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Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationship:	Rupert Grint/Emma Watson
Character:	Rupert Grint , Emma Watson
Additional Tags:	Grinston
Stats:	Published: 2012-06-01 Completed: 2012-06-03 Chapters: 6/6 Words: 16457

Steam

by [otterlybrilliant](#)

Summary

COMPLETE! One look can change everything. Set during the after-party of the Deathly Hallows Part 2 premiere, Rupert and Emma suddenly find themselves drawn into a firestorm of lust. What will materialize from the ashes?

Friction

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own, nor am I affiliated with, Warner Bros., the Harry Potter movie franchise, Rupert Grint or Emma Watson. If I did own Rupert Grint and Emma Watson I would make them get married and fill the world with beautiful ginger children...

Author's Note: This story was originally posted on fanfiction.net but got removed for violating their 'Don't write about real people' rule. I am happy it has found a new home. The story is dedicated to my wonderful and talented (not to mention gorgeous) friend Jes. Without her help, support and general awesomeness this story would never have been published. It is also dedicated to all of the Grinston shippers out there: Stand stong, our day will come!

Steam

Chapter 1: *Friction*

It was the end of an era. The cast, crew and author had walked the red carpet in Trafalgar Square as millions gushed. The movie was premiered and the congratulations, speeches and tears had flowed like wine. The official after-party was held at the Old Billingsgate Market. But after making an appearance at this lavish, media-swarmed event, much of the cast and crew retried to the St. Pancras Hotel, where some were staying, to enjoy a more intimate setting.

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Rupert took a quick glance in the mirror over the dresser in his hotel room. He ran a hand through his ginger hair and straightened his jacket with a sigh. Since arriving at the hotel he had gone to his room before entering the private after-party that was taking place several floors below in the function room.

As he loosened his tie slightly he thought about how he had been doing an adequate job of avoiding what this night really meant. Even with all the excitement and chaos that had been the final year of the Harry Potter movie franchise, Rupert was actually able to numb himself to most of it. Except for her. The only thing left to organize and neatly pack away was his relationship with Emma. Each time he tried to seal the dam, to barricade his emotions, his heart constantly got in the way, getting bent and torn in process.

For the longest time he thought his problem was not being able to separate himself from his character. But in the past few years he came to realize that Ron had nothing to do with it. It was Emma that had taken hold of his deepest self. *We're like brother and sister*, he would tell himself. But he could no longer delude himself with this statement. What he felt for Emma was in no way 'brotherly love.' He was constantly plagued by an ache so deep for her it was a permanent manifestation in his chest. He knew she did not reciprocate these feelings. Although she constantly gushed about how wonderful she thought he was, it was always with an incredibly platonic tone. Even her touch, although frequent, smacked of sibling closeness.

And yet, there were brief moments, milliseconds really, where he felt a connection with her that went much deeper. Sometimes they would share looks that were not purely innocent; touches that had an undercurrent running through them.

He recalled when they stood in Trafalgar Square; a tiny island in an ocean of eyes. Emma had barely let go of him. It was if an electrical surge was forcing them together. And when their eyes had met they produced sparks. It had been acute torture. She was close to him, holding onto him like a lifejacket in the sea of people, but it was Rupert who felt completely stranded. He was desperate to sweep her into his arms and, in front of millions, break her open and taste her.

Now that would have been a show, he thought.

Fantasies as such were his perpetual companion. He craved Emma constantly. Each time they came together for promotional engagements after filming had finished he would fill himself with her presence, hoping to satiate his longing. But it was never enough. He was addicted; always aching for the next hit. But after tonight his supply was in jeopardy of being cut off indefinitely. Tonight was his last chance.

His thoughts seemed to constrict his airway. He loosened his tie to try and release the pressure as he took one final glance in the mirror. He grabbed his key card from the dresser and slipped out of the room.

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He found her almost as soon as he entered the expansive, yet intimate function room. Even though Rupert had spent the last several hours with her, the sight of Emma still floored him. She had changed from her frothy, flowing ball gown worn for the premiere, to a knee-length, snowy frock that was iced in white jewels. It was the perfect combination of elegance, innocence and sexy. When she moved, the beads on the dress caught the shifting light, making her sparkle. She stood with Bonnie Wright; they were both laughing at something her fiancée was saying. Then, as if sensing him, Emma looked over and caught his stare.

Normally he would offer a trademark sly grin and give her a wink. But he seemed to have removed all of his filters on his way down to the party and was instead staring at her with pure honesty reflecting in his eyes. *Last chance*, echoed inside him. The thought became a crack in his carefully walled dam. He let out a small sigh, as if the splintering had given him more room to breathe.

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Emma smiled widely at Rupert as she drank in his features. She marveled at how perfectly he wore that black suit. The subtle alligator skin pattern embellished his muscular body perfectly. When their eyes met, her heart suddenly skipped. He was staring at her intensely. But it wasn't a look that she normally received from him. There was a storm brewing behind his usually placid blue eyes. Emma felt something strange stir inside her as she gazed back at him. Her cheeks began to flush and she felt a warmth bloom within her.

The heat generated by his stare took her completely by surprise. Rupert was not a person who caused her heart to race; quite the contrary. He was always the one who calmed her. He was her constant comfort, her best mate and she loved him dearly. Truthfully, she had never felt closer to anyone in her life.

But right now it was like she was seeing him for the first time. She indulged herself, gazing at him with unbiased eyes. The shoulder that she had lent her head on and clung to in front of millions suddenly transformed into hard muscled arms that she wanted wrapped around her. That hair she had playfully tousled so many times over the years had become locks of silk she would love to feel on her face. Those hands she had high-fived a million times before were now hands she wanted touching her in places no brother should. And those lips...

In a matter of a breath, she exhaled a friend and inhaled so much more. How was it that in one look Rupert had gone from best mate to wanted bedfellow?

Unbeknownst to Emma, it was a short foray into lust. Their friendship had been dangling over a pit of desire by a quickly-fraying thread for some time. But Emma had expertly convinced herself that her relationship with Rupert was purely platonic; demonstrating this with extreme emotional restraint and redirecting pent-up sexual frustration into her character while on set. Since moving to America she dove into a relationship with Johnny Simmons, her co-star that she had met while filming in Pittsburgh. The relationship was satiating and, with her film as well as university to keep her busy, she had no problem keeping any romantic feelings she may have for Rupert in check.

But tonight Johnny was an ocean away and Rupert was standing right in front of her.

It had been an emotional evening, she thought. Emma justified the strange feelings Rupert's stare had elicited to the stress and excitement of the night. Or it was possibly the champagne, although she did not drink much at all. No matter what the cause of her body's reaction to Rupert, she found herself hypnotized by him. And for a moment she let herself bask in the embers his eyes were stoking within her. As she surrendered to the slowly rising flame, Rupert became distracted by someone approaching him and broke their stare. When he looked away Emma felt cold. She shook her head, trying to dislodge the encounter, but it seemed to cling to her as she fought her way back to the present. She couldn't escape the imprint of his gaze and it brought heat to her face.

As the evening progressed she found herself searching him out. Not that this was at all unusual, they were almost always together. But she didn't want to just to hang out. Emma wanted to see if he could elicit that same feeling a second time. She figured that, since she was better prepared for it, his gaze would cause no reaction at all.

It wasn't long before she was able to put her theory to the test. Rupert cropped up, leaning against the long bar, ordering a drink only a few steps from her. Their eyes met again and he gave her the same smoldering glare as before.

Butterflies bloomed in her stomach.

Emma blushed and a girlish smile swept across her face. Embarrassed by her body's physical reaction, she broke eye contact. She was baffled.

What is going on? Why is he staring at me like that? And why am I reacting this way?

She could still feel his stare and her body hummed in response.

This is ridiculous.

Unhappy with the outcome of her experiment, Emma tried to distance herself from it. She re-engaged in the conversation she was having with Bonnie and her fiancée, Jamie, but could not seem to follow it. Her head was smoky, filled with blue eyes and ginger hair. Against her will, her eyes sought him again. They reconnected. He burned his eyes into hers and smiled a very small, crooked grin.

The butterflies in her stomach caught fire.

"Blagh blagh blagh... Emma?"

Emma heard Bonnie talking to her, but she was miles away, standing at the edge of the building inferno that pulsed between her legs.

"I'm sorry?" Emma stuttered, painfully wrenching her eyes away from Rupert's, and coming back to the room. But Bonnie was now laughing hysterically at something Jamie had said, and didn't repeat herself. Emma tried to follow the conversation but could not ignore the fever in her thighs. After giving up on pretending to be engaged in the couple's joke she risked a glance to the bar where Rupert had been standing. He was gone.

"Can I steal you for a dance?" Rupert seemed to have materialized behind her and Emma shivered at the feeling of his hot breath on the nape of her neck. Her torso went scarlet. She nodded, momentarily unable to speak, and the corner of her lips turned up. Rupert placed his hand at the small of her back and her heart dropped into her stomach.

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"Sorry, but you had a bit of a glazed look on your face, I thought you needed rescuing from those two." Rupert lied as he escorted her toward the dance floor. It was the only excuse he could think of to steal her away. His arm snaked around Emma's waist as he led her into the center of the small dance floor. He desperately wanted to give action to the blissful thoughts pooling in his mind. Instead, he placed his arm innocently around her waist, preparing to dance.

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The band began a new song, a cover from a familiar American movie. Emma recognized it, but it was as if she was hearing it from underwater. "...*Now with passion in our eyes, there's no way we could disguise it secretly...*" The memorable lyrics flowed over the dance floor.

