

Contractual Obligations

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Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Rape/Non-Con
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationships:	Hermione Granger/Draco Malfoy , Pansy Parkinson/Ron Weasley , Harry Potter/Ginny Weasley , Luna Lovegood/Blaise Zabini , Astoria Greengrass/Theodore Nott
Additional Tags:	POV Hermione Granger , POV Draco Malfoy , Ministry of Magic Employee Hermione Granger , Ministry of Magic Employee Draco Malfoy , marriage law , Forced Proximity , Forced Relationship , Medium-Fast Burn (sexual) , Slow(er) Burn (emotional) , Light Dom/sub , they're both switches , But Draco is big dom energy , Muggle Technology , draco pining , Oblivious Hermione , Resolved Sexual Tension , Explicit Sexual Content , HEA , Denial of Feelings , Possessive Draco Malfoy , Edging , Praise Kink , Strippers & Strip Clubs , Hermione gets a lap dance not from Draco , Magic Induced Lust , Dubcon due to magic-induced lust , Non con due to magic induced lust , Drunken sex , Minor Degradation , BDSM , Dirty Talk , Spanking , Sexting , the earlier tag say "light dom sub" but maybe it's just regular dom/sub , Panic Attack , Draco's a lil depressy sometimes , Hermione slaps Draco in both a sexy and non-sexy way , only somewhat canon compliant , Hermione has some abandonment issues , Draco is angsty and has self worth issues (rare but it does show up) , Drinking (sometimes excessively) , Peer Pressure , boudoir photos , Hermione has some self confidence issues , Squirting , Sex Toys , Hermione is not emotionally intelligent , Hermione ooc at times , reference to abortion (implied - does not happen) , reference to miscarriage - does not happen , Mr Granger-Malfoy , minor bullying of Draco - but i think he deserves it
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Contractual Obligations

by [Hufflepuffsanonymous](#)

Summary

The Ministry of Magic institutes a marriage law to address the dearth of magical pregnancies after the War. What happens when Hermione finds herself matched to one Draco Malfoy, their compatibility ratings, among the highest in the program? Will Hermione be able to overturn the law, or will she find herself in over her head with her new husband?

Notes

Welcome to another fic! I shocked myself and also finished this story. It has been sitting in my fanfiction folder on my computer since 2017 or 2018 and now it's finally done!

Anyway, this is a classic marriage law fic. It definitely lives up to its explicit rating. There are only like 6.5 chapters out of 19 that don't have sexual content. So, mature audiences only. That being said, it is (for Hermione), a pretty slow emotional burn--she is in capital D-Denial. It will get to the point where you say to yourself--how can she be so stupid? So buckle in for that.

While this is a marriage law fic, with the flimsy premise of marriage = babies = more magical people, there will be no focus on actual pregnancy or babies. The fic is the prelude to anyone getting pregnant. Eventually some children show up (in like the absolute final chapter -- along with Daddy Draco, so something to look forward to). There are a lot of side pairings, but they do not feature heavily in the story apart from during social settings/events. (perhaps a future spin off. Who knows?)

The story takes place in 2015. I shifted the OG timeline so that year 1 of Hogwarts was in 2001. Hermione is 25, and Draco is 24 at the start of the story. The story is mainly Hermione POV, with Draco's POV sprinkled in.

****Please mind the tags. They should be fully accurate now (as of Mar. 10, 2024). But I will mention a few quick things here in more detail: (Also spoilers are in this list of warnings)**

- In the first half of the story there is a lot of alcohol and sex, so consent is fuzzy.
- At one point, there is a magical compulsion pushing them to have sex. I view it as dub-con since they both want the other sexually. Hermione is torn up over it though. You may view it as non-con. Either way, you've been warned.
- Hermione slaps Draco in anger/upset and does not do the best job of supporting him through a crisis. There is some recovery on her part, but she could have done a lot better.
- In the very end abortion is implied--it does not happen, but there is a reference to it.

- I've done my best to indicate which chapters potential triggers arise in and how to skip them, but I'm far from perfect, so again, mind the tags.

Thanks for joining me on another adventure and happy reading!

- Your friendly anonymous hufflepuff

The News

Monday, February 22, 2015

When the news of the marriage law first hit the public, Hermione was working quietly in her office in the back corner of the Ministry. Her office was larger than Arthur Weasley's, which felt like an insult to the man who had dedicated his life to studying Muggles and improving their relations, but it was a bonus for Hermione who liked to pace as she thought things through.

That morning she was working through her proposal for magical mobiles. She had only recently gotten the Ministry to agree to install landlines throughout the building and in other important places; Hogwarts, St. Mungo's, Gringotts, etc. They had been so opposed to the useful technology, there was only one phone for all of St. Mungo's and one for all of Hogwarts. Gringotts, on the other hand, recognised the validity of the technology given their international dealings. Owl post was so long and unreliable, not to mention Floo calls hurt the knees and neck and were awfully intrusive. This way, you could decide whether or not to answer a phone call, instead of someone literally popping their head into your office. Ron had commented that it would mean less people caught shagging in offices, to which Hermione had blushed deeply and Harry had guffawed.

The magical world was slow to accept the convenience of the Muggle technology, but after a bit of publicity with the Chosen One—Harry had hated that—and Hermione giving out phones to every major business, it was catching on. It had been six months since this success, and all the offices in the Ministry had landlines as well as 20% of magical homes. It was bold to think that mobiles could be introduced to the magical world so quickly, but given their utility and practical aid for Aurors, she thought that it would make sense. She was, however, having trouble phrasing her proposal to the Auror division. Hermione was trying to talk up the many different features available to Aurors through using mobiles and was finding it hard to describe muggle technology to those who barely knew how lights turned on.

Harry had told her not to worry about it; since he was Junior Head, they were going to accept her proposal. But Hermione never liked to use her connections that way. In fact, she hated using her connections, but insisted that her success be based on her hard work. It felt cheap when something was just handed to you since you saved the entire wizarding world.

So, there she was, pacing, speaking aloud to herself as she tried out different words when her mobile rang. She hadn't modified the classic shrill ringtone as other people had. The caller ID read "Harry Potter". Hermione picked up the phone without hesitation, hoping to get the call over with so that she could return to her work.

"Hey, Harry," she said into her mobile.

He was silent for a moment. "You haven't heard yet, then? It's a complete zoo up here, but I guess down in the Muggle Liaison there are less people to go shouting up and down the halls..."

Hermione, confused and impatient, demanded, "Out with it, I have work to do."

"You might want to sit down."

Hermione rolled her eyes and lied, "I already am."

Harry took a deep breath. "They've just announced that they're putting in place a marriage law..."

A rushing sound filling her ears. "What?" Hermione asked.

"Everyone between the ages of 20 and 33 have to get married and have at least one child within two years..." Harry paused, waiting for her to say something. "Hermione?"

But she didn't respond because she had dropped the phone on the ground with a dull thud. Harry shouted her name a few times and when she didn't respond, he found her in person a few minutes later, pacing.

Hermione barely acknowledged him as he walked into her office.

"Hermione?" Harry asked.

"Maybe we should have told her in person," Ron commented from behind Harry.

"I've just got off the phone with Kingsley," Hermione spoke up. She stopped pacing and glanced at them before starting up again. "This is absolute rubbish. There's no way that they can force us to do this."

Harry didn't look very upset, but he wouldn't be, considering that he and Ginny had tied the knot a few months earlier. Ron should have looked more upset than he did.

"How are you both so calm about this? We're being forced to wed and have children, by our government! That's insanity! How could they ever think that we would accept this? I've already filed for this law to be repealed, but the Wizengamot laughed me off the phone. Didn't stop me from sending in the document though..."

"Listen, Hermione. I know that we're not together anymore," Ron said, his ears tinting red, "But, they've given us one week to be married before they will match us with someone. And...we could...I mean we're still friends, right? And, it wouldn't be that awful if it were you..."

Hermione stopped her pacing and turned on him. "'Wouldn't be that awful' is not the way I pictured being proposed to, let alone a life that I would ever sign onto," she snapped. Ron flinched. "Besides, the one week is only for couples that have been together for a minimum of six months and can prove that they'll be likely to have magical children. I already asked." She cast a glance at Ron.

Ron now looked an acceptable level of panicked. "What?" he squeaked.

"You could lie," Harry offered. He had taken a seat in one of her uncomfortable chairs.

Hermione shrugged. “Kingsley might let us because of our contributions to the magical world, but everyone will know that it’s a lie, and if we’re given special treatment, everyone will want it.”

“It’s not that much of a lie. We were together for a year and a half,” Ron reminded her. “I’m sure that could skirt us around this.”

Hermione frowned and twirled one of her curls. “That could give us a chance...”

“I can’t believe this,” Harry said hollowly.

Hermione sighed. “No one is having children. There is a logical basis for this law, but could they not have come up with a better execution? Incentives for those who have many children, subsidies...” she huffed.

“They already have those,” Harry responded. “After Gin and I got married, they sent a package with information on how we would be rewarded for having children...”

“Why didn’t I know that?” Ron asked, looking offended that he didn’t know every detail of Harry’s life.

Harry blushed and pushed his glasses up. “Didn’t think you’d want to hear about our sex life.”

Ron grimaced and nodded. Hermione rolled her eyes—Ron would have to get over it one day; they were married for Morgana’s sake.

“I’m going to call Kingsley and ask if we can get married,” she proclaimed, bringing them all back on topic. “At least until we can get this human-rights denying law thrown out.”

Ron grinned. “See, I knew she’d figure it out.”

Friday, February 26

Kingsley gave them permission to undergo the compatibility testing. Were Ron and Hermione to pass, they would be allowed to marry. They were still technically being given special treatment, since they were no longer together, but in light of their past relationship, it was a grey area.

The trio sat outside of the Health Office waiting impatiently. There was a long line of other couples waiting to be tested as well. Some looked angry, though most seemed incredibly nervous. For some people it was clear that they were not excited with the prospect of marrying their partner, but for others, they seemed overjoyed.

There were several nurses working and several examinations running at once. Harry, Hermione, and Ron had been waiting in line for almost an hour.

Hermione’s eyes landed on two men gripping each other’s hands and looking terrified.

Ron followed her gaze. “What happens to gay couples?” Ron pondered quietly.

“Apparently, they have to donate their sperm,” she said.

Ron looked annoyed. “I’d do that in a heartbeat. Wouldn’t have to get married—no offence, Hermione.”

She waved him off—neither of them wanted this marriage. “They have to donate their sperm and adopt an orphan or have a child through a surrogate. Female couples have to have a sperm donor, although apparently there’s this new experimental magic where you can get the DNA from both women and make a child,” Hermione sounded fascinated, Ron looked confused (not understanding what DNA was) and Harry seemed vaguely intrigued.

“So, what does the compatibility test include?” Harry asked as they watched the nervous gay couple shuffle into the testing room.

Hermione launched into an explanation, “Since we’re already in a ‘relationship’ ours is just to see what the odds of a healthy and magical child are. But everyone who is single has to fill out personality and values questionnaires and tests in order to create this algorithm to see which potential partner would be the best for them. But I overheard Martha say that the most important factor to the Ministry is magical compatibility.”

Hermione was hiding her nervousness. She had been fighting this law everyday, placing phone calls, Floo calls, and actually going to several members of the Wizengamot. She had basically lived in Kingsley’s office, much to his annoyance, but she had no luck. No one was willing to consider changing the law at all, not even adding provisions or exemptions. They insisted that it would only remain in place for five years, after which time the incentives to have children would remain, but they would not be forced. Hermione hadn’t fully given up her fight, but she realised that she would have to take on a different tactic.

So, for the moment she was left hoping beyond hope that her best friend could marry her so that they could not get pregnant and she could keep working on overturning the ridiculous law. If the tests came back negative, there was no other chance for her. It had almost been a full week since the announcement of the law, meaning that she would shortly be paired up with someone not of her choosing. Someone who she could despise. Someone who she was being forced to have sex with.

When Hermione pointed out the minor problem of mandating sexual assault, the Wizengamot had responded that she could undergo an operation and would never have to touch her spouse if need be. This was not the response that Hermione was looking for, as she did not want to be a broodmare. They didn’t respond well to her calling them all rapists and she assumed that her banishment from the Wizengamot chambers may have been justified given the other choice words that she had shouted their way.

“Granger and Weasley?” the nurse called out.

Harry nodded at them. “I’ll be here.”

Hermione accepted Ron's hand as they crossed through the oak door for exam room 3, waiting to face the results that would change the rest of their lives.

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"So," the short balding nurse said. He read over their files. "You get special treatment, I see."

Ron glared at him, but Hermione answered: "Yes, saving the entire magical world has to come with *some* perks."

That shut him up.

He handed them both a pair of scissors. "I need a strand of your hair," he stated.

Hermione accidentally cut off a sizeable chunk of her curls, not much caring, whereas Ron spent a solid minute trying to locate one precious hair on his head that he was willing to part with. They dropped their hairs into a sluggishly bubbling cauldron.

"It takes about five minutes," the nurse droned. He passed them each a clipboard and a self-inking quill. "Fill these out while we wait, in case it comes back negative. We'll save each other some time." He took one look at Hermione opening her mouth to protest and cut her off. "Better safe than sorry. Besides, I don't want to be blamed for wasting the war heroine's time," he huffed and left the room.

"Someone's in a bad mood," Ron grumbled, but diligently began ticking off boxes on the personality test.

Hermione likewise answered the run of the mill questions; age, physical interests, emotional interests, career goals, favourite colour, sexual interests—she tilted away from Ron for those questions. She wasn't planning on answering truthfully, but the parchment was clearly charmed against lying and found herself ticking off some boxes that surprised her. Hermione wasn't looking forward to the judgement from the nurse and hoped he was under a confidentiality spell.

There were also a series of strange scenario questions asking how she would deal with a break in, or if she would ever join an extreme-sport competition. Hermione did not understand how these questions would determine her compatibility with anyone, but she continued working away on her clipboard.

Exactly five minutes later, the nurse returned and was casting a spell over the cauldron. A bright green spark shot into the air. Ron turned to Hermione and embraced her. They were both grinning and laughing in relief.

"Thank Merlin!" Ron exclaimed, his clipboard falling to the wayside.

"Oh, no," the nurse said, "Green is negative."

Hermione felt her stomach dropping out from underneath her. The walls closed in as her breath sped up.

“Negative?” she asked hollowly.

The nurse looked far too pleased. “Yes. Only shimmering gold means that you are most likely to produce a magical heir. Any other colour makes you a negative.” He shrugged as if it didn’t impact him (which it didn’t because he was already married). “So, I’ll just cast a few charms to see where your core values lie.”

“But—but...” Ron was babbling as the nurse picked up his discarded clipboard and started waving his wand around. The man took notes on the colours that appeared in the air for Ron: pink, yellow, magenta, orange, green...this went on for nearly five minutes straight.

“Okay,” the nurse said, “Finish your questionnaire.” He handed Ron back his clipboard and moved on to Hermione.

The colours that appeared in the air made no sense to Hermione, and in fact, almost every colour of the rainbow had presented itself by the time the nurse was done. He handed Hermione her clipboard and he left again.

Hermione numbly finished filling it out, her pen scratching against the page loudly in the silence of the exam room.

Hermione finished before Ron, which was unsurprising. She fiddled with her pen and glanced around the sterile room, beyond curious about what tests they were using to determine compatibility. As Ron put down his pen, the nurse walked back into the room. He took their clipboards.

“Your partners will be mailed to you by Monday morning. Have a good day,” the man said, dismissing them.

Hermione and Ron stood stiffly, Ron holding the door open for her. She followed him without really seeing where she was going. In the lobby, Harry took in their expressions and frowned deeply.

“You’re not compatible.”

They shook their heads. Harry pulled them into a tight hug muttering that they would figure this all out. Hermione knew what he meant when he said that—*she* would figure this all out. She was, after all, the one who always figured everything out.

But there was nothing to do. She had failed. Hermione had exhausted all the avenues that she could. She had barely slept in a week. She had given her all to the fight, only to end up with nothing. She would be married to some tosser in a month’s time. Knocked up in a year.

Harry and Ron invited her out for a drink with Ginny to drown their sorrows, but Hermione declined. Instead, she slouched home and curled up with Crookshanks, crying into the wee hours of the morning.

Good Choices

Chapter Notes

Turns out only the first chapter is short, the rest are pretty long from here on out. And so begins the smut.
Happy reading.

Saturday, February 27

“C’mon, Hermione,” Ron was coaxing her over the phone, “It’s our last chance to go out and enjoy ourselves before this stupid law ruins our lives. A bunch of the DA will be there. It’ll be a fun night. Besides, it’s been ages since we’ve seen them.”

Hermione responded groggily—she had just woken from her second nap that day (no sleep will do that to you)—“I just woke up.”

“We’re not leaving for another hour. Have some dinner and meet us there. Trust me when I say you’ll regret not going in a month from now when you’re married to some asshole.”

“Gee, Ron, you’re real great at cheering a girl up, you know that?”

She could almost hear him shrug. “Just be there in an hour or we’re coming to get you,” he warned before hanging up his receiver.

Training Ron to not shout into his mobile had been an arduous process.

Hermione heaved herself off of her sofa and stumbled into the shower. She knew that Ron wasn’t lying about hauling her off her couch; he had done it before. So, she got ready, despite having no desire to go out and see anyone ever again. She had been wallowing for the past 24 hours.

To help her, she decided to start drinking. That was always a good choice.

As Hermione sipped from the bottle of white wine that had been in her fridge, she flicked through her closet. She landed on a dress Ginny had insisted she purchase last year. Hermione had never worn it. It was very tight and revealed far more of her chest than Hermione would normally be comfortable with.

But she was feeling bolstered by the wine, so she pulled the dress from her closet and placed it on her bed. She took a swig of her wine and stared at the dress.

