

“Who says I’m going to kiss you?” Draco drawled, screwing up his nose.

“If you don’t, I’m sure someone around here will,” Harry retorted, making a show of surveying his options. Draco rolled his eyes, hand slipping into the back pocket of Harry’s jeans.

“No they wouldn’t. They know better than to throw their lot in with you,” he said, lips brushing Harry’s jaw. “I’m the only one foolish enough for that.”

“Everyone ready?” Sirius called suddenly, and the room went hushed. The dog animagus waved his wand, and suddenly a timer floated overhead, glowing gold numbers ticking down closer to midnight. Harry’s grip on Draco tightened.

“Ten! Nine! Eight!” They all shouted along with the countdown, which exploded into sparkles when it hit zero — Harry turned, sealing his mouth over Draco’s, champagne bubbles still on their tongues. Overhead, fireworks whizzed and crackled and banged, but half the audience weren’t even paying attention, too engrossed in each other. Harry let the kiss go on as long as he dared while still surrounded by his friends and family, then pulled back, green eyes meeting lust-hazed grey. “I love you,” he whispered, watching Draco smile in response. His first words of a brand new year.

“I love you,” came the reply, Draco’s arm holding him close. They tilted their heads up to watch the rest of the fireworks, faces lighting up in blues and greens and reds with every flash of colour in the sky.

When the show ended, they all cheered, and the twins stepped forward with overdramatic bows. “Here’s to 1997!” they cried, raising their glasses in unison. Everyone else copied the motion, toasting to a brand new year.

“And here’s to having the people we love here to share it with us,” Sirius added in a toast of his own, sending a fond smile Charlie’s way. They were all more than happy to toast to that.

Harry sipped his champagne, then raised his glass a third time, looking around his gathered friends. “Here’s to the end of the war,” he said, everyone falling silent. “It’s going to happen this year. One way or another, things will be over by this time next year. That’s a promise.”

It was a sea of solemn faces that raised their glasses in return. “To the end of the war,” they echoed, and they drank.

“Bold promise,” Draco murmured, once they were all headed back inside. “Sure you can keep it?”

“Absolutely,” Harry said confidently, grinning.

He turned seventeen in the summer, after all.

Voldemort wouldn’t last much longer than that.

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