As Rupert slipped his arm around her back, she could feel the heat from his hand radiate right through her. She placed her left hand in his and snaked the other hand around his shoulders almost shyly. She avoided his eyes as she tried to will away the crimson that splashed her face. "...*So we take each other's hand, 'cause we seem to understand the urgency...*"

They were completely in tune with each other and seemed to float through the song. When Rupert twirled her around Emma's heart swelled so large it forced a girlish giggle from her mouth. He pulled her back into his arms and they swayed together, laughing. "...*So we'll just let it go, don't be afraid to lose control...*"

As they danced the current between them strengthened, pulling their silhouettes closer. She was captivated by his lips; her mind began to paint pictures of them etching kisses into her skin. The area between her legs pulsed again; flames licked her skin. She tried to keep her percolating body in check but her hands began to betray her as they crept higher up Rupert's back. Her fingers left the safety of his suit collar and were inching into his silky hair on the back of his neck. "...*You're the one thing I can't get enough of...*"

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Rupert was swimming in her so deeply he feared drowning. He applied gentle pressure as his hand slipped slightly lower, mirroring the pressure Emma was applying. He focused on the feeling of her warm hand on his neck as an incredibly sexy blush spread across her collarbone and her breath quickened. This was not the Emma he was used to. His heart was pounding through his shirt and his head was so fuzzy that he didn't even attempt to find semblance to what was going on. He simply remained floating in the moment, allowing her to tow him away.

"...*yes I swear it's the truth, and I owe it all to you...*"

He could feel the current between them surge throughout his body. Emma's lips parted; a silent invitation escaped from them. His eyes flitted between hers and her lips as her fingers tighten on his neck, drawing him closer still. Her tongue darted out across her lips causing Rupert to see sparks. His lips began to close the gap. Static was building. Rupert felt like even if he wanted to, he could not break free from the electricity binding them together.

Everything around them went black.

Then suddenly, the spell was broken, the electric current shut down, and the lights around them switched back on. Someone had bumped into Emma, jarring them both. The song ended and people began to applaud the band.

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The look she gave Rupert was one of surprise and disappointment; as if awoken too soon from a

wonderful dream.

Had we almost kissed? On the dance floor? In front of everyone?

She panicked slightly and reluctantly reclaimed her arms. Yes, they almost had. And she had been the one to initiate it. When looking at it from any other perspective the idea of her and Rupert kissing was totally ludicrous; however, in that moment, it had made perfect sense.

She wanted to kiss Rupert.

No... she wanted to do so much *more* than kiss Rupert.

They stood on the dance floor, still inches away from each other. Emma could hear Rupert's short breaths. She gazed up at him with a determined look. Her mind and body were dueling for control.

I have to stop this.

She had to be rational; she was going to close the damper on the fire he was fanning inside her. She began to turn and walk away. But just before she broke eye contact with him, her face went rogue and Rupert saw the side of her mouth turn up into a sheepish, yet incredibly sexy smile. Her cheeks were ablaze and she bit her lip. Although her brain shouted *I'm leaving*, her eyes whispered *follow me*.

Ignition

Chapter 2: *Ignition*

After rediscovering how to breathe, Rupert instructed his feet to follow Emma off the dance floor. She didn't stop walking or turn to him, even as he caught stride with her. He walked silently beside her, stealing glances out of the corner of his eye. She was still biting her lip, obviously trying to restrain a seductive smile that was unraveling him.

She was dripping desire and he was soaking her up like a sponge.

They walked out of the ballroom and into the wide hallway. Rupert's heart was beating so fiercely that he could barely get air into his lungs. The dam he had tried to keep from collapsing had crumbled and a tidal wave of pure lust was pouring over him, eroding his self-control ever since she had nearly kissed him on the dance floor. Rupert knew that if he didn't taste her soon he was going to go mad.

They hadn't shared a single word since they had begun to dance and they were still engulfed in silence as they reached a dimmed passage that branched from the main hallway. Within a heartbeat Rupert pulled Emma into it, pressed her against the wall and crashed his lips into hers. His hands grasped her body desperately, pinning them between the wall and her back. As if anticipating his move, Emma's arms simultaneously circled his neck and snaked through his hair as she returned the kiss with intensity.

He was drenched in her.

Emma let out a low moan as her lips parted and welcomed his tongue hungrily. Rupert groaned in return as he explored her mouth, finally tasting her, the experience unlike anything he had imagined for so long.

This was nothing like the kiss they shared in front of the cameras for the film. Although that kiss had been exciting, it had been fueled by anxiety and adrenaline. Rupert had felt far too nervous and exposed to fully enjoy the kiss, although he had still relished every second of it. As Rupert kissed Emma passionately in the hallway he realized how chaste; how downright childish their onscreen kiss had been compared to the almost animalistic way they were devouring each other now.

His arms were traveling up her spine and around her waste and he fisted her dress like a lifeline as

he kissed her with intense greed, still craving more as he moved in closer. They panted into each other's mouths, not being able to stop for a single breath. Emma's hands were a downpour on his body. Her five fingers wove themselves into his hair while her other hand traveled over his shoulders, gripping his jacket and pulling him closer still. Waves of pleasure crashed over him again and again, and even though his lungs were fighting for oxygen, he let himself get pulled under.

He was drowning in her.

After what seemed like a lifetime they pulled apart; both desperate for breath. Rupert braced himself, his hands flat against the wall on either side of Emma's head. He could barely stand as the smell and taste of her continued to drug him into delirium.

"What are we doing?" He asked breathlessly, fighting to bring her face into focus. He was desperate to unleash the storm brewing inside him and rain down on her, but instead searched her eyes for an answer.

"Rupert," his name spilled from Emma's lips, and his heart reacted the same as a stone skipping across water, making it ripple.

"I- I don't know," she stammered.

Suddenly he heard someone walking quickly by in the lobby off to his left. He knew they couldn't stand there much longer without drawing attention to themselves.

"What do you want to do?" Rupert's words were pregnant with lust. He knew what he wanted and what he wanted could not be satisfied there, where anyone could happen upon them.

It was a pivotal moment: They could either smother the embers that might ignite an inferno...

Or they could douse themselves in petrol.

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Emma pressed her greedy hands to his chest. She could feel Rupert's lungs filling with air and deflating with every breath under the taught muscles of his chest. His heart was racing, keeping pace with hers. As soon as their eyes met he was kissing her again and she knew she never wanted him to stop. Her arms encircled his waist beneath his jacket, pulling him into the curves of her body once more. She felt him hard against her and shuddered. His hands cupped her face as he sucked her bottom lip. She tried to stifle a whimper but it escaped her mouth, begging Rupert to

consume her.

Stop. Stop. Stop. Her brain was pleaded to her mouth. It took everything for her to push him away, her hands digging into his hips. But her lips still would not comply.

"Wait," she mumbled into his mouth and Rupert pulled away obediently, immediately disappointing her.

Emma looked up; Rupert's eyes were dripping petrol and she was on fire.

He licked his lips and she was suddenly out of breath. She was a volcano of nerves, not knowing what to say, not knowing if she *could* say anything. Still, she wracked her brain for something, anything...

Lifts. The thought materialized in her smoky head.

Lifts. Room. Clothes. Bed. Hands. Lips. The ideas stumbled over one another inside her head. Emma straightened up, begging her legs to support her. Rupert stepped back and she looked at him with eyes so intense they resembled glowing coals.

"We have to go," she breathed and began to walk out of the alcove.

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For the second time that night Rupert followed her wordlessly, only a step behind. He had no idea what Emma had meant when she said they had to go. *Go where?* He focused on putting one foot in front of the other and not the need to rip her dress from her body and devour her in this very lobby. But he tempted himself when he stared at the curve of her neck as she walked. Her milky skin was flushed with a pink hue. The beads on her frock were reflecting the light and tiny spots glittered over her neck. Rupert licked his lips, desperate to run his tongue over all of her curves.

What the fuck was going on? What about her boyfriend? What will happen after..?

Questions began to tumble out of his brain, each one hitting the floor and shattering like glass. He held his breath in anticipation as they neared the entrance to the ballroom.

Will she go back and try to wash the traces of me off her skin?

The question crunched under his foot and he sighed with relief as he followed her past the entrance to the ballroom and continued on toward the lifts. His heart was racing and his breath was attempting to catch up with it.

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Emma stopped at the lift doors in the lobby. She hoped her fingers would not divulge the cyclone of nerves, lust and desperation that were tearing her up inside as she reached for the call button.

What am I doing?

Her brain answered by offering an image of herself, entangled with Rupert on a bed of white sheets. The picture set her womb ablaze.

Do not do this. Go back to the party.

And yet, despite her best efforts, her hand betrayed her as she stabbed for the call button. She missed it the first time and hoped Rupert did not see her falter as she walked her fingers back up the cool metal plate to light the button.

They stood silently as they waited. There were a million things Emma wanted to say, yet her thoughts were so diametric they seemed to cancel each other out, leaving nothing to say at all. She was so consumed that the ding announcing the arrival of the lift startled her. The doors opened and she glanced wantonly at Rupert as she took a step inside. He paused, breathed out slowly through his mouth and followed her inside.

Emma turned to face the closing doors, pressed the number eight button and watched as Rupert walked determinately into her. In a single heartbeat his hands were scorching her body. Desperately, their lips met, tongues collided and breaths intertwined. They stumbled into the back of the lift, the brass rail digging into Emma's lower back. Her hands seized his jacket collar, giving leverage to her kiss. He grabbed her bum with both hands and lifted her up onto the rail. Emma's dress hitched as she wrapped her legs around Rupert's waist. He pushed himself into her core and she groaned. Spurred by her reaction, Rupert ground himself against her again and she bit his lower lip hard.