Hermione turned and rifled through her underwear drawer. She picked up her regular run of the mill Black full-bottomed knickers and stared at them blankly.

Hermione reflected aloud, “This is my last night of freedom.” She threw the knickers back into the drawer and instead went to the ‘sexy’ side of the drawer and pulled out a lacy thong and its matching push up bra. Hermione bit her lip.

She took another swig of her wine.

“Last night of freedom,” she repeated, then pulled the sexy undergarments on.

Her heart raced as she dared herself to dream of ending her most recent dry spell with the help of a random man at the pub. After all, she deserved it. She was going to be forced to shack up with some loser for the rest of her life. This was her one chance. And she was going to make the most of it.

Hermione shimmied into her tight black dress with difficulty. She even put on some mascara and eye liner—which was incredibly hard for her to do sober, so doing it tipsy was even worse. By the time she was hopping into her heels and adjusting her push up bra, it was clear that she had had too much to drink. Hermione haphazardly pulled her beaded bag over her shoulder. It then occurred to her that she had not eaten since her meagre breakfast of one slice of toast. Instead of eating, she made the excellent choice of finishing off her bottle of wine, grabbing some Floo powder, and swirling off to the *The Leaky*.

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Hermione supposed that Ron had been right. She was greatly enjoying herself, laughing along with her friends, and even some strangers. The energy in the pub was lively, despite everyone’s impending doom.

Hermione was sipping on water and eating chips by midnight, very much needing a break from alcohol. She was in deep discussion with Neville about the curative properties of the dandelion root. However, given her drunken state she was easily distracted.

She felt someone looking at her, so she raised her gaze.

At some point, without most of them noticing, a conglomerate of former Slytherins had made their way into the *Three Broomsticks*. The man staring at her was none other than Draco Malfoy. She stared back at him boldly. Hermione expected one of them to break their gaze, but neither backed down. It was only when Neville cleared his throat that the spell was broken, and she looked away.

“Is he bothering you?” Neville asked intently.

Hermione shook her head in the negative. “I’m just surprised to see him here is all.”

Neville still looked like he was going to make his way over there and show them why he was sorted into Gryffindor.

“Calm down, Neville,” Hermione smiled and downed her water. The alcohol she had consumed up to that point was doing its job in making her forget how much her life was about to suck.

Neville returned to his story about harvesting dandelion root under the summer sun.

Dean came to join Neville and Hermione and the conversation shifted to Quidditch. Hermione, noticing her empty water and having no interest in Quidditch, excused herself from the table with a stumble. Continuing the series of Good Choices she had made that evening, she decided to start drinking again.

Hermione made her way to the bar to get another drink from Hannah.

As she sat on a stool waiting for Hannah's attention, she realised that she had sat beside the Slytherins. Astoria was seated two barstools over and the others were circled around her having a quiet conversation. Malfoy was notably no longer present. They cast a few glances her way, but did not engage with her.

Hermione turned her body to face the group and decided to talk to them—another Good Choice—, her inebriated brain forgetting that they were not friends.

“Hi!” Hermione declared joyfully from the stool that Blaise was standing beside. “What brings you to the *The Leaky Cauldron*?” No one responded, so she continued, “Here to celebrate your last days of freedom, I’m assuming. Just like us,” she gestured drunkenly to her group of friends who were cheering on Ron who was chugging a pint. “Bloody nonsense!”

“Granger, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you drunk,” Blaise declared in a smooth voice, opening up their circle so that she could see everyone’s faces.

Hermione had always liked Blaise; he spoke his mind, was wildly attractive, and very funny. In fact, her attraction probably had to do with the fact that he was very similar to Ron, her first and only love. Not that she still loved Ron, just that she had loved no one else since. Blaise was far more attractive than Ron, though.

“Well, get used to it, Blaise,” she hiccupped, “because I plan on living a long time and if they match me up with some asshole...” she joked, raising her newly acquired butterbeer.

Blaise smiled. “I’ll have what she’s having,” he declared to Hannah.

Hannah smiled at Blaise. “She started with a dragon’s breath if that’s what you want?”

“A round for the five of us,” Pansy declared.

Hermione zeroed in on the woman. Her hair was a level of straight that Hermione could only dream of attaining. Without realizing, Hermione was up, running her hands through Pansy’s hair.

“Wow. Your hair is so straight...and smooth!” she sighed in delight. “You have to tell me how you got it to be so soft!”

Pansy looked alarmed, then annoyed. She pushed Hermione back to her stool brusquely, but before she could tell Hermione off, another voice intervened.

“But how would anyone recognise you without your signature frizz, Granger?” Malfoy asked, a smirk in place. He came to stand directly beside her, making their semi-circle complete.

Hermione, not caring much for what anyone thought of her on a regular basis, merely chuckled. She turned to Malfoy. “My good looks are a dead giveaway.”

Malfoy looked impressed with her comeback. He raised an eyebrow and tilted his head, a smirk in place.

“Well said, Granger,” Blaise commented with a grin.

Hannah dropped off their shots and the Slytherins threw them back, Hermione cheering them on and taking a slug of her butterbeer. Pansy immediately ordered them another round.

“I can’t believe that this is what you started with, Granger,” Blaise continued talking to her, seemingly no longer interested in his friends. “That’s a strong drink.”

Hermione shrugged. “It’s been a long week.”

Hermione teetered on her seat and adjusted her bra strap. Blaise’s eyes followed her motions, landing on her chest. Hermione was flustered. She was not used to having so much cleavage on display and she was especially not used to men staring at her body in interest. Her normal clothes left a lot more to the imagination.

Luckily, Hannah deposited the second round of shots for the Slytherins and Blaise’s attention was no longer glued to Hermione’s body. While the Slytherins consumed their shots, Hermione once again nearly fell off her stool. She placed a steadying hand on the bar.

“Why don’t you sit in a real seat?” Theo asked.

Were she more sober, Hermione would have noted that Theo was not being rude, but was in fact looking out for her. But she was not sober, so, Hermione took it as an insult and was immediately stubborn.

“I’m allowed to sit anywhere I like, same as you, Nott,” she sneered.

Theo raised his hands in defense.

Blaise cut off whatever the man was going to say. “Here, Granger, you can lean on me.” He made to move toward her but stopped upon seeing Malfoy step closer to Hermione.

Hermione glanced up at the blond in confusion. He was staring at Blaise keenly. “I got it,” Malfoy murmured, his left arm coming to rest around Hermione’s exposed shoulders.

She found herself leaning against his body and was now significantly less precariously perched. She glanced at his large fingers, noting his ridiculous signet ring with an ostentatious snake wrapped around the letter M. Heat from Malfoy’s body was slowly seeping into her exposed skin. It was oddly...intoxicating.

Hermione, still feeling stubborn, raised an eyebrow at Theo. “See, I’m fine.” A long silence permeated the air.

Blaise and Theo looked annoyed and Pansy and Astoria were both shocked.

“Anyway,” she continued into the silence pretending her sworn enemy wasn’t casually holding her, “you never answered why you’re here tonight. Did you have to do that horrible test too?” she asked, trying to focus on anything but the heat that was now radiating from her shoulders.

“So, you’re single, then, Granger?” Blaise asked suavely, his annoyance gone in a flash.

Theo rolled his eyes and pulled Astoria away from the group, talking to her under his breath. Pansy took Astoria’s seat.

“I like your shoes,” Hermione said to Pansy, distracted by the woman’s tall shiny heels.

Pansy raised an eyebrow. “Thank you,” she responded evenly.

Malfoy chuckled darkly beside Hermione. She could feel his laugh vibrate through her body. Hermione glanced at his face to see his signature smirk in place while he assessed Pansy.

“You look...nice too,” Pansy returned cordially.

Hermione smiled. “Thank you!” she returned brightly.

“Yes, that’s quite the dress,” Blaise commented, his eyes back on her chest.

Hermione flushed and fidgeted, Malfoy’s arm keeping her steady.

Blaise repeated his question, pulling Hermione’s eyes back to his brown ones. “Are you single, Granger?”

Hermione felt Malfoy’s hand twitch on her shoulder. She glanced at him again, this time meeting his impassive grey eyes. It was at that moment that Ron was suddenly standing between Malfoy and Blaise, glaring at Malfoy.

“Oi! Get your hands off her, ferret!”

Hermione tensed at the sudden shouting and leaned closer to Malfoy, as if he would protect her. It was a very odd instinct.

“Why don’t you mind your own business, Weasel,” Malfoy snapped back, his hand tensing on Hermione’s shoulder.

“Ron, shut up,” Hermione said to her best friend. With slight reflection, she realized she was actually quite drunk—maybe she ought to stop drinking. She normally would not have spoken to Ron like that (in public).

“I’m just looking out for—” Ron tried to say, but Hermione cut him off.

“I’m a single grown woman, I can do what I want,” she snapped back, her stubbornness making her lean even more into Malfoy’s expensive jumper. The man’s chest was quite firm. She wondered if he worked out or played Quidditch still.

“But— isn’t he bothering you?” Ron looked between Hermione and the other Slytherins in confusion.

Pansy, to both Ron and Hermione’s great surprise, placed a hand on Ron’s arm and derailed the conversation entirely. “Weasley, I heard you got a promotion.”

Ron’s face flushed even more. “I did,” he said proudly, immediately distracted from the Malfoy-Hermione situation.

Pansy stood and steered him away, listening intently as he explained his role in the Auror division. She cast a look over her shoulder at Malfoy with an eyebrow raised before returning her attention to Ron.

“Well, that was interesting,” Blaise said with a smirk. He sat across from Hermione decisively. “So, you are single?” Blaise asked yet again.

“And you’re persistent,” Hermione responded with a laugh.

To her surprise, Malfoy laughed too and it once again vibrated down her body and made her flush pleasantly. She placed her butterbeer on the bar and fanned herself slightly. Her reaction to the man touching her made very little logical sense to Hermione. But her drunken mind quickly halted any attempts at logic.

Blaise’s eyes trailed her body. “You’re hot,” he said simply.

Malfoy’s hand tensed again. Hermione looked between Malfoy who was now glaring and Blaise’s look of amusement while she continued to fan herself.

“What?” she responded eloquently.

“I mean you’re rather flushed. Are you warm?”

“Oh—right. Yeah. It’s warm in here.” Even a drunk Hermione knew that she was so warm due to the man touching her skin, and not the heat of the pub.

“We could always move closer to the window,” Blaise suggested, gesturing to an empty two-person table beside a window that was cracked open.

“Oh, sure—” Hermione made to move, but was suddenly held back by Malfoy’s arm. He had shifted behind her, pulling her body flush against his with his arm wrapped around her torso. Hermione looked down at his arm in confusion, even as she felt heat start to build between her legs. She was sure her face was even more flushed now.

She glanced up at Blaise who was laughing with his hands up in surrender. “Message received, Draco,” Blaise said in his deep voice. “Have a good night, Hermione. I’ll go see if I can find any other Gryffindor women who are feeling lonely.”

Blaise stood and left them alone. Hermione tried to understand what had just happened, but was too distracted trying to understand what was currently happening to her body—which seemed to be responding in desire to Malfoy's touch.

Malfoy kept his hand around her waist, for some reason, as he ordered himself four more shots and another butterbeer for Hermione. She stared at Blaise's empty seat, very confused by the turn of the evening. Hannah appeared with their drinks quickly.

"Right," Malfoy declared, and brought his hand back up to her shoulder, the direct skin to skin contact making Hermione's heart race. "Shall we?"

"Huh?"

Malfoy nudged her until she stumbled to her feet and led her to the table Blaise had suggested they sit at. Hermione was immediately much cooler, the winter chill seeping in from the window. Malfoy pulled out her chair and made sure she didn't collapse into it, turned and summoned their drinks, then sat across from her.

Malfoy threw back his first shot. Hermione sipped on her butterbeer.

It was a very odd sensation being seated across from the blond. Especially since moments before he had his hands on her naked flesh.

Malfoy picked up his second shot and pushed the third before her. Hermione should have said no, but instead, something in her dared herself to get even drunker around her former bully and see what would come of it.

"Last night of freedom," she murmured, then swallowed the shot. Definitely a Good Choice. Her throat burned as the alcohol went down. Hermione sipped her butterbeer to help with the after taste.

Malfoy seemed completely unaffected. He toyed with his last shot, his fingers dancing along the glass in a way that had Hermione shifting in her seat. She looked up into his eyes to find his gaze on her.

Without meaning to, Hermione said, "I thought you were dating someone, Malfoy."

Malfoy stared at her. "Keeping tabs on me, Granger?" he asked with a smirk.

She rolled her eyes. "Hardly."

That didn't seem to convince him though. "Should've guessed you have a thing for me, given how flustered you are when I touch you," he said darkly.

Hermione's core clenched and she blushed. "In my defense, I'm drunk."

Malfoy chuckled. "Evidently."

Hermione smiled at him. He really was quite handsome these days. His hair was longer than before, and no longer slicked back. It had a gentle wave to it that was oddly appealing. His

eyes had always been mesmerising, tonight was no different while he stared into her soul. And there was something about that smirk that got her. She hated it. Only she didn't.

He had really grown into his features, his face less pointy and more chiseled than as a teenager. His shoulders were broad should could tell from beneath his jumper that he was quite toned.

"So, tell me, Granger, how are you going to stop this ridiculous law from being put into action? You have less than a day now."

Hermione grumbled. "I've been doing all I bloody well can to get this stupid ass—urgh!"

Malfoy's lip twitched at her anger. "I would have thought that you of all people could solve this little issue..."

"Sorry to disappoint." Hermione tilted her head, hyper focused on whether or not he was single. "So, you're not seeing someone?"

Malfoy's eyes landed on her lips quickly before jumping back to her eyes. "Why do you ask?"

"Just tell me."

"You tell me."

"I already told Blaise," Hermione responded, annoyed and flustered.

"No. You told Weasley."

Hermione's foggy brain searched her memory. "Oh. Well. There you go."

Malfoy's smirk seemed like it would never leave his face. "I am likewise, unattached," he murmured.

Hermione nodded, her eyes glued to his lips. She tore them away and landed back on him caressing his shot glass. She wasn't sure if he was actually being suggestive, or if she was just imagining how his nimble fingers might caress her, but watching him touch his glass felt sinful. He kept circling the rim. Around and around.

She had to look away from that as well, as it was doing nothing to calm down the situation downstairs.

"Were you seeing someone before this and you two failed the test?" Hermione asked eventually.

"No. I was seeing someone, but we both knew it wasn't serious and neither of us were interested in voluntarily marrying the other."

Hermione nodded. She felt vindicated, since she was convinced she had seen him in the gossip column next to some blond.

Malfoy continued, "I would have thought that you and the Weasel would have tied the knot immediately." He pointed over her shoulder at Ron who was currently whispering something in Pansy's ear as she cackled hysterically, perched on his lap.

Hermione's eyes widened as she took in the scene before her. "Do you think that they're going to..."

Malfoy snorted. "Judging by his hand..." Hermione followed Malfoy's gaze to see Ron's hand rested underneath the hem of Pansy's short skirt.

"Whoa."

Malfoy leaned forward across the small table and casually took her free hand into his. "Not jealous are you, Granger?" he asked.

She flushed, unsure if she wanted him to remove his hand or put it somewhere more useful. Recovering her wits, barely, Hermione replied, "Not in the least. I love Ron, I always will. As a friend. Besides we tried to get married, but we didn't pass the compatibility test. So, there's really no question there."

Malfoy nodded, as if this made perfect sense. His hand conspicuously didn't move.

"What about Theo and Astoria?" Hermione asked, trying to think of anything that would distract herself from the feeling of her former enemy's soft thumb stroking her hand.

Malfoy was still leaning toward her intently. "What about them?"

Hermione was far too flushed by this point, so she took a swig of her butterbeer—which helped cool her slightly, but didn't help with her intoxication predicament. She tried to latch back onto their conversation.

"Theo and Astoria," she said again, "did they pass the compatibility test?"

"They were married last year, Granger," he commented with an eye roll. "Do keep up."

How was she supposed to know what purebloods got up to?

"So why are you here tonight, Granger?" he asked when she just blinked at him.

"Oh. Uh. You know. Ron."

Malfoy leaned back slightly, a small line appearing between his brows. "Weasley?"

"Yeah. I mean. No. But yeah. He forced me to come out tonight. Everyone's trying to get one last night in before being condemned to marry and sleep with someone by our government."

"One last night in?" he asked, his eyes on her lips again. "What do you mean by that?"

Hermione drank more of her butterbeer instead of responding, face aflame.

Malfoy leaned even closer. "The great Hermione Granger cannot possibly mean what I think she does..." Hermione looked down at his last shot, which he seemingly had forgotten about. "Are you on the prowl tonight, Granger?" Malfoy asked in a voice that had no business existing outside of the bedroom.

"Uh..." Her thong was definitely damp from his tone of voice alone.

Hermione was in fact on the prowl. It had been too long, and now she was suffering the Ministry-mandated consequences of her boring sex life. However, the idea of Draco Malfoy filling her need was making her head spin. Sure, he was attractive beyond measure. And sure, she was already rather turned on. But...

Hermione needed to think.

"I have to pee," she declared and stood on wobbly legs.

Malfoy stood immediately, rescuing her from falling before she realised what was happening. "I'll escort you," he informed her.

Hermione looked up at his handsome face and felt her resolve cracking.

"Just one second," he murmured, his face dangerously close to hers. Malfoy brought his final shot to his lips and downed it in a flash. "Shall we, my lady?" he asked with a smirk.

Hermione bit her lip.

He led her to the bathroom, his arm wrapped around her shoulders prevented her from falling and did nothing to clear her hazy mind. No one seemed to pay them much mind as they crossed the bar, not that either of them would have noticed.

In the hallway to the loos and the backroom, Malfoy opened the single stall door and ushered her in. Before he could close the door for her, Hermione looked into his eyes, her mind made up.

"Wait for me?" she asked hesitantly.