As the lift climbed, so did the temperature inside. Emma was desperate to feel his skin against hers. She pulled at his shirt from under his jacket, freeing it from his trousers. Her hands burrowed underneath it and fingers slipped over sweat-dampened skin. She raked her nails from his shoulders to his lower back and Rupert growled.

"Fuck, Emma..."

Rupert dropped kisses down her neck. His scent was everywhere; heavy, sweet, intoxicating. His hands went under her dress, branding her thighs with his touch.

The lift sounded and the doors opened. They momentarily untangled themselves and stumbled into the corridor. Emma wanted to sprint to her room, desperate to tear off Rupert's suit and destroy his body with hers. But she could barely carry herself down the hall, finding it hard to focus on anything but the yearning between her legs. She was shocked her frock had not caught fire with the amount of heat and friction that was created by she and Rupert in the lift.

Clumsily, she made it to her door. However, before she could open it, Rupert was behind her, pressing himself against her frame. His hands gripped her waist and his tongue seared a path up her neck. When his lips slipped around her earlobe she moaned and shut her eyes.

"Rupert," Emma barely choked out as she fumbled for her key card. "Please... I can't... concentrate."

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The sound of her throaty words sent a jolt straight to Rupert's core. He could not believe he was having this effect on her. He couldn't stop himself from grinning as he kissed back down her neck. He marveled at the fact that all of this was actually happening. A short time ago he had been in his room trying desperately to suppress his deepest desires. He had no idea that he would be here now, on the threshold of having those desires consummated.

"Sorry," Rupert whispered, but didn't remove his lips from her skin. "But I can't stop kissing you."

Reluctantly and with intense restraint, Rupert lifted his hands from her waist and eased his lips from her soft skin. He let out a long breath on her neck causing goosebumps to scatter over her flesh. He watched with heavily lidded eyes as Emma retrieved her key card from the small pocket

in her dress and, after two tries, finally got the door unlocked.

They practically fell into the room, the heavy door closing on its own with a soft, but definitive click.

Inferno

Chapter Notes

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

Chapter 3: *Inferno*

The stream of light from the corridor slowly thinned then vanished as the door shut. Nothing but the faint glow from the window traced over Rupert and Emma's silhouettes, but neither bothered to switch on the lights.

They were a cyclone of hot breath and frantic hands as they began to undress each other. Rupert's jacket met the floor first. Then Emma began to tug at his tie while keeping her lips passionately entwined with his. Rupert felt dizzy as he fumbled with the zipper of her dress while Emma trailed kisses over his cheek and neck. He let out a guttural curse as she bit and sucked on his chin. Rupert could barely concentrate; thunder was echoing in his head and lightening flashed in front of his eyes. He tried to control the brewing storm in order to untangle their lips and turn Emma around to fully unzip and remove her dress. It slipped silkily from her frame, her strapless bra soon after.

Rupert showered her bare shoulders with kisses. Emma leaned back into him and his arousal doubled over onto itself when he felt how perfectly she fit against him. He squeezed her hips to steady himself, then began to slide his hands over her flat stomach, slowly up towards her chest. Emma let out a sharp gasp as he gently cupped her breasts, his fingers grazing her swollen nipples. She was so soft. But after one gentle tug on her nipples they hardened almost instantly. And not surprisingly, so did Rupert.

Emma reached her arm up behind her to snake around Rupert's neck. She tugged at his shirt and sucked in a breath as Rupert took her earlobe between his teeth. She turned quickly in his arms. Rupert's lips fused with Emma's again; she swirled her tongue inside Rupert's mouth as she worked the last button of his shirt open and pushed it off his muscular shoulders.

They were magnets that could not be forced apart.

She gave his tie one last tug to unknot it and they watched as it slid down his body and onto the floor. Her fingers played down his torso and latched onto his belt. His breath hitched and once again thunder cracked and rumbled in his head as she undid his trousers, which then joined the mounting pile of clothes on the hotel room carpet.

Now free of almost all clothing, their hands explored each other's bare skin. Every nerve in

Rupert's body came alive at her touch. Emma's fingers cascaded over the contours of the muscles in his chest and abdomen, causing him to shiver. He groaned and grabbed her arse with both hands, pulling her hard against him. The feeling of her skin on his was intoxicating; she was seeping into him and taking him over.

In a desperate attempt to keep control Rupert thrust Emma against wall, pinning her wrists above her head. To Emma's obvious surprise, Rupert pulled just out of her reach, creating an agonizing distance between them. Emma's body arched towards his and she strained against his grip, but he edged slightly away from her, letting only his lips graze hers, teasingly. She bit her lip and squirmed salaciously under his grasp, making Rupert grin.

After all these years; she tortured me with her eyes, her lips, her touch. Always in friendship. Always so close yet out of bounds. Bloody torture.

As much as he was dying to conquer her body, to plunge inside of her, he wanted to see her writhe. He wanted to see her desperate for him, as he had been for her for so many years.

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Rupert let go of her wrists with one hand only to quickly reposition the other over it, effectively enclosing both and keeping Emma trapped. The sensation of being restrained seemed to intensify the need that pulsed within her; she could feel it throbbing between her legs.

With his free hand Rupert placed the pads of his fingers above her knee and slowly traced them up her inner thigh. She gasped as he grazed her knickers at the crease of her thigh. His fingers continued to travel upwards, creating sparks on her skin. He reached her breasts and softly traced their peaks and valleys. Emma bucked, trying to force his hand to apply more pressure to her body but Rupert kept his touch tantalizingly light as his flat palm stroked her hard nipple. She moaned and her eyes fluttered shut.

Rupert brought his hand back down to her thigh and began to retrace his path up her figure, this time letting his fingers run right over the center of her knickers. She was drenched in desire and wet heat radiated beneath the silky fabric. Emma arched her back again, her body begging for release. But he continued to tease with his feather-light touch. Again he traveled up to her breast, this time bringing her nipple in between two out-stretched fingers, squeezing gently and rubbing up and down. She growled in fevered anticipation as his fingers trailed back down her body like a river of flames.

His thumb traced the lacey hem of her knickers. Emma was shuddering with longing so intense it was almost painful. This time Rupert sent his fingers beneath the fabric, gliding between her folds,

and Emma felt a shockwave course through her body. She cried out and threw her head back in pleasure. She enveloped his hand as his fingers danced inside her. Another wave barraged her body and she thrashed and moaned as he continued to stroke her.

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Still keeping her pinned to the wall with one hand, Rupert could feel Emma's muscles contracting around his other as he sank his fingers deeper into her. A stream of nonsensical words and sounds poured from Emma's lips. Rupert could no longer bear the tension between them. He released her arms and she crashed into his body like a tidal wave. He scooped her into his arms and stumbled to the bed.

They fell on top of the mattress and Rupert poured over her like waves on rocks, dousing her with kisses. He wanted to explore every inch of her body with his tongue, drink every ounce of her. Starting at her neck, he slowly began to quench his thirst. He reveled in the feeling of her smooth, warm silhouette under his lips. Emma's chest rose and fell sharply, her breath increasing as his mouth descended on her breasts. Her hands were frantic on his back and through his hair, encouraging him as his tongue danced over her nipple. She cried out as he grazed her tender skin with his teeth and then surrounded her peak with his mouth.

He could have spent days exploring her torso but Emma's moans became more pleading, her squirming more urgent. So he descended further, tracing the contours of her stomach and hip bones with his tongue as he neared his goal. He kissed along the seam of her knickers as his fingers hooked under the fabric. Gazing down at her, he slowly peeled the last piece of clothing from her body.

Her chocolate eyes were melting him.

Emma bit her lip as a scarlet flush coloured the milky skin of her neck and chest. With a sly grin Rupert tossed her knickers over his shoulder and descended upon her: He settled himself between her legs and began to swirl his tongue over her inner thigh, slowing making his way to her core. Her body trembled and she groaned with impatience.

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Emma stood on the precipice as she felt Rupert's mouth assault her body. She was engulfed in flames as he licked, sucked and tasted her over and over again. An inferno raged in her core and she began to tremble as waves of searing heat radiated from it. The spasms of euphoria that barraged her body were so strong they scared her; she felt like she was going to break in half. Rupert's tongue was a cyclone of bliss and agony and it tore her up inside until she couldn't take it

anymore. She cried out, louder and louder until the inferno burned her lungs. Her frame went ridged as the final shockwave broke over her and she began to fall.

Down, down, down, until she landed in a pile of ashes on the mattress.

Emma blinked; stars popped and faded in front of her eyes. Never in her life had she ever experienced such an intense rush of ecstasy. She felt Rupert kiss his way up her silhouette as she worked on bringing her heart rate back to a healthy rhythm. His face hovered over hers, his azure eyes full of concern.

"Are you ok?" he asked softly. Emma felt a lump in her throat and tears welled behind her eyes at this simple, yet dulcet, question. She felt so worshiped, like no one else in the world existed but her.

"Never better," she whispered. Then she added with a gulp, "Thank you... Rupert." He sighed, as if relieved by her words.

"It was my pleasure." The concern faded from his eyes, replaced by sweet adoration. He opened his mouth, as if he was about to say something, but instead brought his lips to hers. He kissed her softly, but Emma could feel a strong undercurrent that sent a shiver down her spine. The kiss seemed to open them up to another emotional level and Emma did not want to ascend. She felt overwhelmed as she saw a flash of a future with Rupert spark behind her eyes. She deepened the kiss; bringing herself back to the present with renewed lust. Emma did not want to think about what they were embarking on. She did not want to think at all. She only wanted to *feel*.

She pushed her tongue deep into Rupert's mouth and released a groan from his throat. She ran her hands down his back, pulling him down into her as she wrapped her legs around his waist.

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Rupert felt Emma envelope him, welcoming him hungrily. He watched her eyes clamp shut and she pressed her head into the pillow as he penetrated her.

"Rupert, oh god..." she mewled as he buried himself inside her, filling her up. It was utter bliss. With each thrust he felt himself fall further into delirium. He fought to stay present; he wanted to memorize every inch of the moment and tattoo it into his skin; the shimmer of sweat on her upper lip, the flutter of her eyelashes, the taste of her breath, the sweet smell of her skin...

Rupert's body ached to move faster, pound harder, rage inside of her. Yet he forced himself into a slow, steady rhythm; calm waves lapping over smooth sands. It was agonizing pleasure that surrounded him, engulfed him, consumed him. Their mouths came together with each thrust; awkward, sloppy kisses ripe with passion.

Their pants and moans braided together; binding them.

The pressure inside Rupert was building, charging throughout his body as they plunged deeper and deeper into each other. His pace began to quicken, the waves more powerful. Emma's breath was fast and shallow, and mixed with cries of ecstasy. Rupert drank his name from her lips as he thrust into her again and again. Emma's fingers clawed at his back, her heels pressed into his tail bone demanding, *pleading* him to bore into her deeper still.

Rupert's eyes locked with Emma's rich chocolaty pools that splashed tears over her cheeks. He wanted this to last forever, but he knew he couldn't hold on for much longer. He tried to savor every ragged breath, every moan, and every rapid beat of their hearts.

Then he let go. He released the storm that had been churning within him, letting it course through Emma, quenching her. She let out a long cry as she arched into his frame and raked her fingernails over his shoulder blades. Rupert collapsed on top of her, resting his head on her chest. He felt her arms wrap tight around him. She kissed the top of his head and sighed. The sound of her breath turned into a lump in his throat and tears materialized behind his eyes.

His dam had been destroyed and pure love was flooding his veins, taking him over, altering every cell in his body.

They lay there, breathing heavily and Rupert contemplated the gravity of what they just experienced. Eight stories below them he could hear the traffic flowing through the city. Life was somehow carrying on, as if the earth had not shattered into a million pieces. But as Rupert lay in Emma's embrace, he knew he could never put his world back together the same way. It had changed forever.

He loved her - truly and deeply; he was certain of that. What he wondered now was... did Emma feel the same?

End Note: I am a huge advocate of safe sex. Please know that protection was used, it just was not described in the story.

Afterburn

Chapter 4: *Afterburn*

Emma had slept so deeply that she momentarily forgot where she was. The sound of Rupert's breathing close to her ear reminded her of the previous night, and a huge grin broke over her face. She began to recall the blissful feeling of his lips on her skin and her body seemed to reignite. Never in her life had she experienced such intense physical pleasure. Nor had she ever felt so worshipped by another person. The intense emotions that last night had invoked in her began to trickle down her spine and pool in her stomach, warming her.

She couldn't help compare what she had with Rupert with her intimate encounters with Johnny. Although Johnny was experienced and certainly skilled, he was almost arrogant about it; as if giving her pleasure was only to validate his own prowess. Rupert, on the other hand, had been generous and selfless; as if his pleasure was completely dependent on hers. Thoughts of Johnny and Rupert did not coexist well together and her stomach began to churn.

Johnny. Her eyes caught her mobile sitting on the bedside table. The indicator light was flashing. She felt a pang of dread inside her. Johnny had texted her last night and she had not answered.

Her fingers had been otherwise engaged...

She stifled a girlish giggle as thoughts of her hands all over Rupert's body stoked her. But too quickly those beautiful moments were squelched by guilt.

In the night she had gotten up and checked her mobile and found two texts from Johnny waiting for her: One asking how the premiere went and the other saying that he missed her. And now the light was flashing again, like an alarm bell going off in her brain. No matter how wonderful last night was, it had been a mistake. *A huge mistake.*

Guilt and bliss continued to mix inside her gut, creating a feeling of nausea that crept up her esophagus. Just as she was about to sneak out of bed she felt Rupert stir behind her. The arm that snaked around her waist gave her a tight squeeze and he let out a contented 'ummmmm'. He grazed his lips across her shoulder in a trail of kisses; they were like morphine, immediately palliating the ulcers her guilt was inflicting on her. *You need to get up*, she told herself, but her body disobeyed and turned into his embrace. Rupert's eyes sparkled from under his tousled hair and as soon as their gaze met her temperature began to rise. Emma smiled widely as she basked in his warmth.

"Good morning."

Rupert grinned and his happiness splashed everywhere.

Emma melted. She reasoned that it was impossible to leave the bed when she was just a puddle, drenching the sheets.

The sun streamed through the window behind Rupert as he gazed lovingly down at her. The rays filtered through his hair, setting it aglow and casting an angelic quality over his face. She reached up and brushed his hair away from his eyes then traced down his face and cupped his cheek. He reached up and caught her hand in his, bringing her palm to his mouth, and filling it with kisses.

Emma took his hand in hers and began to wind and interlace her fingers with his. She watched as the sunlight played over their coupling hands. She was a swirling contradiction: The guilt she had felt only moments ago was now fighting a feeling of utter contentment. She wouldn't object if the world were to crumble around them, just so she wouldn't have to focus on anything but this.

"I wish I could stay here forever," Emma sighed. *Did I just say that out loud?* Rupert's widening smile confirmed it.

"We should, then. They've got room-service; we would never have to leave this bed," he said as he rolled onto his back, pulling her on top of him. *No*, Emma thought, *I should be getting ready to leave, checking-out...* She ran through the itinerary she had planned out for the day. Staying in bed with Rupert was not on the list.

As her body settled on top of Rupert's her traitorous lips wasted no time seeking his. Their kiss burned slowly as they savored each other. Emma ran her hands through his hair as she pushed her tongue deeper into his mouth, causing him to groan in pleasure. Her head began to fill with smoke and her skin seared under his touch. *Stop this now*, her brain commanded. But as Rupert hardened underneath her she began to smolder and the instructions burned away.

Sparks danced over her body as Rupert slid into her. She let out a long moan of satisfaction as she welcomed him, engulfing him. Emma lifted herself off his chest, her legs draping over his sides, allowing him to fill her up. Rupert's hands were white hot as they traveled from her hips, up her sides to cup her breasts. Emma let out a cry as his fingertips scorched her nipples. As if the distance between them was too great, Rupert sat up and wrapped his arms around her. Their eyes locked and two oceans of deepest blue consumed her. She felt herself suddenly overcome with emotion. Her heart was beating in her throat. She felt tears well up behind her eyes as she realized she felt complete; whole; flawless.

This was *it*; what she had been wanting for years. He fit into her perfectly; she never wanted to let him go.

He sought her lips hungrily as Emma rocked on top of him. She cupped his face as her tongue searched every part of his mouth. The tension in her core mounted as she quickened her pace. Rupert's hands were everywhere, their heat almost too much to bear. She cried out and dug her nails into his shoulder blades as he gripped her arse, pulling her down as he simultaneously thrust into her. Rupert groaned as he penetrated her with intensity. Emma could no longer catch her breath as Rupert's hand swept across her center.

With a flick of his thumb her fuse was lit and she was about to explode.

His body stiffened and his grasp on her tightened as the pressure mounted. With a call of her name, she felt Rupert pour into her as she burst into flames. She sucked out his last breath as they toppled back down onto the sheets.

Emma rested her cheek on Rupert's heaving chest as he held her in his arms. It was only a few hours ago they had been lying like this but their positions reversed. It felt so comfortable, so natural as she listened to his heartbeat begin to slow. She wanted to spend a thousand lifetimes in this moment before the swarm of guilt, fear and anxiety infiltrated her brain; before the world came crashing through the window. She heard Rupert sigh.

"If someone told me yesterday that I would be waking up to you today I would have told them they were barmy," he chuckled. Emma grinned.

Too true, she thought.

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"Have you seen my kickers?" Emma asked as she held the sheet to her body while leaning over the edge of the bed. She searched the floor around the bed but couldn't see where they had fallen the previous night.

"Yes, I have!" Rupert exclaimed cheerily. "And now I can cross that off my bucket list."

Emma smacked his shoulder. "Rupert, come on."

"I don't know... think Emma; where did you leave them?" Rupert said in his best parental voice.

"Ha ha, very funny. But I think it was *you* who took them off last night," she said as her face reddened.

Rupert made a dreamy face and rolled his eyes as if watching the evening's events replay in his head. "Oh yeah..."

"Ugh!" Emma groaned.

"Why do you need them anyway? Going somewhere?"

"Well, I should probably leave this bed at some point," she said, leaning as far as she could over the side of the bed. "Maybe I need to use the loo?"

"You don't need knickers for that." Rupert offered. Emma stared at him incredulously. "What? Do you not want me to see you starkers? It's a little late for that, Emma."

Emma sighed. Biting her lip, she tried to trap the grin that was inching across her mouth. She steeled herself, surprised at how nervous she was now when she had already completely bared herself to him last night, not to mention earlier this morning.

"Don't look," she said as she stood up and let the sheet slide off her figure.