Malfoy's eyes were glued to her lips. "Sure, Granger."

He closed the door behind her. Hermione peed for a long time, emptying the vast amount of liquids that she had imbibed. She stared at herself in the mirror as she washed her hands and wondered, aloud, "Am I really going to do this?"

Her heart started racing. She knew her inebriated brain was not making Good Choices that evening, but she could also admit that she'd always found Malfoy attractive. This was ostensibly the only time she would ever have again to even entertain the idea of sleeping with him. And, he seemed surprisingly into it.

Hermione squared her shoulders and opened the door. Malfoy was leaning against the wall opposite the bathroom his hair slightly falling in his eyes as she held his gaze. She couldn't

help herself; she walked up to him and pressed her body against his, wrapping her arms around his neck.

“Are we really going to do this?” he asked her.

Despite staring at his lips, she wasn’t listening to a word he was saying.

“You’re so hot,” she mumbled before leaning on her tippy toes and pressing a kiss to his lips.

He was hesitant to respond, but when she pressed further, he was suddenly pushing her back into the bathroom and slamming the door behind them. Malfoy lifted her up onto the countertop and pulled her dress up enough so that she could spread her legs. He stood between them, gripped the back of her head and deepened the kiss.

She sighed into his kiss, curling her fingers into his soft hair.

Hermione’s heart was racing and she could feel a heat building between her legs. She was so drunk that she wasn’t even embarrassed when she hoisted her leg around his waist, his hand holding it in place. Hermione rocked her hips against his, making him pull out of the kiss and swear. His grip tightened on her thigh.

“Shit,” he muttered as she nibbled at his ear and increased the pressure of her hips.

Malfoy began kissing along her jaw. As his hand landed on her wet knickers, Hermione groaned and froze.

Malfoy’s breath came out in huffs. “What?” he demanded once he realised that she had stopped her hips. “Come to your senses?” he asked.

“Not here.”

His eyes searched hers trying to piece together what she was saying. “Not...here?”

“Not here,” she clarified and gently pushed him away.

Hermione hopped off the sink countertop. She held onto him for balance while she righted her dress. She double checked that her wand was still in its hidden pocket in her dress, and that she still had her purse. Then, Hermione tugged him out of the loo and toward the fireplaces.

As they walked through the bar, she saw Ron and Pansy glued together, Pansy straddling him aggressively. Hannah was eyeing them with unease, wanting to intervene, but understanding that this was everyone’s last Saturday of freedom.

Hermione tried not to be dumbfounded by Ron and Pansy, but she was. Seeing Ron kiss a Slytherin was mind-boggling. So, she was too distracted to realise that Malfoy was tugging her into a fireplace, hugging her tight to his body. Her last coherent thought was that Ron seemed to have upped his kissing game, then she was swirling away, flashing by fireplace after fireplace.

*

They landed in a jumble of limbs. She glanced around the dark room and realised that they were not at her apartment. She had very little time to contemplate this though, because Malfoy had rolled on top of her and brought their lips together again in a searing kiss.

He nestled his way between her legs and pressed his hard length into her. Hermione groaned. He pulled away from the kiss in order to push and shove her tight dress up her body once more.

“Why do you even own this dress, Granger? It doesn’t seem like your style.”

Hermione thought of that shopping trip where Ginny had ranted about how she needed more sexy clothes to show off her “rockin’ bod.”

“You seem to like it,” she responded.

“I like your knickers better,” he smirked, the dress now up to her bellybutton.

She was wearing an exceptionally lacy thong that evening. She was happy that someone was actually getting to see it. Malfoy pulled the dress over her breasts with some difficulty (it was *tight*), his hands skimming over the sides of her matching push-up bra.

“Shit, Granger,” he mumbled, taking her in. “You got nice tits.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “You sure know how to compliment a woman.”

He popped her bra off in less than two seconds flat and ogled her breasts, watching her nipples fully harden. Finally, he raised his hands and touched her. Cupping her breasts then playing with her nipples in such a way that had her squirming and panting. Malfoy trailed his tongue over her nipples slowly, watching her every twitch and sigh. Hermione was glad she was drunk or she would have been far more self-conscious of her responses to his touch.

He trailed kisses down her stomach to her lacy thong. Malfoy grinned at her and tugged it off quickly. He spread her legs wide. Hermione was embarrassed by how wet she was. But she was quickly distracted by him kissing his way up her inner thigh. Her hips canted upwards of their own volition, demanding that he touch her where she needed him the most.

Finally, he situated himself between her legs and dove in.

She had only been eaten out once before, and Krum was awful at it. It had been shortly after she and Ron had split and Krum was hoping to rekindle something between them. It was an awkward encounter for both of them and Hermione definitely left feeling dissatisfied.

Malfoy, on the other hand, seemed to be well-versed in the female anatomy. His tongue lapped at her contentedly, stroking over her clit and causing her to cry out in pleasure. His fingers slid into with determination. Hermione’s hips danced against his face and fingers, groans falling from her mouth unbidden.

Malfoy pressed her jerking hips down with a hand and really got to work, clearly trying to bring her to orgasm. And he didn't fail, his tongue insistently pressing on her clit as if it were a button that if pressed a certain way would save the entire world. Hermione clutched at his perfect hair, encouraging him with a, "right there. Yes. Oh, *GOD*, yes! Oh fuck, Ho-w do you. *Nnngh!*"

With a stilted gasp she was teetering over the edge and screaming to the heavens, "Draco!" Hermione swore her shout echoed.

He stayed between her legs until her spasms calmed down then crawled his way up her body slowly, kissing her along the way and paying special attention to her breasts before settling on his side, draping an arm around her middle.

Coming home with him seemed to have been a Good Choice, after all.

She stared up at his white vaulted ceiling and wondered if they were at the Manor.

"Where are we?"

"My London flat," he responded simply, dancing his fingers across her naked stomach.

Hermione felt slightly more sober than she had before, her orgasm bringing back some of her common sense. So, she realised that she was stark naked and he was still fully clothed and very erect. And that Draco Malfoy had just brought her to orgasm.

"Oh," was all she said.

Malfoy pulled her chin so that she was looking at him. "You don't regret coming do you?"

She stared deep into his hooded eyes and found herself admitting, "No."

"Good." He pulled her into a kiss. "No need to be embarrassed. I always make the girls scream," he murmured against her lips.

Hermione pulled away. "I didn't scream," she countered with a light slap to his chest.

"There she is," he mumbled with a smile. "And, you most definitely did."

The cool floor was making her skin pucker with goose bumps. Malfoy seemed to notice.

"Let's go to my bed," he suggested, standing and pulling her up with him.

He threw her naked body over his shoulder and she shrieked in surprise as he walked them down a dark hallway like she weighed nothing.

Sunday, February 28

Hermione awoke slowly, feeling a soreness between her legs. She was a little overheated, but extremely comfortable. She wondered idly if Crookshanks was curled up against her again—that cat emitted a lot of heat. She listened to the birds chirping and thought that they sounded different than the usual chirps she heard in the morning. She wiggled around to get more comfortable.

That was when she noticed.

She flushed a hot red and opened her eyes to the blinding sunlight streaming through the window. She was cuddling a man. She knew it was a man because she felt a certain something poking into her back. It was when the arm around her waist tightened that she noticed that she was being held in place by said horny man.

Hermione stiffened uncomfortably, trying to remember who she had gone home with last night. It had become clear, upon opening her eyes, that she had gone to his place and not hers. She tried to gather information by looking around the room, but all that greeted her were glass doors leading onto a balcony, half-closed blackout curtains (through which too much sunlight was currently streaming for her hungover brain to handle), and an expensive looking side table with an empty glass on it. She moved slightly and he grumbled, pulling her closer.

As her head cleared, her resounding headache made itself known and her stomach felt like the ocean was moving about in it.

Hermione glanced down at the pale arm standing out against her tawny skin. If she was tense before, she was frozen in place after seeing the tattoo there. At first, she hadn't noticed because it was surrounded by a myriad of coloured flowers. But it was definitely there.

The Dark Mark.

As she tried to question why any Death Eater would sleep with her and whether or not she had been kidnapped, she remembered a vague image of blond hair between her legs as her body shook in pleasure, her screams echoing through the flat.

A loud pop and the appearance of an old house elf caused her to shriek, jolting her companion awake.

Hermione snatched the sheets up around her body, shielding herself from the elf and the man alike. Her head whipped around to see him and her heart stopped in disbelief.

Then, like a movie montage, the night before flashed through her mind; him holding her, stroking her hand, making out in the loo, going down on her in front of his floo. Hermione gasped.

Malfoy stared at her in shock. He looked extremely confused.

“Mr. Draco, Flopsy is sorry. Flopsy did not know that Mr. Draco has company. Flopsy will come back with breakfast for Mr. Draco's company.”

It was then that the couple noticed that the elf was hovering a tray of delicious food beside her. She placed it on his bedside table and disappeared with another resounding *crack!*

Malfoy blinked at Hermione. “Holy shit,” was all he managed to say.

Hermione couldn’t meet his eyes, but when her eyes landed on his neck and saw bite marks and hickeys, she decided not looking in his general direction was the best option. She looked around desperately for her clothes, but they were nowhere in sight. Despite his room being massive, it was extremely clean, so her clothes should have been highly visible on the otherwise spotless hardwood. The only thing that she noticed to be clearly out of place was a tipped over firewhiskey bottle on his nightstand. It was empty.

Her head continued to pound and she cursed her drunk self for drinking so damn much.

Malfoy reached for his wand and summoned her clothes. They came whizzing through the door from down a hallway. Hermione blushed deeply as Malfoy caught them, her lacy underthings in his hands. He looked equally as awkward, handing them to her.

She accepted them without meeting his gaze.

“Turn around,” she ordered harshly. Malfoy obliged, shifting onto his side.

Hermione pulled her underthings on beneath the sheet. She wished now that she had worn more practical undergarments. The lace was irritating her sensitive skin. She sat up, turned away from him and tugged her tight dress over her. She struggled with the material as it got caught over her breasts. This brought back the memory of him commenting on how nice they were and attaching his mouth to them, the previous night. She flushed hotly.

Hermione stood and looked at the back of his tousled hair, remembering her hand firmly holding his blond head between her legs while she screamed in pleasure.

“Oh, Morgana,” she muttered to herself.

When she moved away from the bed, Malfoy sat up against his headboard. He scratched at his head awkwardly. Her eyes followed his arm and landed back on his Dark Mark. He noticed this and quickly covered it with the sheet. His muscular chest was still exposed though, making her wish he had more clothing on.

“Er...” Hermione began.

“Just...it’s not that big a deal, Granger,” he said, his voice a little hoarse.

Hermione begged to differ but said nothing.

“Er...good luck with the matching, I guess,” he said lamely.

Hermione had never had a true one-night stand before (Viktor’s disastrous oral sex had been after a few dates, so she didn’t count it). She felt oddly compelled to thank him, given the fact that she was sore in the best way and could remember at least one of her orgasms from the

night previous. However, she merely opened her mouth to say something three times before closing it and staring off into space.

She then realised that her wand was missing.

“My wand?”

Malfoy nodded and summoned this as well. It came from what she assumed was his ensuite bathroom. They both frowned in its direction. She definitely didn’t remember going into that room.

“You don’t...remember last night, do you?” she asked finally into the horrible silence.

Malfoy shook his head ‘no’ after a brief hesitation.

Hermione nodded. It was probably for the best. Neither of them remembered (most) of the night before. It was a good release of tension, and they would never talk of it again. Hell, they could barely talk about it as it was.

“Well...I guess...good luck to you too...for the...y’know...” she trailed off.

Flopsy was back with a *crack*, causing them both to jump. She was carrying another tray of food that smelled heavenly. Flopsy frowned at Hermione.

“Is the miss leaving?” she asked, distraught. “Did Flopsy take too long? Flopsy is so sorry, Miss. Please don’t leave!” She was almost crying and kept pushing the tray into Hermione’s hands.

“It’s not you, Flopsy,” she reassured her, still not accepting the tray, “I have an...appointment that I have to get to.”

Flopsy was sobbing by this point, the sound grating at Hermione’s headache. “Flopsy is so sorry, Miss. Flopsy has made you late. Flopsy must punish herself!” The elf went to fling herself into the wall, but Malfoy stopped her with a flick of his wrist.

“Flopsy, that will not be necessary,” he said sternly.

Flopsy, however was still bawling. “Flopsy begs your forgiveness!” She was once again pushing the tray of food at Hermione.

She was going to utter out an excuse, but couldn’t. Instead, she said, “Why don’t we go to the dining room, Flopsy. We’ll eat there instead of in bed.” She couldn’t stop picturing the fact that Malfoy was very much naked underneath that thin sheet. She found herself curious, despite herself, as to what he looked like.

Flopsy nodded happily, shaking her big ears. She snapped her fingers and the trays zoomed out of the room. “Of course, Miss. Flopsy will show you to the dining room and Mr. Draco will join us there.”

Hermione eyed Malfoy with disdain before letting the elf lead her down the long corridor. Hermione introduced herself to the elf on their way to the dining room.

Malfoy joined them moments later, looking far too put together for how drunk they had been the night before.

“Thank you, Flopsy,” he said graciously before taking the seat at the head of the table, opposite Hermione. He was so far away it was laughable.

Hermione had already started eating so that she could leave as soon as possible. It helped that the meal seemed to be curing her roiling stomach. The meal was awkward at best, strained and tense at worse. Malfoy kept adjusting his sleeve when he thought she wouldn’t notice. She couldn’t help but be curious about the flowers around his Dark Mark, but refrained from asking.

In fact, they didn’t say a single word to each other, but they both kept reassuring Flopsy that the food was amazing. Hermione kept readjusting her cleavage line which inevitably brought Malfoy’s eyes to it and caused her to flush crimson.

The second she had cleared her plate she shot out of her comfortable and elegant chair. “Well, bye, Malfoy,” she muttered before asking Flopsy to show her to the Floo.

The elf happily grabbed her hand and tugged her down the corridor. Faced with his massive fireplace, the memory of his blond head between her legs resurfaced again. She found herself glancing at the vaulted ceiling and looked away quickly with a blush.

“Have a very good day, Miss Hermione Granger,” Flopsy wished happily.

“You too, Flopsy,” she responded.

Hermione stepped into the offending fireplace and swirled away in green flames.

*

Back at her home, curled up around Crookshanks, and several hangover potions later, Hermione was finally able to process that she had had sex with Draco Malfoy. And she couldn’t remember it.

Earlier that morning, shortly after she had left, she had received an owl from the pompous ass. It was short and sweet. It read; *I found a note in the bathroom that says we used the contraceptive spell last night. We both signed it. I’m assuming that’s why your wand was there. DM.*

Hermione had uncharacteristically not thought about that until that moment and felt a huge wave of relief. She didn’t respond to Malfoy, hoping to pretend this little lapse in judgement had never occurred.

She spent the day watching reruns of Dr. Who and trying to figure out why she had ever gone home with the man to begin with. If she were being honest, she knew why, but she was no

longer drunk, so she continued to live in denial when it came to how attractive she found him.

As Hermione tried to sleep that night, all she could think about was the feeling of his head between her legs. She couldn't help but offhandedly remark that sleeping with him for the rest of her life wouldn't be so bad. When she finally succeeded in blocking out thoughts of his skilled tongue, anxiety ran through her instead as she thought about who her future husband would be.

She tossed and turned for most of the night, finally felling asleep around 5 am.

The owl pecking at her window at 7 that morning pulled her out of her restless sleep. She ignored the heat between her legs and pushed away the thoughts of a certain blond, instead tripping her way over to the window.

The owl flew in with a whoosh. She untied the letter, handed the bird some treats and plopped onto her bed, her hands sweating. Hermione opened the Ministry seal and let her eyes skim over the page. It was a repetition of the marriage law and date that everyone had to be wed by. Finally, at the bottom, was the name and address of her future husband.

She nearly fainted. The scroll fell out of her hands and onto the floor.

In black bold letters the scroll proclaimed for all who dared to read it: *Draco Lucius Malfoy*.

Appeals

Chapter Notes

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

Monday, March 1

Hermione could not believe her eyes. For a long time, she hoped it was a prank from George and that she and Ron had actually passed the compatibility test and all was well. She looked at her bedroom door, praying that George would burst through any moment, laughing hysterically at her face.

But the minutes ticked by and no one came. Hermione went so far as to go open her front door to see if George or Ron were waiting there. The empty hallway stared back at her.

She finally snapped out of her disbelief by the pecking of an owl on her living room window.

She numbly let the now familiar owl in and accepted the letter. It perched itself by the window, clearly waiting for a reply. Hermione groaned and forced herself to read the letter. In neat script, Malfoy had written:

Dear Hermione Granger,

You are invited to join my mother and I for lunch this afternoon to discuss our upcoming nuptials.

Sincerely,

Draco Malfoy.

Hermione stared at the short message, immediately disliking the formality of it.

She could not believe how calm he was being about everything. She had expected a letter of protest stating that they would never be able to force them together. She had been tempted to send him that very letter. But she was glad that she hadn't now, if only to save face.

She had hoped that somehow, she would end up with someone like Neville. Neville would have been a lovely person to live with. Not *Draco freaking Malfoy*. Hermione huffed in annoyance.

Hermione didn't respond to his letter, hoping that she could put him off for a few days and live in denial.

She was tempted to send Kingsley a Howler, but she knew, from her previous week of pestering him, that it would change nothing, nor make her feel any better. So, she let a few silent tears escape. Then she picked herself up, dusted herself off, and prepared herself for the work day.

With a deep breath, Hermione began thinking through her appeal, since it was the only hope she had left at this point.

The owl remained perched in her living room as she left.

She should have predicted the complete and utter chaos of the Ministry, but she was distracted by her own personal doom. The amount of press was unprecedented. Everyone was being hounded as to whom they had been matched with and the second that *the* Hermione Granger appeared, it was pandemonium.

Hermione shoved her way past photographers and shouted questions until she finally clawed her way into a lift. Her already foul mood had just been made so much worse.

Luckily, the Muggle Liaison Office was far removed from most other offices. She did notice an unprecedented amount of people were in her normally empty corridor, probably hoping to catch a glimpse of her future husband. Hermione settled into her long to-do list and ignored the marriage law for a few blissful hours.

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Ron and Harry came to visit at the beginning of lunch.

Ron was ‘I’m flustered’ red and Harry could not stop laughing. This became clear when it was announced that Ron had been matched with Pansy Parkinson.

Hermione had only then remembered that he had been fused to the brunette on Saturday.

“Pansy? I would think that you would be happy with that match,” she stated with a smirk.

Ron flushed more, if possible.

“What?” Harry demanded. “Why would he be happy?” Harry narrowed his eyes at Ron.

Hermione smiled, enjoying distracting herself from the fact that she was spending the rest of her life shackled to Draco fucking Malfoy. “They were fused at the lips Saturday night. Malfoy and I had a bit of a bet of whether or not you two were...” Hermione trailed off.

“Malfoy!” Ron declared, latching onto something that would not implicate him and Pansy. “Weren’t you getting all cuddly on him!”

Harry choked on his own spit. “Malfoy?!”

“It’s true, you two were all cozy. She was even spending time with the other Slytherin gits,” Ron explained to Harry.

“Maybe you shouldn’t refer to your future wife as a git,” Harry suggested astutely.

“I meant Malfoy’s a git,” Ron clarified.

Hermione groaned and banged her head on the table. “Can we stop talking about Draco bloody Malfoy?” she pleaded.

“You haven’t told them yet, then?” a voice drawled her doorway.

Hermione’s head snapped up in horror and she eyed the tall blond in front of her. Malfoy was sporting dashing dark grey robes. He had a hand in his pocket and a haughty expression on his chiseled face.

Harry seemed to figure it out first. “No,” he stated slowly.

Ron’s head whipped back and forth between the two before he finally understood. “No!”

Hermione nodded dejectedly. Malfoy’s face was its usual impassive mask, but Hermione could swear that his shoulders were tense.

“Malfoy and I have been matched,” Hermione muttered.

Ron stood, unsure of how to react, but very red in the face.

Harry kept shaking his head.

Malfoy remained by the door, unmoving.

Hermione took a deep breath. “We can’t change it...for now. So, we just have to accept it.”

“Accepting it is easier said than done. Besides, what’s he doing here?” Ron questioned.

Malfoy raised an eyebrow. “I’m here to see my fiancée, Weasley. Perhaps you should be doing the same.”

Ron grumbled something under his breath, but showed a surprising amount of restraint by not engaging with him.

“Shall we, Granger?” Malfoy asked, gesturing toward her door.

Hermione sighed. “I had hoped my lack of response would discourage you,” she muttered.

He pursed his lips. “Alas, it did not.”

Hermione heaved a sigh. Harry was still in a state of utter disbelief and Ron was still vibrating with anger.

Hermione stood. “Er—yeah. Sorry guys, but I’m going to lunch with Malfoy.”

Ron looked like he was going to shout in protest, but it was Harry who spoke. “You don’t have to go on... dates with him, Hermione. He might be your fiancé, but that doesn’t mean that you two have to actually spend any time together.”

“I’m still in the room, Potter,” Malfoy sneered.

Harry glared at him, undeterred by the patented Malfoy sneer. “If you so much as lay a finger on her, I’ll end you, Malfoy.”

Malfoy’s jaw twitched. The blond didn’t back down from Harry’s intense gaze. “I’d like to see you try, Potter.”

Hermione huffed and pinched the bridge of her nose. “Can we not? It’s already been a stressful enough day.” She stepped between the two tall men, her back to Malfoy. “We’re going on lunch to talk about our upcoming...” Hermione shuddered, “wedding. So, if you two don’t mind scooting. And Ron, it is a good idea to meet with Pansy sooner rather than later; the deadline to be married is fast approaching. I don’t know how they expect people to plan a wedding and be married in four weeks!” Hermione complained. “Filing the paperwork alone will be a nightmare.” The men looked at her blankly. “Okay, let’s go, Malfoy,” Hermione sighed again.

Ron clenched his fists. He nodded at Hermione awkwardly and took off down the hallway, clearly trying to contain his anger. Harry followed him at a much more reasonable pace.

Malfoy leaned against her doorframe, suddenly the picture of ease. He handed her her beaded bag, which she hadn’t noticed he’d had slung over one of his shoulders. “You forgot this yesterday.”

Hermione blushed to her roots, having somehow forgotten that she had had sex with Malfoy. She accepted the bag and slung it over her shoulders.

“Where are we meeting your mother?” she asked.

“My flat,” he stated.

Hermione held back a groan. She didn’t want to return to his flat; she was worried that memories would resurface. She was having enough trouble as it was keeping the image of his head between her legs out of her mind.

“Why are we meeting, Malfoy? We could just owl post details. It’s not like we’re having a real ceremony or anything.”

Malfoy stared at her. “I don’t believe you’ve actually ever met my mother, have you? We’ll most definitely be doing a ceremony. And we’ll have to hammer out the marriage contract. You should probably tell your boss that you’ll need the afternoon off; I see our negotiations taking a while.”

“Marriage contract...?”

“I forgot that you muggleborns aren’t used to the idea...” he sighed, clearly not wanting to educate her. “In essence, it is a contract for an arranged marriage that covers all aspects of life from children to finances. We must both agree on it and sign it before the wedding.”

Hermione nodded slowly. She had definitely not planned on having any sort of ceremony. She didn’t want anything to mark the moment where she married her enemy—well, former

enemy.

A numbness overtook her brain and she let herself follow Malfoy out of the Ministry to the teeming lobby where he side-along apparated them to his flat. The press crowded in the atrium went nuts when they saw him take her arm. There were bound to be photos in the following day's paper.

The rush of apparition jostled her back into her body and she realised that she should have changed into something more appropriate; she was wearing her normal bland pantsuit, her hair in a frizzy ponytail. Narcissa Malfoy was standing by the fireplace dressed elegantly with a house elf to her left. The blonde pulled her son into a surprisingly heartfelt hug. She neatly took Hermione's outstretched hand and shook it once, a tight smile in place.

"Ms. Granger, a pleasure," she stated tightly.

Hermione just nodded, beyond uncomfortable in the aristocratic blonde's presence.

Malfoy led them to the dining room. His ridiculously large table was overflowing with an assortment of finger sandwiches, teacups, and cutlery... it was overwhelming. Malfoy sat at the head of the table and Narcissa sat to his right. Hermione, unsure of proper etiquette, sat across from Malfoy hesitantly. He nodded at her in encouragement. The distance between them was just as absurd as it had been the day before.

"My dear," Narcissa began, "tea?" It became clear that she was talking to Malfoy, and not her.

"Yes, thank you, mother. Granger?" he offered for his mother.

"My apologies, Ms. Granger. Would you like some tea?" Narcissa asked, but did not wait for an answer and summoned her teacup, elegantly pouring the weak tea into it. She hovered the tea over to Hermione without spilling a drop.

Hermione accepted her teacup and sipped at it awkwardly.

"So, Ms. Granger," Narcissa began, all business, "I believe we need to discuss the wedding, then I shall take my leave and you and Draco can confirm your contract."

"Er, yeah, about the wedding, I was thinking—"

"I've already put in the order for your dress, and the cake. The venue will of course be gorgeous. I was able to secure the gardens below the national museum. It was quite the headache getting that on such short notice, but I put in the call last week. We simply need to confirm the flowers, which to be honest are already perfect for your skin tone. I will need a guest list from you. Maximum 100. The wedding will happen four Thursdays from now, the 25th, in the evening. The fireflies are going to be beautiful," Narcissa stated demurely. She snapped her fingers and the same house elf appeared. "Get the measuring tape, Glo." The elf bowed low and disappeared with a crack.

Hermione blinked at the woman in disbelief. "You've planned the whole thing?"

Narcissa took a prim bite of her finger sandwich. “Why yes, of course. It is the groom’s mother’s job,” she stated, as if it were obvious. “Draco’s wedding has been planned since the day I found out I was pregnant. Of course, I update the décor every year to match the current trends,” she added dismissively.

“Mother,” Draco spoke up, “You’re forgetting that Granger is a muggleborn.”

The woman stiffened slightly. “I did not forget,” she responded icily. Hermione felt more than a little outraged at the woman’s clear prejudice.

Malfoy gave her a sharp look and spoke before Hermione could. “You’ll also remember that she is my fiancée and as such should be treated with the utmost respect,” he bit out.

Hermione stared at him in shock, feeling a strange sense of pride. She smiled at him without meaning to. Narcissa looked like she was going to slap him, however she merely clenched her hands together and placed them on her lap before allowing her face to go blank.

“Why of course, darling.” She looked at Hermione with little compassion. “I apologise if I have offended. Back on topic. I will need your measurements.”

The house elf popped back into the room, causing Hermione to jump. This time he was holding a parchment and a measuring tape. Narcissa flicked her wand and the measuring tape soared toward Hermione. She shrieked and dodged it.

“Mother,” Malfoy warned.

“I cannot have the dress properly tailored if I do not have her measurements,” she responded.

Hermione cleared her throat; she had had enough. “I am choosing my dress.”

Narcissa dropped the mini sandwich she was currently holding. “I beg your pardon?”

Hermione swatted away the measuring tape that kept trying to circle itself around her body. “This may not be the... ideal wedding, but if we must have a real ceremony, I have every intention of purchasing my own dress, with my mother and friends.” Hermione cast a finite incantatum on the measuring tape which flopped to the ground with a *thunk*.

Narcissa looked as if she had been slapped. Malfoy placed a hand on his mother’s clenched fist.

“She wanted to get married at the Ministry,” Malfoy said. “I think she has taken the news of this extravagant wedding fairly well. Just let her get her own dress.”

Narcissa replied tightly, “Tradition clearly states that the groom’s mother plans the wedding.”

“Which you have! Without any of my input, mind you,” Hermione muttered, her anger spilling over. She may not seem like it, but she had imagined her wedding since she was little.

“Not her tradition,” Malfoy responded more calmly. “Usually, it’s the *bride* and her family,” he looked at Hermione to see that he had it correct. Hermione nodded.

“If you can kindly owl me the wedding plans so that I may look them over. I can give you feedback and suggest changes,” Hermione stated, not asked.

Narcissa narrowed her eyes.

“I’m sure my mother would be much obliged to do so,” Malfoy said, the tension evident in his voice, even to Hermione.

Narcissa glared at him, but saw that she would not be able to change his mind. Instead, she turned to Hermione and said, “I must insist that I attend the dress shopping trip. I need to make sure that it will match Draco’s robes and the décor.”

Hermione, knowing she would regret this, agreed. “Nothing would make me happier,” she responded tightly.

“Was there anything else, mother, because I think Granger might hex you,” he almost chuckled at the end.

Narcissa wiped her hands on her napkin and stood. “You’ll have the plans for the wedding by tomorrow evening. Please send me your guestlist by then. You’re not allergic to anything, are you?”

“No,” Hermione responded.

“Excellent, because the caterers refuse to change the menu.” Hermione narrowed her eyes at the elegant woman before her—what if she had been allergic to something? Narcissa continued, “Please forward the place and time for the dress shopping. Good afternoon, Draco dear. Ms. Granger.” The woman turned on her heel to leave, her measuring tape and parchment vanishing with a snap.

“Oh! My parents are muggles,” Hermione said suddenly.

Narcissa turned back slowly. “Yes. I know what muggleborn means.”

Hermione’s eye twitched. “I mention it because they will need special access to the venue and the Ministry must be alerted. I would do it myself, but since it’s *your* job...”

Malfoy looked like he was holding back a wide grin.

Narcissa nodded curtly. “Of course. It will be taken care of.” She patted Malfoy’s shoulder gently, then left the room, her house elf and enchanted measuring tape trailing after her.

Hermione huffed.

“You might survive this marriage yet, Granger.”

Hermione stuffed a sandwich into her mouth instead of responding.

“Seriously,” Malfoy insisted, “Not many people would be able to handle my mother. I must apologise for her... attitude toward you. You must understand that she was expecting me to marry a pureblood of high standing.” Hermione was going to shout at him, but he continued, “Not that any of that matters to me, she just can’t seem to let it go. It might have helped if you were at least born wealthy, but—”

“It doesn’t matter to you?”

Malfoy shrugged, as if he hadn’t just dropped a bomb *and* apologised to her in the same breath. “Living with a megalomaniac tends to change your previously flawed viewpoint.” He ate a sandwich.

“That’s... wow.” She didn’t know what to say.

“You are supposed to be the brightest witch of our age, Granger. Would you not have thought it odd for me to have brought you home the other night if I hated the very ground you walk on?”

And she was blushing again, the image of his head moving between her legs and the sound of her screaming his name echoing through her ears. She knew she should not have agreed to come back to this building.

“That’s true... I suppose,” she managed to say.

“Eat, Granger. I’ll go get some spare parchment so that we can draft the contract.” He stood and left the room.

Hermione followed his advice and shoved more delicious sandwiches into her mouth. He was gone a surprisingly long time and she wondered if he had gotten lost in his massive flat. She chuckled to herself at that.

“Oh my, you haven’t gone mad, have you?” he asked.

Hermione blushed again. She hated this man. He ignored her discomfort and sat down beside her.

“Seems odd to be so far away,” he stated simply, laying out a piece of lined paper before them. Hermione blinked at the paper. It was muggle lined paper. Magical folk used parchment. Draco Malfoy had muggle lined paper in his home.

Hermione frowned at him.

He wrote out ‘Marriage Contract: Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy’ then looked at her expectantly. “Let’s start with something easy; where shall we live?”

Hermione choked on her tea. She hadn’t thought of that part yet. She remembered vaguely reading something about having to live together, at least officially. She glanced around his flat and thought of her much smaller and cozier one. It seemed more practical to live at his since he probably had at least one guest room. If they were to live at her flat, they would have to share a bedroom, or he would be on the couch.

“I think here is the best option,” he continued when she stared blankly for several moments. “Although, I do have many other properties if you would like to tour them.”

This brought the image of the drawing room to the forefront of her mind. “No,” she nearly whimpered.

Malfoy’s head snapped up to look into her faraway eyes. He placed his hand over hers gently. “Not the Manor,” he said quietly. His voice became gruff: “Neither of us wants to live there.” Malfoy withdrew his hand. In a lighter tone, he continued, “Besides, technically my mother owns the Manor. And she definitely doesn’t want us living with her. I have few properties across the UK and one in France and Italy. I’m sure there are at least three in Asia that I am forgetting about. Then of course, the one in Greenland...”

“You personally own more than one house?” she was incredulous.

Malfoy shrugged. “I thought you were rich from the war?”

Hermione laughed. “Not a house in France rich.”

“Well, until you figure out how we don’t have to be married, you’re going to be filthy rich, Granger. You should buy a house or two while you have access to the vaults.”

Hermione bristled. “I don’t need your money.”

Malfoy rolled his eyes. “No one said that you need my money. But you are entitled to it.”

“What do you mean?”

“We’ll be married, Granger. What’s mine is yours, all that...”

“So, you’ll have access to my money?”

“Why would I want it?”

“Answer me,” she insisted.

He sighed and leaned back in his chair. “This is what the contract is to determine. Technically we can agree to whatever we want; you could have no access to my money, and me none to yours. Or we could do the classic 50/50 split of all assets, or... whatever we agree to really.”

Hermione nodded. “Perfect. We’ll do the no access to each other’s assets option then.”

Malfoy leaned back slowly. “No.”

“Pardon me?”

“No.”

Hermione huffed. “Why? You just said that you don’t want my money.”

“But you should have access to mine,” he mumbled.

“Why? I don’t need it. I live a comfortable life. Obviously not yours,” she looked around his dining room pointedly, “But I want for nothing.”

Malfoy didn’t respond for a bit, and refused to meet her eyes. “I have to provide for you.”

“Please don’t tell me this is some archaic sexist shit where you think that the man *must* pay for the woman.”

“It’s chivalrous, Granger.”

“No, it’s outdated,” she rebuked.

He suggested, “How about you have your own money and you can access mine whenever you want.”

“I don’t need your money!”

Malfoy groaned in annoyance. “This was supposed to be the easy part,” he muttered. “Okay, Granger. how about this: you live here. I pay the bills, all of them. You won’t have an allowance, but you’ll have access to my vault.”

“An allowance?!” she was outraged.

“All pureblood brides receive an allowance from their spouse. Since they don’t work.”

Hermione stood and pointed at him threateningly. “You better not think that I’m quitting my job!”

His voice was bored when he responded, “Sit down, Granger. Obviously, you’re not quitting your job—until the children arrive.”

She was going to slap him. It was definitely going to happen. Her wand had found its way into her hand. “I am not becoming a stay-at-home mom, Malfoy! So, think again.” Red sparks shot from the end of her wand. “I will keep my job for as long as I like, and I will have none of that ridiculous allowance business,” she declared.

“Well, someone will have to take care of the children,” he muttered.

Hermione was seething. “What you call chivalry, I call sexism,” she bit out through clenched teeth. “I need to get back to work.”

Hermione stalked out of the dining room and quickly found her way back to the Floo. She could hear Malfoy sigh in annoyance behind her, but he didn’t follow her out. She returned to work in a foul mood.

Instead of working on her proposal, Hermione returned to her notes to overturn the marriage law. She worked herself up into even more of a tizzy and ended up pounding on Kingsley’s door.

It took a long time for the Minister to answer.

“Yes, Hermione?” he finally asked, pulling the door open and ushering her in—probably hoping to muffle some of Hermione’s shouts.

“I assume you know who I was matched with?” Hermione seethed.

“Yes,” Kingsley nodded solemnly.