"I promise nothing," he said, but trained his eyes on the ceiling. As soon as Emma turned toward the bathroom she caught his glance in the mirror above the dresser.

"You're peeking!"

Rupert shrugged at her reflection. "Sorry, I can't help myself. You are too hot for your own good. I can't control myself."

Emma smiled sheepishly as a blush washed down her body. She could feel Rupert's eyes on her as she headed into the loo. His stare made her simmer, and she loved it.

Emma splashed water over her face then grabbed a facecloth and began to wipe the remaining makeup off. She looked down at the smudges on the white terrycloth, remnants of last night. She peered at herself in the mirror; if only she could wash Rupert off her that easily. She felt the familiar pang of guilt once again start to creep from her stomach up through her chest.

Even though they had exchanged few words the previous night it seemed like Rupert had bared his heart to her through his actions. She could not deny the utter devotion and pure love that swam behind his eyes. It had flowed all over her, slow and sweet like honey. Had he meant to be so revealing?

And what had she revealed to him? She felt like he had cracked her in half. Her body had been an open book; unedited, uncensored. What had he read within her pages? Did she even know what was written there herself?

She scowled at her reflection. No matter what her feelings were, she had gotten herself into a huge mess. *What had I been thinking?* That was the problem, she hadn't *thought*. She had let her body make all of the decisions up until now. Or was that her heart? She shook her head; it didn't matter. She couldn't think about a life with Rupert. Her life was already mapped out; she had Johnny, she had University in America, and she had her career. Dating Rupert would derail all the progress she had made on distancing herself from the Harry Potter franchise. It was not that she disliked being connected with the films; they were a huge part of her life. But she needed to move on. By starting something with Rupert the world would see her as Hermione again, a girl falling in love with her long-time friend, only in this case her friend was also her co-star.

"I'm going to order breakfast" Rupert called into the bathroom. His voice made her jump.

"Ok," Emma called back. "Make sure you order extra toast!"

She took a deep breath, exhaling through her mouth. They would talk over breakfast. She grabbed a robe off the back of the door, wrapped it around herself and headed out of the bathroom, a plan forming in her mind.

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"Ugh, the toast is too cold!" Emma exclaimed after she had settled herself and her plate on the bed. "Too cold to butter now. I hate it when they do that."

Her face looked freshly scrubbed, free of makeup and her natural radiance washed over Rupert, baptizing him. Her freckles, which were normally covered, adorned her nose and cheekbones proudly enhancing her beauty. It had been so long since he had seen her without the fanfare of makeup and fancy clothes. He took a deep breath, trying to inhale the sight of her and savor it. He wished he could see her like this every day.

"Emma it's fine. Look." Rupert was sitting in his pants across from her on the bed with a plate of eggs, bacon and toast in his hand. He set his plate in his lap, took a piece of toast and spread the butter over it with his knife. The butter scraped across unwillingly, tearing some of the toast in the process.

"See?" Emma pointed accusingly at his hand. "It should melt into it, not scrape across it." She huffed. "The toast is ruined."

Rupert rolled his eyes. "You and your toast." He shook his head. "You're barmy over your toast."

Emma made a face and chucked a square of toast from her plate at Rupert. He attempted to catch

it in his mouth but it bounced off his chin and landed in the bed, crumbs dusting the sheets.

"Now look what you've done," she groaned.

"Me?" Rupert cried. "You're the one who threw the bloody thing at me."

He scooped it up and took a bite out of it. As he crunched the toast in his mouth he gave her a wink and leaned back against the headboard, beckoning her to join him. He saw her hesitate for a second then Emma repositioned herself so that she was tucked into Rupert's side. She grabbed her tea from the bedside table and leaned her head against his shoulder. Rupert nuzzled and kissed her on the head. Her scent was drenching him and he wanted to float away in her sea of perfection.

It felt so comfortable lounging in bed with her; like they had been spending mornings shagging and eating breakfast half-naked for years.

Rupert sighed deeply. *If only...*, he thought.

He could not deny the growing seed of doubt in his stomach that was feeding on feelings of guilt and uncertainty. He tried to cling to the vestiges of the dream they had ensconced themselves in last night, but it was slowly slipping away as the morning wore on. He knew full well they had been engaging in adultery last night; he was at fault as much as Emma. But the guilt he felt was not directed towards Emma's boyfriend. On the contrary, Rupert often felt like it was *he* who was being cheated on when Emma dated. The guilt he felt was for Emma; knowing that she would have to deal with the fallout from their actions more severely than he would.

Rupert was dreading facing the elephant in the room with the sign around its neck saying: "So where do we go from here?" That conversation was inevitable as the clock ticked closer to eleven o'clock, then it would be time to check-out of the room.

Time to check-out of the dream.

He could feel the anxiety churned up the breakfast in his stomach. He knew exactly what he wanted. He wanted Emma, plain and simple. The thought that Emma did not want to be with him after what they had experienced together was like a rope around his neck, slowly tightening... To come this close, to finally experience loving her on a physical level, and to be treated as best mate once more would destroy him.

Rupert needed a distraction. He picked up the remote and began to flip through stations on the telly.

"Spongebob! This morning just gets better and better," he exclaimed, trying to believe it himself.

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"Shit, it's almost eleven o'clock!" Emma cried, looking at her mobile. "We have to be out of the room in 15 minutes."

She had cocooned herself in Rupert and had let the sound of his breathing lull her into a light slumber while he watched the telly. When her mobile vibrated across the bedside table she had awoken with a start. She had noticed the time before she even opened the text message and now the urgency of having to leave before check-out completely distracted her from the message itself.

"Are you serious?" Rupert removed his arm from around Emma's shoulders and straightened up. "Oh bollocks, I'm sorry Emma. I had no idea." He had a mixture of guilt and worry smeared across his face.

Emma began to feel nervous and her breath hitched. She wasn't physically ready, let alone emotionally prepared, to leave the room yet. She hadn't said anything to Rupert about the implications of their tryst, and there was no time now.

"Let's see if we can get a late check-out." Emma decided quickly. That would give her plenty of time to get ready, pack and discuss things with Rupert. She prayed to herself it would be possible.

"I better get my stuff out of my room and go downstairs to check-out, yeah?" Rupert said, but he looked at her like he was asking her a question; *and then what?*

"Right, well... drop your stuff off here, I guess," she said, and then preoccupied herself with the room's telephone. She couldn't look him in the eye for some reason. Emma rang the lobby and spoke with the concierge as Rupert dressed in his trousers and shirt from the night before and headed toward the door.

"Rupert," she called to him, putting her hand over the mouthpiece of the phone, "take the key card so you can get back in. I'm going to have a shower." Rupert nodded and took the card from the dresser.

She watched him leave the room and as soon as the door closed it was as if the temperature dropped a few degrees. The room felt bigger, emptier. Lonely.

"Ma'am?" asked the voice in the receiver. She turned her attention back to the woman on the phone.

"Sorry, yes?" Emma asked, eyes still focused on the door.

"And how long would you like to extend you stay, ma'am?"

Forever, Emma thought.

Condensation

Chapter 5: *Condensation*

Emma did not move from her seat on the edge of the bed after she hung up the phone. She had successfully acquired a reprieve of five hours to gather herself, get out the door, and on with her life. It seemed like a vast amount of time, but the last 13 hours had gone by in a heartbeat and soon the threat of check-out would be clawing at her again.

Although he had scarcely been gone long, her body had recognized Rupert's absence; it was as if she had reorganized herself in order to create a space specifically for him. And now that he was gone her body felt hollow. She had to snap out of the childish dream she was floating in. She would fill the cavern inside her with steel wool and confront Rupert as soon as he walked back through the door.

But five hours was a long time. Surely they had time for one last- *No!* Emma screamed and the thought echoed in the emptiness inside her. This was it; the end of her affair with Rupert. They needed to leave everything that had transpired in this room here: She could not take it with her.

She sat, wrapped in the hotel's white terry cloth robe, for what felt like hours, going over the conversation she would have with Rupert in her head. It was like memorizing lines from a script; they truly did not feel like her own words. But they were the words she had to use in order to get through this and continue on with her life.

Truthfully, she didn't want to talk at all. It would be easier to simply move her lips over Rupert's skin - down his supple neck, across his taught chest - than to recite what she had written in her head. The former seemed far more natural. As her mind began to drift to dangerous territory she caught it and dragged it back, kicking and screaming. How could she even begin to think about doing anything with Rupert again after deciding that she would be telling him what a huge mistake everything had been?

But it was easier said than done, and her resolve began to evaporate as soon as she saw Rupert walk through the door.

She was a dying ember and Rupert was breathing petrol.

And later, as he peeled the robe from her skin, he made it impossible for her to think. Emma had thrown her duplicitous body on the pyre after swearing off Rupert for good. He replaced the soft

fabric with kisses as he lay her down on the mattress yet again.

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As soon as Rupert had entered the room he knew from the look on Emma's face that she was about to say something that he did not want to hear. He had found her sitting on the edge of the bed, the very spot he had left her, her face stained with what looked like a mixture of grief and longing.

As he walked through the hotel corridors on the way to check-out out of his own room he had found it almost impossible for his brain to think of anything that did not consist of Emma's soft lips, intoxicating scent and sweltering figure. The images were bricks tied to his ankles as he tried to stay above water. He could only surface for seconds at a time in order to catch a breath and attempt to form an idea about how he would go about sharing his feelings with Emma. He had to confess how he truly felt about her; he had to reveal it once and for all. He was desperate to try and find a way to explain everything. But as soon as a thought began to materialize he would get pulled under again by the sound of her voice crying his name or the way her skin felt molded into his.