“Well!”

Kingsley blinked at her. “Well?”

“What is wrong with you people!?” Hermione shouted.

Kingsley cringed, knowing this was only the beginning.

“He’s a pureblood, racist, sexist, rich snob!” she shrieked, pacing his office with her wand out.

“I do believe he is reformed these days. You do know he had to do those courses and the year in Az—”

“Oh, shut it, Kingsley!”

Kingsley slowly closed his mouth, looking annoyed.

“He’s trying to get me to become a stay-at-home mom! Me. Quit my job! *ME!*”

“Yes, well that seems like a rather poor idea.”

“Can he do that?” Hermione questioned, but answered her own question, “He can’t do that! I’m not his to control.”

“No, you’re not,” Kingsley agreed, taking a seat on his desk.

Her anger was rapidly dissipating, replaced by sadness and fatigue. “How could you do this to us, Kingsley? I had my whole life ahead of me. I had...I could have had a great romance. And now...I have forced motherhood and forced sexual relations with a man who ruined my childhood! Do you have any idea how...how fucked up that is? How could you?” She was crying now, the tears hot as they streamed down her face.

Kingsley went to comfort her and Hermione pushed him away bodily, a small wandless spell sending him backward more than her arms could. It occurred to her briefly that assaulting the Minister for Magic was probably a bad idea, Golden Girl or not.

“Sorry,” she whispered. “Sorry. I have to go.”

Hermione fled his office and worked from home for the rest of the day.

His owl must have left at some point because it was back with a new letter and a copy of *The Daily Prophet*. It refused to leave until she answered and she refused to answer, so his owl

seemed to be staying at her flat indefinitely.

Hermione read the newspaper, against her better judgement.

Daily Prophet: Evening Post

Society Pages

MARRIAGE LAW HIGHLIGHTS: WAR HEROINE MATCHED WITH REFORMED DEATH EATER

Monday, March 1, 2015

By Lavender Brown

The Wizengamot's controversial marriage law continues to bring about surprising bedfellows. This author was astounded to see none other than Draco Malfoy, Britain's second most eligible bachelor, escort Hermione Granger, Golden Girl, Saviour of the Wizarding World out to what we can only presume was an romantic lunch earlier today.

While there is no official confirmation that these two infamous figures have been matched, as their former classmate, I can say with conviction that they have a history of tension. Perhaps it was love all along?

The match is of no surprise to friends, nor family, with an anonymous source claiming that the couple has in fact been dating in secret for months. Why keep their torrid romance a secret? Could the soon-to-be Mrs. Malfoy already be pregnant? What does the Lady Malfoy think about their secret affair?

Hermion Granger, Order of Merlin, first class, has been hailed at the Brightest Witch of her Age since she was a child. Yet, this reporter is left wondering if aligning herself with the likes of a Death Eater, reformed or not, is a wise decision.

Will their flames burn bright with passion, or will they both go up in smoke?

Make sure to check back tomorrow for more information.

Hermione lit the newspaper on fire.

Tuesday, March 2

Hermione was reading her draft letter to the Wizengamot aloud to herself when someone knocked on her door. She glanced at her clock. It was lunch time. Probably the boys hoping to grab lunch together and gossip. Hermione waved her door open and scratched out a sentence.

“I’m almost done just—” she glanced up. It was Malfoy. “What are you doing here?” she sneered.

He leaned against her door frame much like he had the day before, the picture of nonchalance, despite her open hostility. It didn't help that he looked oddly attractive leaning like that, which only made Hermione angrier.

"We need to finish drafting our marriage contract."

Hermione's eye twitched. "Don't worry about that. I'm getting this law overturned well before the end of the month, so there'll be no need for a wedding or for a marriage contract."

Malfoy raised an eyebrow. "Is that so?"

"Yes," Hermione responded tightly.

"And on the off chance that you don't get this law turned over, we should have a contract in place."

Hermione clenched her fist and snapped her pen in half, ink spurting all over her notes and her white blouse. She cursed. Malfoy took out his wand and cleaned up the mess for her, even casting a reparo on her pen.

"So, shall we?" he inclined his head.

"No," Hermione responded obstinately and picked up her wand. She flicked it, making the door slam closed in his face.

She smiled triumphantly and went back to work, ignoring all future attempts from others to contact her. She didn't much care, the wording of this letter was more important than her other work at the moment.

*

That evening, his owl was still perched in her home. It seemed to like teasing Crookshanks. The owl had somehow broken into the cat's treats and was eating them. Hermione scowled at the owl and dramatically opened the letter from Malfoy.

Granger,

Don't be a prat, we need to get this contract done.

DM

Hermione lit the letter on fire. His owl hooted in what may have been fright at the sudden fire in the room. It stubbornly didn't leave. She grabbed a bit of the charred parchment that hadn't burned and scratched back a response.

Piss off.

She handed the scrap of paper to the owl and said, "Goodbye!"

The owl hooted and finally took off through her open living room window. Hermione was cursing the man for the rest of the evening. She took a bath in hopes that this would calm her down, but his owl had succeeded in swooping into her home and straight into her bathroom with another letter. Hermione shrieked in fright at the sudden appearance of the bird and nearly jumped from the tub. She let loose a shout of frustration and resigned herself to the fact that his owl lived with her now.

Friday, March 5

By the end of the first week, she was before the Wizengamot delivering her well-practiced speech. She had been avoiding Malfoy successfully for three days in a row. She had begrudgingly become friends with his owl and almost penned him a letter to ask her name.

Hermione looked into the eyes of the Wizengamot as she approached her conclusion.

“...such an egregious violation of freedom, free will, and one’s own agency has never before been seen in wizarding society. While it is undeniable that the magical world’s population is dangerously low, this is of our own making. We have spent centuries waging war against one another in many ways. Perhaps it is time we face the consequences of our actions. Perhaps we must have those who would continue to see us divided understand the consequences of *their* actions.

“Why is it that it is the muggleborns and those who fought against hatred, those who lost the most in the war, who yet again are the ones who must sacrifice themselves for our society? We have never had an issue with non-magical folk, nor mixed bloodlines. If the pureblood aristocracy had not been allowed to preach their filth, there would not be such a need for a repopulation effort, our population would be robust instead of decimated by a racist war!”

“Hear hear!” someone in the crowd shouted. Hermione zeroed in on George’s face as he clapped along with her other friends in the courtroom.

Hermione nodded at him and continued her slow walk along the courtroom floor, trying to make eye contact with as many Wizengamot members as possible.

“To demand of our citizens to give up their bodies and their futures after they have already done so at great personal risk only 8 years ago is an egregious, dishonourable, and inhumane request. I implore you, vote in favour of this appeal and do what is right for us young adults who have barely recovered from the horrors of the war.”

Hermione was met with a resounding applause from the civilian area of the Wizengamot chambers, but most Wizengamot members remained impassive in front of her speech. This was normal, as Wizengamot members were supposed to remain neutral so as not to influence other members’ vote. However, Hermione was worried. She usually had a few more encouraging nods. The members were overwhelmingly made up of pureblood witches and wizards as well as those who remained ‘neutral’ during the war.

She nodded at the gathered members, then took her leave to the reception atrium outside of the court room. Journalists threw question after question at her and she tried to keep up.

“Yes, the petition already has 2000 names.”

“Well, yes that is a lot of names when you consider that about 5000 people are affected by this law, nearly half vehemently oppose it.”

“No, that is not the problem, the problem is that our Ministry is putting women and men into potentially unsafe situations where they may be forced or coerced into sexual acts.”

“That’s preposterous. Women are far more than mothers, they are whole people!”

“How dare you imply—!”

“Yes, he is my match. But I plan on seeing this law overturned before the deadline at the end of March.”

Hermione, exhausted, let Harry put an end to the questions and cart her away into one of the jammed lifts.

“Well done, Hermione,” Harry muttered over the chatter in the lift.

Hermione hoped she had done well. There was not much else she could do. Forcing the appeal on the Wizengamot was a gamble because laws could only be appealed once a year and she might have jumped the gun a bit early, but she had to do something.

Back at her office, Malfoy was leaning against her doorframe, which seemed to be his new favourite spot.

“Very well written speech,” he intoned. He made to enter her office after her and Hermione began closing the door quickly. “You can’t avoid me forever,” Malfoy cautioned.

Hermione scowled. “Watch me!”

She slammed the door in his face.

That night at the *Leaky*, Ron and Harry tried to keep her spirits up after her Wizengamot hearing.

“Obviously you have my support, Hermione,” Ron was muttering, “I’m just saying, you could relax a little. More flies with sugar, or whatever that muggle expression is.”

Hermione huffed. “Relax? His fucking owl basically lives at my place and refuses to leave! The Ministry is trying to make me marry into the family whose home I was tortured in, Ronald! Not everyone is getting along as well with their fiancé as you are!” Hermione half-accused.

Ron and Pansy had annoyingly hit it off. They were both a little pretentious and entirely self-absorbed, but they didn’t completely hate each other. They had made a contract earlier that

week with little issue. Ron had even taken to having lunch with her every day to ‘get to know her better’. Hermione had to suppress her eye roll at that. They were clearly shagging during these lunches, which was the only real reason Ron wanted anything to do with Pansy. Or so Hermione told herself.

“Sorry, Hermione,” Ron muttered. “I’m just saying, not everyone is as angry as you are about the law.”

“So, you’re saying I should just stop fighting and marry Malfoy?” she asked testily.

Ron shuddered. “Definitely don’t marry Malfoy if you can help it.”

Hermione harrumphed. “The Wizengamot better see reason.”

She looked out at the pub and took in her friends and acquaintances. Many were socializing with their new fiancés, others drowning their sorrows, others still were trying to go out in a blaze of glory by flirting with as many people as possible.

Hermione’s eye landed on Luna Lovegood smiling dreamily at Blaise Zabini. It seemed they were getting along well enough, but the tall dark man clearly didn’t know what to make of Luna’s dreaminess. Their conversation was stilted. It was odd to think that a week ago Blaise was trying to get in Hermione’s pants.

Hermione eyed Susan Bones who was leading a wizard she didn’t recognize toward the fire places. Hermione had half a mind to bring someone home that night, just as a distraction. But as soon as she imagined this, her brain filled with images of Malfoy’s head between her legs and her screaming his name. She shook herself, disturbed.

She really ought to bring someone home now, if only to clear him out of her system. But she didn’t want to sleep with anyone here. She knew they were all engaged and it felt wrong. Then she realized with a jolt that *she* was engaged. Miserable, Hermione realized she wouldn’t be able to sleep with anyone until her sham marriage was over.

Hermione sighed and tuned back into what Ron was saying about some weird pureblood tradition about having to wear a particular cloak during the ceremony that was handed down from his father’s father or something or other.

Thursday, March 11

The Wizengamot still had not come to a decision six days later, which was making Hermione very nervous. She had even read over the wedding plans that Narcissa had owled her and had responded with suggestions, revisions, and her own guest list before she realized that meant she was agreeing to the wedding. She threw the plans to the floor in a heap and hadn’t looked at them since.

Narcissa wanted them to be married in 14 days. It was preposterous. *Married in 14 days?!*

Hermione tried to focus back on the logistics for implementing mobiles in the Auror division when she got a phone call. She answered, reading “Harry Potter” on the display.

There was an extended moment of silence.

“They voted against the appeal,” Harry finally said quietly.

Hermione gulped. “What?” she asked faintly.

“They. They voted against the appeal, Hermione. I’m so sorry.”

“I have to go,” she squeaked and hung up the phone abruptly.

There was a knock at her door sometime later, or maybe it was only a few seconds, Hermione didn’t know. She opened it without thought, staring blankly into the middle distance.

“I’m surprised you let me in,” Malfoy said casually, stepping into the room before she could slam the door in his face.

She didn’t respond, just stared at nothing, her brain curiously blank, her body tingling.

She had lost. She had never lost before.

“I hear we are to be wed after all,” he said slowly, staying near the door.

I lost.

“Can we resume our contract talks?” he asked when she still didn’t respond.

I’m marrying Draco Malfoy.

“We’ll need to make sure everything is planned quickly now because the deadline—”

Hermione stood abruptly and grabbed her beaded bag. She slung it over her shoulder and left her office in a daze. She could sense that Malfoy was following her, but he didn’t attempt to talk anymore. They walked in silence.

2500 signatures. And still...the law stands.

Hermione found herself on the streets of muggle London with Malfoy in tow. She wandered into the closest bar that she could find and ordered a double shot of vodka. She did the shot quickly, then ordered a scotch on the rocks.

Malfoy ordered a scotch as well and sat patiently until she finally said something.

“I lost,” Hermione said after her second scotch. She was quite trashed at that point. “I lost. *I lost. Me. Hermione Granger!*” She started laughing hysterically which quickly turned into sobs.

Malfoy reached toward her uncertainly, but thought better of it and remained silent.

“Hermione Granger is a loser,” Hermione repeated. She was laughing again. “Can I get another scotch?” she asked the bartender, who ought to have cut her off, but happily obliged.

She lapsed back into silence and drained her drink.

Hermione pulled out her mobile and dialed her parents’ landline, completely ignoring Malfoy’s presence.

“Hey mom,” she said tiredly, then she was sobbing again.

“Hermione? Are you okay? Is it that Lord man?”

“No—no, it’s...” More sobs. “I’m sorry.”

“Breathe with me, sweetheart. In...out...”

She breathed deeply for several minutes along with her mother.

“Better?” her mom asked.

“Yes,” Hermione hiccupped. “I’m a bit sloshed,” she admitted quietly.

“Yes, dear, I could tell,” Her mom laughed. “Now what is it, sweetheart? Why are you drinking in the middle of the afternoon?”

“The—the Ministry of Magic, mom, they...”

“Another war?” her mother asked, concern evident in her voice.

“No. Not. No. No war. Just. They’re putting in a marriage law. And I’m to be married to—” She gulped and looked at his blank face. He was undoubtedly occluding. “I’m to be married to Malfoy.”

“Malfoy? Do you remember a Malfoy?” she heard her mom asking her dad, then she remembered. “Malfoy! That bully?”

“Yes. Him.” Malfoy pulled his intense gaze from hers.

“Oh dear,” her mom said.

“What’s going on?” her dad was shouting from the other room.

“Something about a marriage law!” her mom shouted back.

Hermione couldn’t handle this conversation anymore. “I’ll call you tomorrow, okay? I just. I needed to tell you. We get married in two Thursdays, on the 25th.”

“The 25th!”

“I—tomorrow. I’ll call you tomorrow.” Hermione hung up decisively.

She ordered another drink, this time a double.

Finally, Malfoy spoke. “You won’t be able to get yourself home at this rate, Granger.”

Hermione laughed again, slightly unhinged. “One can only hope! Maybe I’ll wake up and it will all be a cruel dream.”

He flinched. “Cruel indeed.”

She downed her drink and ordered another.

“Seriously, you might end up in the hospital if you keep drinking.”

Hermione shrugged, well beyond caring for her well-being.

Malfoy intercepted her next drink and told the bartender to stop serving them. The bartender raised an eyebrow, but slinked away. Malfoy pulled out some muggle notes and left them on the counter.

“Where do you live?” he asked sharply, clearly not drunk at all.

Hermione shrugged. “Doesn’t matter,” she replied, which she realized made no sense, so she started laughing again.

“Fuck me,” Malfoy muttered.

Hermione hiccupped again. “Already did!” she laughed even harder now.

“Use your muggle rectangle and summon Potter,” he told her firmly.

Hermione frowned at him. “You can’t order me about, Malfoy. You don’t scare me with all your flowers.”

Hermione frowned, that sentence made more sense in her head. She had meant something about flowers, but she wasn’t entirely sure what anymore. The thought drifted away.

“Summon Potter,” he repeated.

Hermione rolled her eyes and nearly fell from her seat. She righted herself and unlocked her phone. She clicked on Harry’s name with some difficulty.

“Hermione!” came Harry’s concerned voice. “I went to your office but you weren’t there. Where are you? Are you okay? I promise, we’ll come up with something—”

“Malfoy made me call you,” Hermione interrupted drunkenly.

“Malfoy? Where is he?”

“We’re at a pub. I’m very drunk,” she giggled.

“Which pub?” Harry asked.

Hermione shrugged.

“Which pub?” he asked again.

“The pub. The pub ‘round the corner.”

“Okay. Okay. You stay. I’ll—Fuck. Just stay there okay.”

Hermione giggled and hung up the phone while Harry was still giving her instructions.

“Why do men think they can just tell me what to do?” she wondered aloud.

Malfoy sighed. “Did you summon him? I don’t understand how that rectangle works.”

“It’s science, Malfoy. It’s science! Bill Nye the Science GUY!” Hermione began singing the Bill Nye song at the top of her lungs.

This was how Harry found her.

“What the fuck happened, Malfoy?” Harry asked rudely.

“She wouldn’t stop drinking. I didn’t think I should leave her alone.”

Harry glared at him, making Hermione break out into a fit of giggles. She tapped Harry’s face. “You look so funny when you’re mad, Harry!”

“Jesus Christ.” Harry grabbed hold of Hermione’s arm. “Okay, time to go home, Hermione,” he stated.

“No,” Hermione protested.

“Yes,” Harry countered.

He tried to lift her, but Hermione found herself pitching toward the ground. Malfoy caught her. The two of them supported her out the door and into the back alley. Harry disappeared the three of them to her flat the next moment.

*

Draco’s owl Aurora hooted in delight upon seeing him again. It had been two weeks of the owl waiting at Granger’s place for her return letter. The witch had even set up a perch for his owl and purchased her treats. *So stubborn.*

Draco helped Potter place Granger on her side on her sofa. Her orange monstrosity of a cat greeted Potter happily, then stared down Draco with intelligent eyes.

Draco looked around, drinking in Granger’s flat. He wanted to know more about how she lived, it would help him decorate her bedroom at his flat.

“You can leave now, Malfoy,” Potter said snidely.

Draco's mask fell back into place. He pat his owl softly, then moved back to the door until he felt the line of the wards pass over him. He nodded at Potter, then disappeared on the spot.

Draco was greeted by his too large flat and Flopsy. The elf was in her normal uniform: a well-tailored and ironed three-piece black suit.

"Mistress Hermione is not with you," Flopsy said sadly.

Draco felt a burning in his stomach. "No. She is not."

Flopsy hung her head. "Flopsy puts away the food she prepared."

Draco felt bad for the elf. He brushed it off and went to go sulk in his bath. The thought that Granger would rather drink herself to death than spend any amount of time with him hurt him, more than he thought it might.

Upon finding out he had been matched to her, he had felt an unexpected thrill shoot through him. It might have been based on their wild night of sex, but if he were honest, he had always been intrigued by Granger, always annoyingly drawn to her. He might have even fantasized about the woman before. Not that he would ever admit that.

Draco was not an idealist like Hermione Granger, so he knew that this marriage was definitely going to happen the moment they announced the law. What he needed now was to get Granger to accept it somehow. He hated the thought that she hated him so much she would rather be insensate drunk than marry him.

Once he had towed off, he started thinking of ways to make Granger hate him slightly less. It was going to be awfully hard co-parenting with a woman who couldn't even be in the same room as him.

Chapter End Notes

Our first look at Draco's POV! Poor Flopsy, already in love with Hermione.

Also, I really have no clue how the legal system works in the muggle world, let alone the magical one, so just pretend all of these things make sense.

Negotiations

Chapter Notes

CW: brief mention of miscarriage, no details.

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

Friday, March 12

Hermione awoke groggily the next morning to a pounding headache. Her unfocused eyes seemed to imagine Harry sleeping in her armchair. She groaned and closed her eyes again. A few moments later she opened them. It was definitely Harry.

“Harry?” she croaked.

Hermione noticed a glass of water and sat up awkwardly so she could drink it. She gulped it down quickly, the fog and pain in her brain clearing slightly. She grasped her wand and summoned a hangover potion. She downed that next, then filled her water and chugged another glassful. Her mouth tasted peppery from the potion.

“Harry,” she repeated more confidently this time.

He sat upright suddenly. “What?” Harry adjusted his glasses on his face. “Oh. You alright, Hermione?”

Hermione let reality slowly filter back to her. She remembered her embarrassing breakdown the night previous. And in front of Malfoy no less.

“Sorry about yesterday,” she apologized.

“It’s okay,” Harry shrugged.

Hermione sat up slowly and checked the time. They still had an hour until they had to be at work.

“I wish I could help,” Harry said finally. He summoned his own water.

“I did everything I could, Harry. I...I’m sorry I broke down like that. I’ve just never lost before. You know?”

Harry nodded. He did know. They had pulled off the impossible again and again and again. It was unbelievable at times, even perhaps poorly written, but they always triumphed. Something stupid like a law beating her felt like a very low blow indeed.

“Listen, Hermione. We can protest. We can move to America. Or—or Australia. Or Canada.”

“No, we’re not moving, Harry. This is our home. We have fought tooth and fucking nail for this place. And they *owe* us. They can’t chase us out. And if I have to be married to the blond idiot for a while, so be it. I’ll figure it out. I won’t stop fighting. I’ll just have to think of another tactic. I can appeal the law again next year, so I’ll start building my defense.”

Harry dropped his head. “I’m sorry.”

“Me too.”

*

Malfoy was leaning on her doorframe when she got to her office. He had a coffee cup in his hand that he handed to her.

“Good morning,” he greeted evenly.

Hermione flushed, embarrassed by her breakdown. “Hi,” she responded neutrally.

“I take it from your phone call with your parents yesterday, you are now willing to continue our contract negotiations?”

Hermione crossed her arms. “I guess. But I will find a way to overturn this law.”

Malfoy shrugged, seemingly unphased. “I have no doubt that you will, Granger.”

Hermione peered at the coffee cup. “What is this?”

“Coffee. One milk, one sugar.”

Hermione frowned. *How does he know my coffee order?*

“Thank you,” she said begrudgingly.

“I will come by at lunch. We can continue our conversation.”

“Fine,” she said and closed the door in his face once more. Although this time, it wasn’t quite a slam, so their relationship was improving.

*

Instead of insisting that they return to his over-sized flat, Malfoy waltzed into her office, closed the door and took a seat across from her. He pulled out their lined paper contract and a quill and placed it on the desk.

“So,” he started, all business. “This is what I have so far,” he read, “Marriage Contract: Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy.” Then he looked up at her expectantly.

Hermione snorted. “I suppose we didn’t get very far last time, did we?”

“No.”

Hermione almost apologised, but felt justified in her anger. Instead, she cleared her throat. “We can live at your flat. Mine is small and I’m not very attached to it.”

Malfoy began writing in his neat, slanted script. “I will pay for the bills, taxes, utilities, food, that kind of thing,” he stated.

“I can contribute,” Hermione countered.

“You can, but why would you?” he responded. At least he hadn’t written anything yet.

“Because it’s wrong for you to pay for everything when I can pay. It’s no problem.”

Malfoy rolled his eyes. “Think of it as reparations, Granger. My family more than owes you a lot of money in terms of prolonged psychological damage.”

Hermione shuddered at the casual way he referred to her torture.

“Sorry. No. I meant. Me. The bullying. Not—well, I mean also *that*—because—”

Hermione liked seeing him uncomfortable. It was so incongruous to the Draco Malfoy that she knew. She relished in his discomfort for a moment.

“This is just the draft contract, right?” she asked, cutting off his babbling.

“Yes.”

Hermione did feel that Malfoy owed her—owed the world really—for all the terrible shit he did as a child, and all the terrible shit his whole pureblood line contributed to. Letting him pay for the bills would not be the end of the world...

“Well, write it down for now.”

Malfoy’s hand resumed its flowing script.

“Allowance?” he asked quietly, not looking at her. He probably feared another of her outbursts.

Hermione had discussed this a bit with Ginny since he had first mentioned it and realized that it was supposed to be seen as a nice thing, which felt wrong. But she acknowledged that Malfoy was just trying to do things ‘properly’ whatever that meant to him.

“No.”

“What about—”

“I don’t want one.”

“Can you at least listen to what I have to say?”

Hermione took a deep breath and counted to five. “What?”

“At least consider taking an annual allowance.”

“How is that any better than a monthly one?”

Malfoy twirled his quill. “You can access the money all at once if you wanted.”

“I don’t need or want your money.”

He tapped the quill on their parchment, tiny flecks of ink dripping out. “You could do anything you want with it.”

“Why are you so insistent that you pay for everything? That you pay me—it’s bizarre!”

It was Malfoy’s turn to take a deep breath. “Women are supposed to be taken care of. We are supposed to share our wealth.”

“But I’m perfectly capable of—”

“I’m not claiming you’re not capable of providing for yourself,” he cut her off, his voice sharp. It appeared he was reaching a limit on his patience with her. “I am simply what is proper—providing for my future wife. You are not required to spend the money I give you. You can give it all away for all I care.”

Hermione thought about this for a while. “I could do anything I wanted with it? No strings attached?”

He nodded.

“Aren’t you worried I’ll rob you blind and give it to the House Elf Alliance?”

“Not really.”

Hermione tapped her fingers on her desk, thinking. She could do a lot of good with the Malfoy fortune. “Fine. An annual allowance. How much? Ginny said many pureblood wives get between 500 to 3,000 galleons a month—which is an absurd amount of money. So, we could do...15,000 per year?” Hermione muttered to herself: “15,000, that’s an insane number...”

“15,000 is nothing.”

“Malfoy, 15,000 galleons is the starting salary for most ministry positions.”

“And you don’t think you deserve more than an entry-level position?”

Hermione’s eye twitched. “I have a job,” she reminded him through clenched teeth.

“Besides,” he continued on, not addressing her comment, “15,000 is far too low, your allowance would have been at minimum 5,000 a month, so—”

“5,000! A month?! Malfoy, don’t be ridiculous.”

He leveled her with his aristocratic gaze. “We are Malfoys. We take care of our wives.”

Hermione held her tongue, barely refraining from making a callous comment about Lucius not caring for his wife when he decided to be branded by a megalomaniac. She reflected that she knew nothing about the relationship between Lucius and Narcissa and wondered if it had been loving or not.

“But that’s 60,000 galleons, *a year*,” Hermione pointed out.

“Correct. So, your annual allowance should be a value of at least 60,000 galleons,” he reasoned, his quill hovering dangerously close to the paper.

“40,” Hermione rebutted.

“70,” he countered back.

“You’re supposed to go down, Malfoy, not up. Compromise.”

“80,” he responded, a gleam in his eyes.

“Jesus. No. 45.”

“90.”

“Malfoy!”

“Granger.”

Hermione was equal parts annoyed, equal parts amused by their exchange. “50.”

“Granger, just take 100,000 and let’s move on.”

Hermione jaw dropped. “100—no. That is too much. What on earth would I even do with that kind of money?”

“Think of all the charity work you could do,” he offered. “Save the elves or the faeries or whatever.”

Hermione glared at him in annoyance. He was right. She could donate the money to so many causes in need. It would make a huge difference in the world. She crossed her arms, mind racing.

“Can you afford to manage all of your many properties, pay all of our bills, live your lavish lifestyle, and give me 100,000 galleons annually? I mean, you can’t possibly be *that* rich.”

“My financial advisor informed me that I can go as high as 500,000 for you a year without it impacting my behaviours or expenses,” he responded.

Hermione’s jaw dropped. “5—*Pardon*? How rich are you?”

Malfoy smirked. "It's not all liquid, of course," he said in that annoyingly posh voice of his, "But, I believe the estate is sitting at about a billion. We have 300 million in the bank. Then, of course there's all the jewelry, the ancestral trove, the properties, stocks, the hidden wealth, the—"

"Jesus. Christ." Hermione blanched in the face of the wealth before her.

"So really, 100,000 a year is nothing. Would you agree to 2?"

Hermione might have been shaking in shock. A billionaire. She was marrying a billionaire. Who apparently didn't care if she bankrupted him. She could redistribute his wealth and actually make the world a better place...

"Uh. Okay."

"Fantastic. I'm surprised I got you to agree," he admitted, his quill descended to the page.

"I'll take the 500."

Malfoy raised an eyebrow. "Really?"

Hermione nodded. "Yes. I'll save the elves, 'or whatever,' as you put it. Might as well. Clearly, you're not using it if you're just letting the money languish in your bank account."

Malfoy appeared to be holding back a smirk. He nodded and wrote in the details in silence.

"And what will you have in return?" she asked, still worried about feeling like she owed him.

"What do you mean?"

"I get to rob you blind—"

"Like I said, it will not impact my finances at all—"

Hermione continued, "What do you get?"

Malfoy shrugged. "Nothing."

"Well, that's hardly equal."

"Reparations," he repeated softly.

Hermione didn't like that line of thought, so she instead thought of something that she could offer him that would require nothing from her—at least nothing tangible. "I'll be nice to you for a full day, once a year. You choose the day, but have to give me 24 hours warning."

He shot her a lopsided grin. "Deal."

"Deal," she agreed.

“To clarify,” he said, “You will be transferred 500,000 galleons once a year to your private Gringotts account. That will be your money that I do not have access to. In addition, as a Malfoy, you will always have access to the vaults and assets.” He cut off her protest, “Which does not mean that you are required to access them, merely that you may, should you so desire. I will not have access to your vaults, unless you give me express permission.”

“Why would I?”

“For instance, if you want me to pick up some galleons for you on my way home from the Ministry.”

“Yes. Okay, that is fair. And when we divorce?”

His jaw ticked slightly. “You will have an allowance for any children we have. We’ll stick with 500,000 a year? The children will have their trusts, of course, a standard percentage of the estate depending on how many we have. You will also have access to divorcée funds until you die. Generally, that’s 50K a year.”

“Divorcée funds?”

“You can access an account I will set aside for you.”

Hermione was beyond confused by the blond’s motives. Why did he want to give her money? Also, 500,000 was an insane amount of money for the children, but she could continue donating to charities with the extra funds, so didn’t see much point in fighting it.

“Why would you want to give me money? I mean *me* specifically, not our hypothetical children?”

He blinked at her slowly. “Repa—”

“If you say reparations one more time—!”

His mouth twitched in an almost smile. “Because I’m git and I’m sure you’ll deserve a fortune for putting up with me.”

Hermione didn’t find much point in arguing about that valid point. “And the assets? We will both leave with what we had at the beginning of the marriage.”

“You sure you don’t want to put in something about taking some assets, or—”

“I don’t want your things!” she huffed.

Malfoy rolled his eyes dramatically. “You are not going to adjust well to being rich.”

“Well, really no one should be as rich as you. There is no way to be an ethical billionaire—”

“Yes, yes, thank you, Granger,” he cut her off rudely. “You won’t get any of my assets. I won’t get any of yours. Happy?”

Her eye twitched again. “Yes.”

“You should get a property of your choice as well.”

“P-pardon?”

“It is common practice.”

“For whom?”

Malfoy chuckled. “The rich.”

Hermione pinched the bridge of her nose. Her patience was running thin. “*Fine*,” she seethed. She could always sell the property or open up a not-for-profit.

Malfoy nodded calmly and kept adding to the contract. He read back everything they had discussed so far and Hermione nodded tersely in response.

“Next order of business; jobs. I’ll just write in that we’ll both work as we see fit, sound good?”

“I would like it written down that you will not force me to quit working when I become pregnant. And that I am allowed to continue to work after any children are born.” Hermione was distinctly uncomfortable at the thought of procreating with the man before her.

Malfoy nodded and penned in the addition. “I would like to add that work hours should be limited to the regular workday to allow for maximum time with the children.”

Hermione narrowed her eyes at him. “You think I would care more about my job than my children?”

“I didn’t say that.”

“You basically did.”

“No, you’re jumping to conclusions,” he replied.

“*You’re* jumping to conclusions about my work habits.”

“Everyone knows you’re a workaholic, Granger.”

Hermione huffed. “I think we should take a break for now.”

Malfoy stiffened. “Agreed. Can we meet tonight after work?”

Hermione sighed. There was no escaping him. “Yes. Come to my flat. I believe you know where it is.”

Malfoy nodded tersely and folded up their contract. He deftly placed it in his robes and swept from the room without another word.

*

Draco found a letter waiting in his inbox when he returned to his office after his brief lunch with Granger.

It was odd how quickly she consumed every one of his thoughts. At Hogwarts, she was often on his mind because of how annoying and righteous she was. Always being swotty and shouting about one thing or another. Being obnoxiously intelligent in class. Biting on her quills and tucking her hair back behind her ear while she furiously took notes. Laughing at whatever joke the ginger oaf was telling. Desperately pining after the Weasel like a fool. Always stealing Draco's favourite table in the library, her nose inches from a book—she truly had terrible posture.

Not that she noticed him, apart from their fraught encounters and Draco's bullying. As he matured, he regretted his actions back in school. He had even sent her a letter and apologized after the war. He wasn't sure if she accepted his apology, since she had never responded to the letter, but when they had started working at the Ministry together and would randomly end up in the same lift or hallway, Granger was never hostile, though he definitely wouldn't qualify her as welcoming or friendly. After his apology letter, Granger had largely faded into the background of his mind. He hardly saw her and he seldom thought about her.

Now, Draco could rarely concentrate on work because he was trying to find a way to make her show up to their Ministry mandated wedding. Draco didn't much fancy marrying a woman who couldn't stand his presence. At least, that was the excuse he had settled on for justifying his quest to get her to like him.

He nodded at the department secretary and closed himself in his office before his boss could berate him about something. Draco opened the letter primly with his sharp letter opener.

Malfoy.

I'm shocked you wrote me. I'm more shocked I read it. I'm most shocked that I'm responding. But since Hermione didn't get the law overturned, I was curious about what you might have to say.

Imagine my further shock at your particularly un-Malfoy-esque request.

I've thought long and hard about what you'll have to do to pay me back for this intelligence. I want a new broom. The Nimbus 2012. Once it's at my house, I'll give you the information you want.

GP

Draco read the letter quickly and smirked. *Good for her.* She really ought to have been sorted into Slytherin, the snake. He was expecting her to ask for something ridiculous like a broom that cost as much as a small house. Luckily, he was so rich it didn't matter. Draco summoned Flopsy.

"Yes, Mr. Draco, sir?" she asked as she popped into existence beside his desk.

“How are you, Flopsy?”

Flopsy blinked up at him with her large green eyes. “Flopsy is good, Mr. Draco, sir. Is Miss Hermione Granger coming to the flat tonight?”

Draco sighed. “Not tonight. But we are making progress.”

Flopsy nodded as her smile disappeared. Poor elf loved that woman, even though they had only met twice. It was rare for Draco to bring his conquests home—he preferred to end up at their homes so that he could avoid the awkwardness of getting them to leave. Granger was the first woman to spend the night in several years.

“I need you to buy a Nimbus 2012 and deliver it to Ginevra Potter as soon as possible. It will help with Granger.”

Flopsy bowed low. “Of course, sir. Right away!” she snapped and disappeared.

Draco nodded to himself, confident that he would be hearing back from Ginny within the hour. He did his best to return to the mountain of work before him, but his thoughts kept running to the wedding and the need to make sure that Granger didn’t flee the country. He was less than enthusiastic with their progress so far. Getting her to agree to an allowance had been like pulling his nails from his fingers—*why does she not want money? Everyone wants money.*

Draco was looking forward to seeing her flat again so that he could make more modifications to her new suite. He was less enthused about the return to their negotiations.

*

Hermione was finishing up a memo when there was a knock at her door. She glanced at the clock, tempted to tell whoever it was to bugar off, since it was the end of the day and she really needed to tidy before Malfoy saw her apartment.

But, of course, it was the blond devil himself.