And then there was still that nagging seed of doubt to contend with. It was budding with guilt and despair and threatening to take him over. There was something about the way Emma had been looking at him as they ate breakfast that told him that she was concealing a very sharp needle and was poised to burst this beautiful bubble they were floating in at any second.

By the time he arrived back at her room he was no better off than when he had left. Thoughts of what they had experienced, the ramifications of said experience and the multiple ways things could play out were a tangled mess in his head. When he knocked lightly as he slipped the key card into the slot he decided he would let Emma begin the conversation and hopefully his brain would catch up.

But even that seemed too much for Rupert to handle when he saw her face. He quickly crossed to the bed and knelt in front of Emma.

"Hey, are you okay?" He asked when she did not meet his gaze. Emma sighed and gave a slight nod. Rupert brought a hand to her chin and gently tilted her face. When their eyes met Emma's mouth formed a sheepish smile. The grief he saw in her glassy eyes was a cold hand squeezing his heart. He filled the space between them and kissed the tears before they had a chance to fall from her eyes. Then slowly, his lips whispered across her cheekbones, over the bridge of her nose, and across her forehead. Emma let out a small sigh and Rupert withdrew from her slightly, but remained close enough to feel her breath on his face.

He dropped his gaze to her lips; it looked as though words were ready to spill out. His plan was to allow her to speak first, and it looked like that was about to happen. He should have eased back and created space for her. But the best laid plans will turn to ashes when they are surrounded by intense heat. And before Emma's lips could part and potentially drown him in heartache he pressed his mouth to hers in a dulcet, lingering kiss.

When Emma's lips parted and her tongue traced Rupert's front teeth it sent a current through him, singeing his brain. Her hands cupped his face and pulled him closer. Rupert's fingers snaked beneath her robe and traveled over her thighs greedily. He knew he should not be indulging himself like this, that it would only make things more difficult. Yet he leaned into Emma, applying slight pressure to see if she would yield. Her body surrendered immediately, falling back into the sheets and pulling him down with her.

Rupert hovered over Emma as she lay on the mattress. Their kisses became more heated and their breaths shallow and labored. Rupert's fingers found the knot of Emma's robe and released it. As his lips slipped down her neck his hand danced over her frame and cupped her breast. Emma moaned and arched her back.

He knew it may be the very last time he got to taste her: Rupert etched every curve, every contour, every freckle on her body, into his brain as his mouth made the journey down Emma's silhouette. He savored her cries of pleasure as he eagerly consumed her; he was on death row and this was his last meal.

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Rupert settled himself beside Emma, propped up on his elbow. She was lying on her back, one arm above her, cradling her head. He watched her eyes flutter open, her breath was still shallow. She licked her lips and gazed up at him.

"Now," she breathed, barely a whisper, "what can I do for you...?" Her smile was seductive and it made Rupert's face redden. "What do you want?"

Rupert knew she was implying something physical she could do for him; something to thank him for what he had just done for her (as if being lucky enough to indulge in her was not thanks enough). But his mind focused on what he *really* wanted. Rupert was silent as he immersed himself in her eyes.

I want you to break up with your boyfriend. I want you to tell me that you want to be with me and with no one else. I want you.

I want only you, forever.

Emma searched his face, seemingly aware of the acute longing in his eyes.

"I want you..." His voice was low and heady as it tricked from his lips. His eyes said the rest. He could see tears welling in the corners of Emma's eyes. She swallowed hard and Rupert held his breath.

"Rupert," his name came out in a hesitant quiver. He knew what was coming and there was no holding it off this time.

I don't want to hear her tell me she loves me like a brother. That she is my best mate. I don't want to hear that voice. I can't go back to that. Not now.

"Emma, please," he choked. "Don't tell me that this didn't mean anything to you." He refused to believe anything different. What they had experienced reshaped both of them and he felt like she was about to try and stuff them back into the moulds they started in. He was a square peg in a round hole now, and she couldn't force him to fit no matter how hard she wanted to hammer.

She looked shocked as she pushed herself up onto her elbows. Rupert pulled away from her, tensing as he sat up. He looked down at the bed and smoothed out the sheets; as if removing the wrinkles in the linens would help calm the ripples in his heart.

"Of course it did, Rupert. It meant *everything* to me." Rupert relaxed slightly. But his heart froze when she added, "It was the perfect good bye." A chill spread over his body, her words incased him in ice.

The perfect goodbye; the sentence reverberated within his frozen tomb.

"Well, you can't expect us to continue this, right?" She stammered, almost tripping over her words. "This was just a one-time thing; a way to say good bye to our previous life." She paused then added, "Closure." The word smashed through his block of ice and Rupert shattered to the floor.

He couldn't speak. His silence seemed to press Emma to fill the growing space between them. "I mean," she continued, sitting up and wrapping her robe tightly around her, "It's not like we aren't going to be mates, I could never lose you like that. But as we move on, we will always have this."

"So all this was..." He trailed off, not knowing how to describe it.

"Absolutely brilliant," Emma finished for him. But her tone was mournful and she broke his gaze.

"Do you love me, Emma?"

The words were as much a shock to him as they were to her. He pressed his thumb and forefinger to the bridge of his nose and winced. *What the fuck did I just say?* But now that it was out there, he was desperate for an answer. He summoned all the courage he could and locked eyes with her; they were swimming in tears.

"Yes," she sighed.

Rupert's heart jump-started back to life.

"But..." she added. And just as fast as it had begun beating, Rupert's heart was crushed under the weight of the ugly word. "But we can't... What would they think of me- of *us*?" She corrected herself quickly. "The press would have a riot. They would never leave us alone."

Rupert was stunned. He thought she would immediately jump to Johnny, about how she had

betrayed him.

"Wait, is that what this is about? What everyone is going to think of you?"

"Rupert, you don't understand. I have worked so hard on building something for myself beyond Harry Potter. If we started dating it would be like throwing all that work away."

Silence slipped into the conversation. Still no mention of Johnny. He thought for sure she would have played this card first in her attempt to bargain her way out of what they had done. The fact that she was claiming her career was the reason they shouldn't be together made no sense to him. She was already so successful. Was this just an excuse that she was giving to blow him off or to spare his feelings because she was choosing Johnny over him? What was the real reason? He pressed her:

"If that's what this is about then..." he forced himself to continue, "well, you are a hypocrite, Emma," he said in a determined voice as he could muster. "You pride yourself on how you won't let the media control what you do. You work so hard at defining yourself on your own terms and being honest. It's one of the things I really love-" he stammered, "*admire* about you. But you want to throw this away because you are scared about how it will look on you?" Rupert gave her a disappointed head shake.

"And what about Johnny?" he asked, almost as an afterthought. His ship was already sinking; he might as well blow another hole in the bow and get it over with faster.

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Emma opened her mouth, but no words ventured out to answer Rupert. The fact that Johnny had not been at the forefront of this conversation should have come to her as more of a surprise than it did. She seemed to have made an unconscious decision about him: after what she had experienced with Rupert there could be no going back to Johnny. The thought of his hands on her now seemed to threaten the whispers of Rupert that still lingered. She would rather cherish those memories than have them stripped away by reality.

She could not go back. Yet she felt like she could not move forward either. She was slowly being swallowed by the quicksand of her indecision.

She backtracked over Rupert's final question to what he said earlier. His words were true; she did pride herself on living her life the way she wanted in spite of the media. But there were limits to everything. Spending a night in a hotel room with Rupert while her boyfriend was in America was not something she would like broadcast to the world. But it wasn't as if Rupert was asking them to walk hand in hand through the lobby doors. He was just asking for validation of what they had experienced together, for a confirmation of her feelings for him. But she sank deeper into the quicksand when she realized she could not give this to him. Not necessarily because of what it would mean for her career or her other relationships; but because she really didn't understand it herself.

Or did she understand? Did she know from the first moment his lips touched hers not more than 12 hours ago that she had given her heart fully and completely to him? Maybe the transaction had been completed years before... She had been so good at focusing on her professionalism while working with Rupert; Hermione was the lovesick one, not her. She had always told herself that. But all of a sudden the curtains had been pulled back and she could see the cogs and wheels of the elaborate machine she had built to control her heart. It was tired. Maybe it was time to shut it down.

But...

Maybe's and but's were unacceptable answers to the questions Rupert's eyes were asking her. Her body had been so honest with Rupert. But now her mind was spinning lies into words and weaving herself into knots.

Seconds disguised as hours ticked by and she had still not answered Rupert. The silence hung like a dense fog. It swelled inside her head and neck, clouding her thoughts and constricting her airway. She opened and closed her mouth, but neither words nor breath escaped. She was a fish out of water. Rupert gave a frustrated sigh. He got off the bed and smoothed down his t-shirt.

"It was never going to work with Johnny and I anyway," she managed to choke out. "Maybe I was just looking for a way to end it." As soon as the words were out she knew that this was far worse than the silence.

"Oh, right. So you were just using me."

"No! Rupert, please... I didn't mean it like that." She had just pulled the pin and flung a grenade at Rupert. His stare pierced her like deflected shrapnel, cutting her deep.

"I never thought you would do something like this. I thought there was something more here than just shagging. But you know what, I was wrong." He said with exacerbation. "We should just treat it like you said; a good bye and that's all."

She desperately wanted to say something to repair the damage but her words seemed to explode as soon as they left her mouth. She was terrified of further carnage.

"Rupert... Listen," was all she could manage. She tore through her brain for pages of the script she had written herself, but the pages were out of order now and nothing seemed to make sense.