“Ready yet?” he drawled from his favourite place by her doorframe.

Hermione heaved a sigh. “Almost. Just shut up for a minute or I’ll lose my train of thought.”

He raised his eyebrows, but obligingly remained silent. Hermione finished her memo and tidied her desk for the evening. She grabbed her purse and led the way from her office in silence. Once at the apparition spot, she gingerly held out her hand and grasped his. They hurtled into nothingness and reappeared a moment later by her front door.

“Just, wait here a minute,” she ordered, sightly flustered and cast a privacy wall. Hermione sprinted around her living room, picked up the wayward clothing, and tidied the mass number of books that were haphazardly piled everywhere. She double checked the loo was clean, then firmly closed and warded her bedroom door.

Hermione removed the privacy screen and locked eyes with Malfoy. His eyes looked oddly dark from so far away.

Hermione gestured toward her small kitchen table, then went about preparing tea for both of them, more in an effort to keep herself busy than in an effort to be hospitable. Malfoy seemed unperturbed by her evident unease. He went to his owl and gently pet her. She hooted softly. Hermione watched with interest as Malfoy showed affection to something. It was...odd.

“What’s her name?” Hermione asked abruptly, then dragged her eyes away from his open expression of adoration for his owl.

“Aurora.” Malfoy made his way to her small kitchen table and took a seat. “She seems very cozy here. At least when you move in, my owl will live with me again,” he muttered.

Hermione laughed. “Well, she refuses to leave.”

Malfoy sat elegantly in her cheap chair. “You refuse to answer my owls.”

Hermione blinked at him then busied herself with the tea again, not wanting to get into a fight before they had even started the contract negotiations.

He pulled their contract from inside his robes, unfolded it, and summoned a fountain pen with a snap of his hands. Hermione took a moment to admire the pen. It was solid gold.

Malfoy accepted the tea, added three teaspoons of sugar (to Hermione’s horror), then started re-reading what they had already agreed to.

Once he had read through their short list of agreements, he said, “Now for the fun stuff. I do fully believe that you will find a way out of this marriage, Granger. But we must discuss this in case you do not.”

Hermione tensed. She knew what he was going to say.

“Children.” He looked away for the next part. “I’m going to assume that you would like to conceive... the medical way.”

Hermione’s gut reaction was to protest his statement; she had always imagined giving birth to her children conceived through fantastic sex with her loving husband. However, her loving husband, he was not. This also brought up the sex issue. She didn’t, in theory, want to have sex with him. But in practice, all she could think of was her toes curling as he sent her over the edge in his pompous flat. In fact, all day every day, she was trying to suppress the memories of him making her scream.

He continued when she said nothing. “I am fine with this arrangement. I know many people who could not conceive who went the medical route.” He began writing when she said nothing.

“I—” Hermione didn’t know how to say that she didn’t want to be artificially inseminated without then admitting that she was willing to have sex with him. “Fine. Yes. Medical.”

He paused and looked up at her pained face. “What is it?”

She didn’t respond.

Malfoy’s jaw tensed. “I understand that the thought of being forever tethered to me is nauseating.”

“I didn’t say that,” Hermione responded.

“Your face did.” He looked distinctly uncomfortable now.

She huffed. “I was just thinking about how I have always imagined having fantastic sex with the father of my children. And how magical births are always more effective when conceived via mutual orgasm,” she responded, a hot blush on her face. “Less likely to miscarry as well.”

She had done her fair share of reading in her life; while insemination worked, squibs and complications in the pregnancy were far more likely. Not that Hermione cared about squibs—what she cared about was her or her child dying. But if they didn’t choose insemination, then she would be agreeing to shag Draco Malfoy of her own free will (again). Not only shag him, but they would both need to achieve mutual orgasm.

Why did I have to say those words?

Hermione tried to shut off her traitorous mind which flashed a new memory of her on top of him in the dark, screaming as they both came undone. He would definitely be able to bring them to mutual orgasm, should he try.

No. Not thinking about him that way. No.

Malfoy was blinking at her in shock. “What?”

“I did some reading—”

“How out of character.”

“—a few years ago,” Hermione continued on with a glare, “about magical pregnancies and to ensure the highest success rates, you need...well. What I said a moment ago.” She cleared her throat, the air growing tense.

Malfoy leaned forward, his grey eyes flashing in the poor light of her dining area. “What is it you said again?” he asked in a voice that had no place outside of the bedroom.

Hermione cleared her throat and tried to look away, but found she couldn’t. “Just that—natural—um...non-medical...conception. It’s better odds.”

“Don’t forget mutual orgasm. That seemed to be rather important,” he responded huskily.

Hermione finally tore her eyes away. Her heart was pounding and her face flushed. *What is happening?* Her eyes landed on his left hand holding his golden pen. He was rolling it through his fingers in a way that promised he knew how to put those fingers to good use.

Hermione bit her lip.

“Yes,” she responded, her voice unusually high. She traced the outline of his signet ring instead of looking at his fingers.

Malfoy tapped his manicured nail on her shitty table, pulling her traitorous eyes from his ring to back his fingers. “What do you suggest, then, Granger?”

She forced herself to look at the table instead of his body. “I think that... I mean if you...” She was having a hard time articulating.

Malfoy tilted his head and leaned back in his chair, looking vaguely amused. He made no attempt to help her finish her sentence.

“I think that... we could try? Y’know, and see if...” her voice cracked as she said, “the n-natural way.”

“Why, Ms. Granger, are you propositioning me?” he drawled, the amusement evident in his voice. But Hermione was not amused, in fact she was almost on the brink of tears.

“I just,” she continued haltingly, “this is not the marriage that I imagined.” A tear rolled down her cheek. She wiped it away stubbornly. Hermione was mortified that she was crying in front of Malfoy of all people. “I’ve always wanted kids, Malfoy. Lots of kids. I love them. And I don’t think I can handle miscarrying. Or when they’re adults they find out that we hated each other so much we didn’t even try. That it was only ever because of the marriage law...”

“They’re going to find out about the marriage law anyway,” he pointed out.

“Yes, but...we’re supposed to be compatible. Which means that we should want to—obviously, they didn’t take our pasts into consideration...”

“Listen, Granger. If you want to try to have kids through good old sex, you won’t have to twist my arm.”

Hermione flushed hotly.

“But that does complicate things. For instance, now we need to talk about sex. If you wish to have children, *plural*, we’ll have to shag at least twice. Likely much, *much* more than that.” He eyed her lips for a moment, then brought his eyes back to hers. “Now, I’m assuming that you will want to wait a while to see if you can overturn the law, but the Ministry deadline to announce a pregnancy is a year. So, we’ll have to start trying at least seven months from now to give us time to see if you’re pregnant. And then there’s the business of who we’re having sex with—”

“What do you mean ‘who?’”

“Well...I thought that you would want to go the medical route. So, I was thinking of the possibility of...satisfying certain needs with other women. Discreetly, of course.”

Hermione was immediately outraged. She felt oddly betrayed. “I am going to be your wife and you’re planning on cheating on me?”

Malfoy held up his hands in his defense. “Granger, you can’t think that I was going to never have sex with anyone again?”

“I’ve just said that we’re going to have sex!”

“Yes, in order to produce children. So that’s a few times a month while you’re ovulating. Seven months from now. What happens after that? Remember that we are married for the rest of our lives.”

Hermione could not believe him. Did he not believe in the sanctity of marriage? “Well, I’m not having sex with you if you’re seeing other women,” she vowed. “I value my sexual health, thank you very much.”

“Think about it, Granger. The rest of our lives. Once the kids are born, then what? And even then, having sex once or twice a year is not going to cut it for me.” She let out a noise of disgust. “Hey, I’m being honest here. You’re not being honest with yourself. You may be able to last longer than me, but the rest of your life...? And what about the six or seven months before we start trying to get pregnant? Half a year,” he looked off in the middle distance, “that’s a long time.”

Hermione took a deep breath and mulled over what he was saying. She took a sip of her now cold tea. He did have a point. But the idea of being cheated on or even cheating on him would never sit right with her, forced marriage or not.

“I don’t know, but I don’t like the idea of the *Prophet* or *Witch Weekly* somehow finding out about your ‘arrangement’ with other women. I would be criticized endlessly for the entire magical world to see.”

Malfoy paused. “That’s what discretion is for.”

“How am I supposed to just trust that you’ll never be caught?”

Malfoy opened his mouth, but hesitated in responding.

“Can we figure out the sex thing later?” she asked.

“No, Granger. That’s the whole point of this contract.”

“Ugh! Fine. Well. How about this,” she snapped, “We have sex once a week minimum after the children are born, as long as we’re both able—like physically in the country, not ill, that kind of thing. We’ll shag when I’m ovulating to get pregnant...I guess, as much as... necessary?”

Malfoy smirked. “I can’t believe you’d rather shag me than be cheated on. It’s a sham marriage, Granger... or maybe you are just secretly in love with me,” he teased.

“Sod off,” she threw back, blushing again.

“Seriously, shagging to get pregnant, I understand, but wanting to keep shagging after...” He lifted an eyebrow suggestively.

Hermione’s red face got redder. “I hardly want to be the brunt of the gossip column yet again. I can just see the articles now: Hermione Granger, incapable to satisfying her husband!” she reiterated with a swell of insecurity.

Malfoy blinked back at her, thinking of a response, but she cut him off.

“Do you agree or not?”

He considered for a moment. “Minimum once a week... that’s not terrible. Not ideal either,” he muttered almost inaudibly, but he responded, “Fine,” he shrugged and wrote down this proviso. “What about before we start trying to get pregnant.”

Hermione bit her lip. That was a fair question. “Can’t we just wait?”

Malfoy levelled her with a significant look. “I’d prefer not to go six to seven months with just my hand as company.”

Hermione wished her face were less pink. The odds of her overturning the law in the next six months were slim to none. Her appeal failing meant that she had to wait a full calendar year to appeal the law again. “Okay,” she said finally. “Give me...two months? I’m going to be working pretty hard—but if I don’t come up with anything, we could...ahem—stick to the once-a-week rule.”

Malfoy ran his finger around the rim of his tea mug. Hermione had to look away pointedly. All the sex talk was making her mind full of filthy images. Something about his hands just made her—

“Two months from today or two months after we are wed?”

“After the wedding.”

Malfoy debated silently. “When you say once a week...do you mean, one day a week, or one sexual encounter?”

Hermione fidgeted and tried not to be gobsmacked by the idea of shagging for an entire day. “Um—I guess one encounter?”

He was still caressing his mug (indecently, in her opinion). “Define encounter.”

Hermione was hot around her collar. “I don’t know. You define encounter.”

Malfoy’s fingers continued their indecent dance around the rim of his cup. “To me, a sexual encounter could last...hours. It doesn’t end until we’re both too exhausted to keep going.”

Hermione choked on her spit. She coughed awkwardly, trying to clear her airway. “Ahem. Right.”

“It also requires that we both finish, at least once.”

Hermione had to be sweating through her clothes. *How did we get here?* she wondered idly, as a heat sparked in her lower abdomen.

“That definition is fine with you?” he prompted, voice husky.

“Uh—yeah. Sure,” Hermione squeaked in response.

“But, to be clear, we could have more than one encounter, if we wanted.”

“I suppose so. That’s what ‘minimum’ means.”

Malfoy finally stopped his caressing his cup. “Agreed.”

Hermione cleared her throat while he wrote down their sexual obligations: once a week starting May 25, at least once while she was ovulating seven months from now, once a week after the children were born—unless otherwise agreed upon.

“Now, how many children are we agreeing on?” Malfoy asked, moving them right along. Hermione was thankful for that, because her mind was all sorts of scrambled.

“Three.”

“Three? I already thought that two was high.”

“I want at least three,” she restated, “And I’m not budging on this. And, I expect you to love them.”

Malfoy frowned at her. “I may not love you, Granger, but I will love whatever offspring we produce. Can we agree to a range? At least two children, with a maximum of four.”

Hermione considered his counter offer. She felt confident that, if by some horrible twist of fate, she remained married to Malfoy, she would be able to convince him to see her way with time. “Sure.”

“Excellent.” His quill scratched away. “Now, I want to discuss your last name—”

“I’m keeping it. And the children will have hyphenated names. Granger-Malfoy.”

Malfoy’s jaw tensed. “I really must insist—”

“You got your damn allowance, give me my last name. Hell, we’re living in your house. Your mother’s ruining my wedding and I have to have sex with your pale ass once a week. I deserve to keep my last name.”

“Fine,” he agreed through clenched teeth. “But I think we should all acknowledge that *you* were the one who insisted on the sex.” He smirked at her reaction. “Now, as you know, I have a house elf, Flopsy. She will also be your house elf and our children’s.”

“I think we should free her,” Hermione stated boldly.

Malfoy continued writing. “She is free.”

Hermione’s jaw dropped. “I beg your pardon?”

He glanced at her as if this was not big news. “I freed her when the Dark Lord moved in with us. She was to be his personal elf,” he shuddered deeply. “She gets paid and has vacation time. Last year, she went to Colombia.”

Hermione’s heart swelled. The man in front of her was full of surprises. She blinked at him, confused by the whiplash of the past several minutes.

Ignoring her, Malfoy continued on, “Now I would like to include the fact that the children are to know their grandmother. I know my mother is... a lot to handle, but there is nothing that will bring her more joy than grandchildren. I must insist that she sees them at least monthly. I will supervise these visits. You may come too, if you wish.”

“As long as she doesn’t teach them blood prejudice, I have no objections. Also, add in the same for my parents. At least once a month.” Hermione figured she could accompany Malfoy if it came to it.

“Excellent,” Malfoy responded, his quill flying across the page. “This has been surprisingly easy, Granger. I don’t believe there’s anything else that I want to add.”

“I wouldn’t mind adding something...”

He raised his brow inquisitively. “Yes?”

“I know that this marriage is a joke, but... I think that we should try to be as cordial to one another as possible. Even if I do succeed in overthrowing the law. I would prefer to not hate living with you in the interim.”

“How about: we shall not be unnecessarily hostile toward one another?”

“That works. I think it’s the best that we can count on, considering us,” she laughed lightly.

They descended into silence.

“So. That’s it then, we’ll be married in 13 days,” Hermione said.

“This isn’t how you imagined your wedding, is it?”

Hermione sighed sadly. “I just thought I would be with the love of my life. And I had always looked forward to the engagement ring and some spectacular proposal.” She let her mind drift off dreamily. “And you?”

He shrugged. “If I’m being honest, this isn’t much different from what I expected. purebloods don’t usually marry for love.”

Hermione frowned. "But did you want to?"

Malfoy made a noncommittal noise. "I never gave it much thought. Doesn't matter now anyway."

Hermione was sad for both of them; for her lost future and for the fact that he had never even imagined one.

Malfoy passed the paper toward her. "Read it over and sign."

"I'll sign it at the altar," she countered.

Malfoy rolled his eyes. "Just sign it, Granger. We can change it at any time, including at the altar."

"Why does it matter when I sign it?"

"This is just one less thing to worry about if we get it done now. Didn't Weasley sign his two weeks ago? They're not married yet, right?"

Hermione groaned. "I am not looking forward to their wedding," she responded.

"I thought he was your best mate."

Hermione nodded. "Doesn't mean I want to spend the evening with a bunch of pureblood Slytherins," she retorted.

Malfoy seemed unbothered by her jab and pushed the contract back in front of her. "I'll be there to protect you."

Hermione blinked at him, trying to determine if he was joking or not. He seemed serious, which greatly confused her. Hermione looked back down at the contract and read over it meticulously, thinking through every possible interpretation of the phrasing he had used and any other specifics. It was oddly simplistic all in all.

"I'll need a lawyer to read this before I sign."

Malfoy's jaw clenched, but his tone was even when he responded. "As you wish."

Hermione folded up the paper and left it in the middle of the table. They descended into awkward silence again. She looked around absently for Crookshanks and couldn't find him anywhere. He must have been hiding.

Aurora hooted happily from her perch.

"I guess I can take my owl home with me finally," Malfoy said.

Hermione smiled. "I'll miss her."

"She's a good owl."

Hermione could hear her kitchen clock ticking loudly. She was about to tell him that she should start on dinner when he spoke.

“Are you free Monday for lunch?”

“Pardon?”

“Monday. Lunch.”

“You want to have lunch with me?”

Malfoy looked at her intently. “Yes.”

“Why?”

“I do believe I have agreed to be less horrible toward you. This is a step to getting to know you better. I would have offered earlier, but you’ve been avoiding me for two weeks.”

Hermione pursed her lips. “Alright.”

“Great.” Malfoy stood and stretched.

Hermione accidentally admired the swath of his lower abdomen that was exposed by his stretch. Luckily, his eyes were closed as he yawned.

“See you, Grangie,” he said casually. “Aurora,” he called and the bird flew from its perch and onto his arm. “Meet me at home,” he ordered softly, the bird hooted in response and flew from the open window.

Malfoy disappeared without another word.

Monday, March 15

Hermione’s lawyer’s eyes widened as she read over the sex part of their contract, but said nothing. Once the woman had finished reading, she looked up at Hermione.

“This feels unfair to Mr. Malfoy,” Sonia stated.

Hermione shrugged. “He’s already signed it. Most of it was his idea.”

Sonia’s eyebrows rose. “Were I his lawyer, I would have some concerns. As it stands, I do not see any of this negatively affecting you down the line. Except of course, the—”

“I know...” Hermione groaned. “I just...the science behind magical pregnancies, and I...”

Sonia held up her hands. “I have no judgement, Hermione. Just know that encouraging sexual relations between the two of you could be very problematic when it is likely that you will find a way to end this marriage.”

Hermione had no response.