She anxiously watched him grab his duffle bag and jacket off the floor where he had hastily dropped them on entry. She wanted to leap from the bed and prevent him from going, but she was waist-deep in quicksand, barely able to move.

The empty space inside her was reverberated with her screams. Echoes that begged him not to go, that she wanted him to stay, that it wasn't just shagging, that is was more.

So much more...

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Rupert took her silence as agreement.

"Right... Well, that's sorted then. Brilliant."

He had to get out of the room. He was in a race with his tears; he had to reach the door before they reached his eyes. "Ok... well, I better go then."

Rupert was never one to get mad, to be vengeful, to want to hurt. He especially never wanted to hurt Emma, the person he so desperately loved. But when love and desperation are mixed with anger and doubt, a deadly poison can be produced. As Rupert opened the door he turned to her, and with venom oozing from his mouth he said,

"Thanks for the fuck, Emma."

Fusion

Chapter Notes

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

Chapter 6: *Fusion*

The door closed just in time to catch his weight as Rupert fell back against it. He stood in the hallway, unable to take a step. He had regretted his parting words as soon as they had left his lips. He never wanted to hurt Emma. Not true. He *had* wanted to hurt her, that's why he had said it. He wanted to make her feel just a fraction of the pain she had inflicted. She had used him. How could she have treated him like that, after all they had been through together? He felt betrayed by his best mate.

It was as if he was nailed to the door; crucified by Emma. She was a spear in his side, and every time he took a breath searing pain shot through his entire body.

He cast himself into the dream-turned-nightmare that had played out on the other side of the door. Looking back he realized they had not said much to each other, and what they had said seemed forced and awkward. When had talking become so difficult, Rupert wondered. Talking with Emma used to be so easy; their words seemed to race from each other's mouths and intertwine, creating comfort and laughter. He and Emma used to spend hours talking about everything and nothing as they killed time on set. They played chess and video games, joking and talking for hours. But today, words seemed to get stuck in his throat, unwilling to venture out into the new world Rupert and Emma's coupling bodies had created.

As soon as Emma dealt the blow about finding a way to end things with Johnny, Rupert had shattered. He didn't say any of the things he had wanted to say. Most importantly, he failed to tell Emma how he really felt. Maybe she said that because she thought *he* didn't want things to progress? But how could she? Had it not been obvious that he had gift-wrapped his heart and presented it to her through his actions? But again, he had not said anything outright. Maybe if he had said something she wouldn't have stabbed him in the chest.

Memories of the morning seeped out of his wound and pooled onto the floor. It seemed like a lifetime ago when they had sat cocooned together on the bed. Rupert had had his arm around Emma and was able to hold her; really hold her. He had always been desperate to do that when they would sit on the couch in his trailer during breaks in filming. So often was he tempted to grasp her hand where it rested on her leg, or wrap his arm around her shoulders. This morning he finally had. Had he known it would be the first and last time?

Of all the things that the Harry Potter movies have given him, she was the one thing he had become so addicted to that he couldn't live without, and she was the one thing that was quickly

slipping from his grasp...

No, he was not going to end it on this. He had to go back and make it obvious to her how he felt, and how he would continue to feel, forever. He had to make certain about her feelings as well. If she rejected him yet again, said outright 'No Rupert, I don't love you. I don't want to be with you,' then at least he would be sure. He was going to do it; he was going to go back in.

His determination pumped new blood into his veins. He was resurrected.

Burying the pain deep inside him, he fumbled in his pocket for the key card he still possessed. He slipped it into the lock and the indicator light blinked from red to green. He took a deep breath and pushed open the door. Would his salvation be waiting on the other side, or his demise?

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Rupert's words had slapped her across the face and Emma's cheek still stung.

Tears streamed down her face as she stepped inside the glass walls of the shower and turned on the tap. The water spat down at her, chilling her to the core.

She deserved it.

She deserved every cold needle piercing her skin. She had ruined everything. Was this how it was going to end? She felt physically sick at the thought of never seeing Rupert again. Only, of course, they would have to see each other again: But now they would act like distant acquaintances; smile for the cameras, hug with hips apart and be on their way... That almost seemed worse than never seeing him at all.

A giant sob forced its way from her throat and echoed in the space around her.

Emma turned the shower handle further to the hot side but the water didn't seem to get warmer. It was so cold she could tell which streams running down her body were her tears.

She lamented over how things had come to pass. What she said, what she hadn't said, and how she had obviously hurt Rupert. For Rupert, the sweetest, kindest, most gentle person she had ever

met, to say something like that to her – she must have cut him deeply.

How could you hurt someone you love so much? She asked herself. And then she stopped- how could you hurt someone you love... *Love? Well, of course I love him, he's like my brother-*

Old habits die hard; she couldn't believe she was still trying to use that line on herself after what had just transpired. *I don't love Rupert like anything: I just love him.*

I love him.

The shock of him leaving seemed to have sent a current through her brain that fused all the pieces together, pieces that had been meticulously hidden under layers of friendship for years. She could see everything so clearly now: She loved him on every level of her being. She loved him like she could never love anyone else.

Emma realized she really didn't care about all the reasons she had given Rupert for them not to be together. She could deal with the media barrage. She could deal with the inquisition from family and friends. She could deal with Johnny; what she had said to Rupert about their relationship was true; it had been a fun distraction, but that's really all it was. She didn't have any deep feelings for him.

After being with Rupert it was clear how shallow all of her other relationships had been.

She could deal with it all as long as he was by her side. Without Rupert, she would have to deal with the biggest mistake she would ever make. And that was beyond the bounds of possibility.

She pushed the tap further to the left again but the water remained consistently cold. *What is wrong with this fucking thing?* She leaned her face against the glass. Her sobs were convulsing her whole body now. A cold ache spread over her. Her arms and legs felt stiff.

She was frozen.

Panic began to pool in her stomach. Emma felt imprisoned by the glass walls. She had to escape, she had to find Rupert, she had to heal the wounds she had inflicted on him. Emma pulled her face away from the frigid glass of the shower wall and straightened her shoulders. She began to reach for the handle with icy fingers when she heard Rupert's voice.

“Emma..?”

And there he was, in the bathroom doorway. His features were distorted by the water running down the glass. Was she seeing things? She wiped the droplets of water off the glass door for a clear view. Rupert was there. He looked slightly sheepish with his hand stuffed into his trouser pockets. But then he walked determinedly up to the shower stall and Emma’s heart skipped so high it landed in her throat.

He opened the door, “Emma,” he sighed. She stood, water pouring down her naked body, in disbelief. She stared at him through teary eyes as he kicked off his shoes. His blazer fell to the floor as he stepped inside the shower stall. Suddenly they were inches apart.

“Emma, I-“ he started but she cut him off.

“Rupert, I’m so sorry,” she choked out over the rush of the shower.

“No, Emma, *I’m* sorry. I just...” The stream of water poured over Rupert, slowly soaking his hair and clothes. His t-shirt began to cling to him, accenting his torso beneath it.

“Please Rupert, don’t apologize. I was horrible to you,” Emma said as she looked up into his eyes, two bottomless pools she wanted to drown in. “I know you may not forgive me, but please know...” she trailed off, momentarily losing her courage. She took a breath, “I *do* love you. I do; no ‘buts’.” She grinned sheepishly. A sad smile trickled across Rupert’s face as he breathed deeply. He opened his mouth to speak but Emma interrupted him again.

“I’m sorry I didn’t realize it sooner. I’m sorry I put you through this...” Truth poured out of her in tears that cut paths down her cheeks. Emma gulped in a breath and added, so there could be no mistake,

“I... I am *so* in love with you.” And as the words left her mouth it was as if Emma was breaking out of a thick shell she had been encased in for years.

“Emma,” Rupert began. She held her breath. She desperately wanted him to return her words, to wrap her naked body in them. “I hate the way I acted before. I am so sorry. It’s just...” And then he let it all out, and she let his words flow over her like lava:

“I have been in love with you for so long. You have no idea...” he said. “Utterly... desperately... in love with you.”

The last words barely escaped his mouth before Emma’s lips were on his, her arms encircling his neck, pulling him into her. As she kissed him she felt the warmth of his body heat the water coursing over them. It began to loosen her stiff limbs and lubricate her joints.

Her fingers threaded through Rupert’s wet hair and over his t-shirt that was now soaked completely.

Rupert’s tongue sought hers as Emma sank deeper into the kiss; she let it squelch the pain they had inflicted on each other.

She was a glacier melting into his sea.

The water’s temperature continued to rise and its stream began to burn off the layers of denial that had calcified on her skin over the years. The truth was surfacing; new skin with super-sensitized nerve endings. Everything intensified; Rupert’s fingers were ten brushes painting her body with bliss as they swept down her arms and torso to grip her waist.

“I love you, Emma.” The words were like sunshine on his face; they lit him up and Emma basked in the reflected glow. “I’ve wanted to say that for so long.”

“God Rupert, I was so stupid. I tried so hard to deny what I was feeling for you.” She pulled his face to hers and kissed him, taking in the water that trickled over his face, trying to drink in every ounce of him. “But I don’t want to do it anymore... I can’t do it anymore... I just want to be with you.” The honesty of the words opened the damper and the ember inside her chest began to smolder.

Emma tugged at the hem of his shirt, desperate to feel Rupert’s skin against hers. They broke apart and he lifted the soaked shirt over his head. It landed with a splat on the shower floor. Emma’s hands were hungry and wasted no time reacquainting themselves with Rupert’s body. The water greased her fingers, allowing them to glide over his smooth pectorals and down his stomach as she licked beads of water off his collar bone.

Emma’s hands made haste with Rupert’s trouser button and fly. As soon as they were open she pushed his trousers and pants sloppily from his waist. As he stepped out of them Rupert backed

Emma against the cool wall behind her. He unwrapped her arms from his waist and pressed them into the tiles above her head. Rupert reclaimed her lips and kissed Emma with raging desire, liquefying her bones: she was grateful for the support the tiles gave her. Then Rupert trailed his fingers down the underside of her arms, making her shiver. His large hands enclosed over her breasts and she let out a loud moan as he toyed with her nipples.

Emma was burning up; the effects of him were coursing through her bloodstream, heating her from the inside out. She gazed at Rupert, watching as droplets of water clung to his blond lashes. He smiled down at her, his lips shimmering with water, and suddenly she was dying of thirst.

“Say it again,” he said to her. Emma smiled as a blush scorched her cheeks.

“I love you, Rupert.” She tasted the sweet words and her smile spread wider.

“I’ve wanted to hear that for so long...” he breathed. She was melting like a sundae in July and desperate for Rupert to consume her.

The heat intensified. She brought her hands to his face and cupped his cheeks. She blinked through her tears and stared at him.

“I love you. I love you,” she repeated for him. “I don’t think I could ever love anyone else the way I love you,” she added and then pressed her lips against his once more, sealing in the words. Steam began to swirl around them as the kiss radiated heat. The intensity threatened to shatter the glass walls around them.

Emma began to simmer.

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Rupert pulled away slightly. He drank her in with his eyes; pearls of water dotted her face, magnifying her freckles. He brought his hand to her face and softly brushed away some of the wetness with the pad of his thumb. He opened his mouth to speak, but found his heart had momentarily repositioned itself in his throat. He delicately repositioned himself behind her and began to kiss the milky skin on her shoulder. His lips traveled up her neck and enveloped her ear lobe. Emma moaned and reached over her head and put her arm around Rupert’s neck. And then the words slipped out, like the water trickling down her ear:

“I wouldn’t know how to live my life without you. And I don’t ever want to learn,” he whispered.

Emma leaned back into him and Rupert’s hand searched for the wall to anchor himself. His fingers grasped a small ledge and he picked up a small bar of soap that sat on it; it was smooth and slippery in his hand. He brought it against Emma’s stomach. As he smoothed the bar over her skin it left a trail of suds that glistened. He transferred the bar to his other hand and worked up a generous lather. When both hands were covered in bubbles he replaced the soap and brought his hands back to Emma’s body.

Rupert stood with his back to the shower stream, sheltering Emma from the cascade of water as he painted her body with streaks of lather, letting the bubbles slowly disperse over her skin. His hands were like silk as they slid up and down Emma’s frame. He massaged her breasts and watched tiny bubbles form and pop over her hard nipples. Then he purposefully led his hands down to her core. She shuddered and moaned in his arms as he delicately slid his fingers up and down between her legs. He felt her nails dig into the back of his thigh as he teased her with delicate strokes.

Steam rose up and encircled them. He could see the vapor being forced away from Emma’s face as she panted heavily. He watched beads of sweat form on her upper lip and then vanish as her tongue darted from her mouth to lick them away. Rupert felt her body begin to tremble against his. Knowing that he could elicit such wanton passion from Emma gave him a high no drug could ever rival. He could feel himself floating away. But he was pulled back down to earth as Emma tightened her grasp on his body and went completely rigid. She stopped breathing, her eyes clamped shut and her mouth froze in a silent scream. And all of a sudden she relaxed, letting all the air out of her body in one breath, and condensed into Rupert. He held her steady, running his hands over her body and tightening them into a slippery hug. He kissed the side of her face.

The steam created a haze around them; he could barely see as Emma quickly regained her balance and turned to face him. She snaked her arms around his waist and slid her hands up Rupert’s back as she moved into him. She tilted her head up and gave him a kiss that turned the world on its axis. If he wasn’t careful he was going to slip right off the edge into oblivion.

And then Emma’s hands were gliding over his length like sweet syrup. She had taken the soap from the ledge and its lubrication was intensifying her touch as her small hands encircled him. He closed his eyes and focused on the feeling of her hands gliding back and forth while her lips trailed hot kisses across his neck and chest. He succumbed to the ebb and flow until the pleasure was so intense it was almost agony. He let out a low moan and braced himself against the shower wall with both hands, he could barely stand. Rupert closed his eyes and fought desperately against the blissful tide in order to regain some composure. He choked out her name,

“Emma... wait.” He forced himself to pull her hands away. She was holding a match far too close to an extremely short fuse.

Rupert took her hands and placed them over his shoulders. Then he wrapped his arms around her and lifted her off her feet. She eagerly entwined her legs around his waist as he braced her against the wall. A deluge of ecstasy almost drowned him as they fused together.

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And suddenly she was whole again.

Each thrust filled Emma up until she was spilling over onto herself. The water pounded down on their skin, seeping into the small spaces that opened and then vanished as their bodies collided.

In contrast to the previous times they had come together, when her mind had been at odds with her body, and she had to endure a constant battle while being consumed by the passion they created, now her thoughts and actions fused; compounding and intensifying everything. Pure love rushed through her veins so powerfully she was going to erupt.

Rupert pressed his silhouette into her, anchoring her to the wall, giving his thrusts more leverage. Waves of pleasure emanating in her core traveled up her spine, igniting each vertebrae until her whole body was dripping fire. Her fingers snaked through his hair and raked his back as she cried out, again and again.

Lips, hands, skin; she could not tell where she ended and Rupert began. They were wax melting into each other under the constant stream of hot water.

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Rupert gripped Emma as his hips pulsed, plunging deeper into her inferno. Every muscle in his body was contracting, spasming with pure ecstasy.

The water that rolled over his back was a delicate trickle compared to the monsoon raging inside him. He was driving into Emma with such intensity that he thought they might break through the wall into the next suite. But still Emma was crying for more. He gripped her more tightly, braced his legs more firmly and impaled her so deeply he forced a stream of curse words from her mouth that were immediately met by choice words of his own.

It was so hot and wet that Rupert felt faint. He barely had any strength left in his legs now that the storm had broken. He was still enveloped in Emma, clinging to her for strength as he supported her against the wall. But his legs were slowly turning to jelly and he was in danger of collapsing.

The steam was so thick around them that Rupert could barely see. His lips searched for Emma's blindly in the crystallized air. They connected and her breath flowed through him, giving him the strength he needed to lift her from against the wall.

They spilled out of the shower, the cool air immediately condensing on their already soaked bodies. Rupert stumbled as he carried Emma out of the bathroom and they splashed onto the bed, soaking the sheets.

He lay on top of her and they kissed; their well of passion was bottomless. Rupert was still entwined in Emma's legs and he remained a willing prisoner.

Finally, and only because his lungs were pleading for oxygen so fervently his chest burned, he pulled away from her. His wet hair framed his face and beads of water dripped off the strands and anointed Emma's forehead and cheeks.

They smiled at each other as they both worked desperately to catch their breath. Suddenly aware that he may be crushing Emma under his weight, he propped himself up on his elbows. He was about to pull away further when Emma's legs tightened around him.

"No," she whispered, "don't go yet..."

Still panting, Rupert brought his lips to hers in the softest of kisses.

"I'll never leave you, Emma," he breathed and he let the gravity of the words weigh her down. "Ever."

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Rupert and Emma thoroughly soaked the sheets as they made love again. This time it was slow, as if both knew they now had all the time in the world to savor each other. The heat from their coupling had burned off any lingering moisture on their silhouettes and they were grateful for the cool, damp sheets to bring down the fever in their bodies.

They were lying entwined in each other, Rupert trailing his fingers up and down Emma's frame, when there was a knock on the door.

"Housekeeping!" said a voice from the hallway. Emma and Rupert stared at each other, four eyes wide with surprise. And then they broke into laughter at the same time. They searched each other's faces for what to do next. After a long pause, filled with giggles and smirks, it was Rupert who spoke. He raised his voice but did not break eye contact with Emma as he said,

"Can you come back later?"

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~ End ~
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Chapter End Notes

I would like to thank everyone who has followed this story. Your reviews and comments from fanfiction.net have meant the world to me. I am especially happy that many of you have followed the story to its new home here at AO3. Your dedication to this fic has been awe-inspiring.

When the story was removed from fanfiction.net with only one chapter to go and no way of contacting people who had placed it on alert I was crushed. But then messages via Tumblr, Twitter and FanFiction.net came flooding in, saying how much they love the story, encouraging me to find a new place to post it and to keep writing. They lifted my spirits and pushed me to find a new place to write and post Grinston fan fiction.

I will continue to write and post both here and on FanFiction.net so please follow me if you have enjoyed this story (my user name on ff.net is Hedwigshero).

You can also follow me on Tumblr ([tumblr.com/blog/slytherin-style](https://www.tumblr.com/blog/slytherin-style)) and Twitter (twitter.com/#!/TaraBr0wn) for updates and writing news. Next month I will be attending Ascendio, the Harry Potter con in Orlando, and will be tweeting like crazy throughout the con; please follow me if you would like to hear all about it.

Lastly I would like to thank my wonderful friend JesWithOneEss (Jesrod82 on ff.net) for Beta'ing this story for me. Without her help and support it never would have gotten published, not to mention resurrected here at AO3. This story is dedicated to you, Jes!

Steam is my first work of fan fiction and the experience has been amazing. I look forward to writing more!

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