“But I see no issue in signing this. It can be amended at any time. Simply make the changes and re-sign the document. Generally, marriage contracts with very wealthy families, like the Malfoys, do not offer so much money to the spouse. So, it is possible that the Malfoy estate could take legal action against you, as you will be receiving well above the average payout. They could also try to make you pay back whatever you spend of his. It might be worth adding a line about not pursuing litigation on the basis of this contract. If you can get him to sign that with the witness of a lawyer, you will have no worries whatsoever for your future,” Sonia explained.

Hermione pondered her suggestion.

Her lawyer continued, “One thing you have not decided on is child custody. I highly recommend coming to an agreement about that.”

Hermione nodded, feeling foolish for such an oversight. “I’ll bring it to him in a few hours, we’re meeting for lunch.”

Sonia gave Hermione a look that made her blush, but the lawyer refrained from commenting on their lunch plans. “That’s my advice. If you want me to look over the final contract, just owl it or give me a call.”

Hermione nodded and wished Sonia a good day. She started penciling in her thoughts about child custody onto the contract directly. The second she started writing, a subheading was added that read: Addendum, March 15, 2015. Hermione marvelled at how clever the magic was.

Satisfied, Hermione wrote out invitations to attend her dress shopping that weekend to her friends, her parents, and Narcissa Malfoy. She went to the owlery and sent the messages off with a Ministry owl. She knew she shouldn’t be conducting so much personal business at work, but she didn’t care much these days because the Ministry were a bunch of stuffy assholes who didn’t give two shits about her, so she was going to do what she wanted.

*

Their lunch was stilted. The muggle café food was only okay and it was jammed full of people. Only when Hermione brought up the contract did conversation flow with any fluidity.

“My lawyer says that you could sue me because of how unequal this contract is,” Hermione said.

“You work fast. Already saw your lawyer?”

“Well, do you have anything to say? Are you planning on suing me?”

Malfoy smirked. “If I get bored,” he drawled.

Hermione huffed. “Be serious.”

“Granger, I don’t know how to say this in terms that you will understand. I do not care if you rob me. I do not care if you take everything I have ever owned and give it away, or sell it, or burn it to the ground. I have very few possessions that are of any value to me. Besides, I have a job. Worst case scenario, I actually have to work for a living.”

Hermione was dumbfounded. “But why don’t you care at all?”

“...Reparations.”

She wanted to throw something at him.

“Seriously, I...” he hesitated and looked away at the bustling café. “I’ve been a terrible person most of my life. But here I am, still rich, gainfully employed, with very few repercussions. And I’m marrying the Golden Girl of wizarding society. I think it’s only fair if I have to suffer a bit.”

“Marrying me isn’t suffering enough?” she responded sarcastically.

His lip twitched. “No.”

Hermione stared at his steady gaze. He was being sincere. “You’re not mad you’re marrying me?”

He shrugged. “No.”

Hermione’s mouth remained slightly open for a long time. “Why not?”

He gazed at the crowd in the café again. “Could be worse. I could have got Pansy.”

“I thought you two were best mates or dating or something.”

He nodded. “Mates, yes. Dating, never again. And if I had to live with her, I would have to murder her.”

Hermione snorted. “Like you two didn’t shag in Hogwarts.”

He shrugged a shoulder. “We were bad together. We hate each other when we shag. We don’t when we’re friends.”

Hermione found herself wanting to know more about Malfoy’s life, but instead returned to the point of contention. “So, you’re just fine with marrying me?”

He shrugged again. “I suppose.”

Hermione frowned.

“And you’re not fine with marrying me?” he tossed back at her.

She paused. “You are proving to be less of a git than you used to be. However, I never imagined my future as your wife. Can you blame me?”

“No,” he responded again easily and honestly. “Hence, reparations.”

“Hence.” She took a bite of her sandwich then wiped her fingers on her napkin. “So, my lawyer thinks you should sign this in front of your lawyer showing that you will not pursue litigation over this contract when you come to your senses.”

“No problem, I’ll owl my lawyer and set up a time. What’s your lawyer’s name?”

“No argument?”

“What’s to argue about? Your lawyer is smart to protect you.”

“Okay. I’ll send you her information once we’re back at the Ministry. But what did you think about child custody?”

“Here, I disagree,” Malfoy responded in his deep voice. “I want 50/50. Every other week. I want to see my children frequently for long stretches of time so that they don’t grow up without me. I also want the right to visit them when I do not have custody, assuming you receive fair warning. For school events, or other such things. I want equal decision making in their health and education.”

“50/50?”

“Yes.”

“You want...I’m surprised.”

“Are we agreed?”

Hermione mulled this over, but couldn’t find a reason to staunchly disagree. “Fine. Write it in.”

“My lawyer will come up with the wording about no future law suits. Hopefully we can get this over with by tomorrow evening. The wedding is so soon now.”

Less than two weeks away—that had happened fast.

“Once you sign the contract, you’ll have access to the Floo and apparition into my—our flat. I was thinking that you could bring your things over this weekend so that it is less of a hassle during the week of the wedding.” Malfoy adjusted his cuff links.

“Oh. Yeah. That’s a good idea.”

“Great.”

“Great,” she agreed. “I think I’m going to head back to work,” Hermione finally said.

Malfoy nodded. “I’ll accompany you.” They left the busy café and made their way down the muggle street to the Ministry.

“I’ll send you my lawyer’s information in a memo in a few minutes,” Hermione said as they rode the lift in awkward silence.

“And I’ll see you tomorrow for lunch again? Wear something fancy. You might want to alert your boss that you’ll need 2 hours tomorrow.”

“Why?”

“We’re going to a fancy restaurant. They take their time serving food because they assume no one actually has a job.”

Hermione laughed lightly. “Fine. You’re paying, I assume?”

Malfoy rolled his eyes. “You’ll have to get used to it eventually, Granger.”

She left the lift with a quick goodbye, her mind back on the million things she needed to do for her job and for her upcoming wedding.

*

That evening found her sitting across from Ginny at 12 Grimmauld Place going over her marriage contract with the redhead.

“I can’t believe you’re going to willingly only have sex with him for the rest of your life,” Ginny whispered.

“Don’t tell Harry, please,” Hermione begged.

“He’s going to figure it out eventually.”

“Yes, but, maybe by then we’ll have changed the contract or overturned the law or Malfoy will turn out to be a decent bloke.”

Ginny cackled at that. “Malfoy? Decent?”

“He did tell off his mother for me.”

“There’s something more,” Ginny said, scrutinising her friend.

Hermione blushed deeply.

“*You did not!*”

Hermione looked away, not wanting to add fuel to the fire. It didn’t work.

“It was that Saturday, right? When all the single people went out for a final hurrah?”

Again, Hermione remained mute.

“You *have* to give me details. He must have been amazing for you to agree to sleep with only him for the rest of forever.”

“He was...” the well-played image of him working his magic between her legs flashed before her eyes and she smiled despite herself. “...surprisingly good.”

“So, is he into freaky shit?”

Hermione pulled a face. “C’mon, Gin. Besides, I don’t remember,” she flushed.

Ginny looked disappointed. “If you can’t remember, I doubt you two even did anything beyond a drunken snog.”

Hermione bristled. “Well, he is definitely skilled with his tongue.” As soon as she said it, she regretted it.

Ginny’s mouth dropped open. “My Merlin, he ate you out. Hermione! And he was good? Better than Krum?”

Hermione’s mind flashed to Krum’s disastrous attempts at cunnilingus. “Yes.”

“Good enough for you to agree to be with only him for the rest of your lives. Holy shit. You don’t remember anything else?”

“No... but apparently we did shag because we left a note in the bathroom that said we used the contraception—”

“In the bathroom! What were you two doing in there, I wonder,” Ginny teased.

Hermione dropped her head into her hands. “I’m never telling you anything,” she moaned.

“Hermione this is excellent news,” Ginny responded, chipper. “At least you can hate fuck each other once weekly. In fact, it probably would have helped your relationship if you had done it earlier. Besides, he is planning—Shit, is that the time? I have practice in seven hours,” Ginny groaned. “Sorry, Hermione, I have to kick you out.”

They hugged and said their goodbyes, Ginny promising to attend the dress shopping that weekend.

When Hermione fell asleep that night, she had X-rated dreams of her and Malfoy tangled together in the bathroom, on the dining room table, against the wall, and finally on his bed. She awoke crying out his name, flushed with desire. Little did she know that it wasn’t a dream, but bits of her memory coming back to her.

It was shaping up to be an interesting marriage.

Chapter End Notes

Honestly, their contract negotiations are my favourite. And yes, they don't make a lot of logical sense, in general, I'd say this story follows Fanfic Logic (TM), not real world

logic. It's is all a flimsy premise--don't try to read into it too much. I just want them to be forced together.

I used a galleons to pounds converter, and the converter told me that 500,000 galleons is about 2.5 million pounds. No idea if the converter is true to the books or adjusts for inflation--I truly spent a good thirty minutes debating if I should adjust for inflation since JK said how much galleons were worth in pounds back in the 90s and things have obviously severely changed since the 90s, then I thought that was a bit Too Much, especially in light of the lack of logic with other decisions (i.e., giant wedding, agreeing to sleep together, etc.). (Also, JK is a TERF, so like who cares if it's accurate.) Just keep in mind, he's offering her A LOT of money per year, inflation or not. I'm interested to hear people's reactions to her accepting the money. In my mind, she kind of feels like Robin Hood because she plans to give it all away. Also, Hermione going on a rant about how ethical billionaires cannot exist brings me joy.

Any time you see what seems to be an accidental pun--it was intentional. I love stupid puns (especially stupid sexual ones). I hope you're picking up on them and smiling along with me.

Any guesses what Draco asked Ginny about?

Thanks so much for reading and reviewing! I'll try to post again later this week :)

The Black Lake

Chapter Notes

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

Tuesday, March 16

Draco was tapping his foot in his office. He still had two hours until they were scheduled to meet for lunch, but he worried that his plans would not be set in place in time. He was concerned that Weasley had lied to him, but couldn't do anything about it, since she was the only one of her friends that he would ever considering reaching out to. He wanted today to be perfect.

Granger may hate him, but he hadn't hated her for a very long time. If he had ever hated her to begin with. Did he hate her at Hogwarts? He was annoyed by her, he knew that for sure... but hate? He was really just parroting what his father had said. Even when he was a teen, he felt bad for the pain he had inflicted on her a few times, especially the bullying about her teeth. He noticed that up until she got Madame Pomfrey to shrink her teeth, she never smiled with her mouth open. That was Draco's fault. At least now she smiled all the time—granted, not at him.

His guilt from his past behaviour overwhelmed him momentarily. He walled it off, pushing it back into the cell in his mind where all of his guilt and shame sat.

Draco sighed and tried to bring his attention back to his work, but his mind wandered so easily these days. He often found himself daydreaming about being tangled in his intended's legs. This left him frustrated in more than one way, given that he could only remember bits and pieces of their night together. Part of what he could remember was her head bobbing up and down on his—

"Malfoy?" a female voice asked from his open office door.

His eyes snapped to the blue ones in front of him as he cleared the dirty images from his mind systematically.

"Mrs. Potter," he greeted smoothly. "Please, come in."

Ginny gave him a weird look. She adjusted her ponytail and walked into his small office as if she did it all the time. She sat across from him and rested her ankle on her knee. The smell of her training outfit wafted toward him.

"I thought that you had training this morning," he stated.

Ginny shrugged. "We're on break. I want to know exactly what you're planning."

"It's supposed to be a surprise."

“I told you all that stuff, I expect details. Hermione is notorious for telling me nothing. Speaking of...” Ginny flicked her wand and his door swung shut. “What did you two get up to the other weekend?” she asked casually.

“How are you a pureblood?” Draco wondered aloud.

“Answer the question, blondie.”

Draco reproached her with an eyebrow. “Red,” he called her, mimicking her reference to hair, “I have a lot to do today, and it smells like you need a shower, so if you don’t mind...” Draco turned away from her and picked up a quill.

Ginny rolled her eyes. “Okay fine, no sex details. But at least tell me your plans for the proposal!”

“If all goes well, I’m sure Granger will tell you herself.”

Ginny banged her fist on his desk. “C’mon, Malfoy!”

“I’ll tell you this; we’re going to Hogwarts.”

Ginny’s eyes lit up. “How? McGonagall let you?”

“Why the endless questions?” he complained.

Ginny shot him a look, but it had very little sting to it. “You can pretend to be heartless, Malfoy, but you’re the one planning a picture-perfect proposal and wedding for a sham marriage. Makes you think, maybe you’re not so upset about marrying Hermione after all...”

Draco worked hard to keep his face steady when he responded. “I am merely fulfilling my duties as a proper pureblood fiancé.”

Ginny gave him a look. “And I’m a crumple-horned snorkak. All I have to say is that you clearly like her, and I expect that you treat her well. If you don’t, you know how many Weasleys there are to deal with you.”

“You’re a Potter now,” he pointed out.

“Thanks for reminding me, Harry would also kill you. By the way, thanks for the broom. It’s wicked.” She waved cheerily to him before bouncing off to finish her training for the day.

Draco cast a charm to rid his office of her BO. He went back to pretending to work and instead went over his date with Hermione. Everything had to be perfect. She had said that she wanted an extravagant proposal and he hoped this would qualify.

*

Hermione looked up from her proposal to the Auror Department (she was rather behind due to all the activism and wedding planning she had been doing of late) to see Malfoy leaning against her doorframe.

“It’s 11,” he said in way of greeting.

Hermione checked her watch. “Shit, sorry! I’ve had an awful time this morning. I spilled coffee all over my first proposal before I had a chance to make a copy of it,” she sighed in frustration. “And I just had the wording down...”

“Well make a copy of that one and let’s go, we have a reservation that we can’t miss.” Despite his rudeness, she followed his instructions and stood. Malfoy stared at her, his eyes raking over her body. “I like that dress, Granger,” he admitted lowly, his voice verging on predatory.

Hermione felt a heat ignite in her lower belly at the tone of his voice and the look in his eye. She only then realised that he was dressed rather fancy himself; a formal deep blue muggle suit. She adjusted her hair in its surprisingly elegant bun and tore her eyes from his body.

“You said to look fancy.”

His jaw tensed and Hermione worried that maybe she was not dressed properly after all. Who knew what to wear to an upper-class restaurant?

“You’ll want a cloak.” She just noticed he had one slung over his shoulder. “It’s brisk outside.”

“So, we’re going somewhere magical?” Hermione asked, swinging her cloak onto her shoulders while he did the same.

He didn’t respond and held out his arm. Recognizing that she would not get an answer from him, Hermione linked hers through his, more than a little uncomfortable with their closeness. He did however, smell delightful; warm and spicy. The many stares and glares made their trip to the atrium feel 10 times longer than it actually was. The heat emanating from Malfoy’s arm into her own made the trip feel 20 times longer. She wished she had waited to put her cloak on.

Malfoy warned her before turning on the spot and crushing them into nothingness.

A moment later, Hermione reappeared in front of an image that she missed more than she knew. Her heart soared.

“I thought that we were going to a restaurant?”

Malfoy smiled. “Didn’t want to ruin the surprise.” He dropped her arm and began walking toward the castle in front of them.

Hermione stayed rooted to the spot for a minute longer, drinking in Hogwarts in the early spring sunlight. She caught up to him moments later and only then did she notice the old professor standing at the gates waiting to let them in. Beside her stood two carriages drawn by thestrals.

“Good morning,” McGonagall greeted cheerily. She pulled Hermione into a tight hug and surprised everyone by doing the same for Malfoy. “It has been far too long, Hermione. You

have to visit more often. Memorial Day is not enough.”

Hermione felt guilt crawl its way up her back. “I’m sorry, professor.”

McGonagall waved her off. “I know how busy you must be, changing the world.” The old woman sighed. “I cannot believe you and Mr. Malfoy were matched. Albus, Severus, and I had quite the laugh!” Malfoy looked annoyed. “Don’t let me keep you. Draco tells me you’re on a strict schedule. I’ll leave you two to it, then. And we’ll see each other next week at your wedding. Send me a Patronus if anything.” She hugged them both again before climbing into one of the carriages and heading toward the main doors.

“You invited her?” Malfoy asked.

“Your mother didn’t tell you?”

“Mother doesn’t tell me much of anything,” he grumbled.

Malfoy opened the door to their carriage and waited for Hermione to sit down before sitting across from her. Hermione took in the sights all around her, happy as a clam to be back.

“Where are we going for lunch, then?” she asked appreciating the way the lake was sparkling in the sun.

“The lake.”

As they approached, Hermione noticed a floating barge that was usually not there. It had a certain level of extravagance to it that screamed: Malfoy. The barge had elegant gleaming wooden railings, a shaded area with a heavy-laden table and pompous chairs. It reminded her of something a king or queen would have had a few centuries ago. Flopsy was waiting by the barge.

“Greetings,” the elf said in her high-pitched voice.

Malfoy helped Hermione out of the carriage and onto their floating personal restaurant. She was in a state of awe, so she didn’t notice that they had pushed off from shore. The sound of the giant squid doing laps pulled her back to reality. Malfoy wordlessly took her cloak and hung it over a spare chair along with his—the barge had heating charms.

“This is really nice of you, Malfoy,” she said softly.

He just shrugged like it was nothing and looked away from her happy eyes. “Lunch?” he offered.

It was mac and cheese. Hermione almost threw herself at him; she loved mac and cheese. There was also an assortment of breads, cheeses, salads, wines. He poured them some sparkling wine. Malfoy broke them both off some bread and he began quietly eating his.

Hermione was very focussed on putting as much mac and cheese into her mouth as possible. It was truly heavenly. After Hermione had devoured her cheesy plate of goodness, she looked

at him and noticed that he was fidgeting with his collar. Apparently, he was uncomfortable, or maybe he was simply warm from the heating spells.

“Thank you for this,” she said sincerely.

Malfoy didn't look at her, just took in the view before them. The castle looked spectacular with the sun glinting off of it. They sat in silence for a while as he demurely ate his food and she shovelled hers into her mouth. It was surprisingly nice sitting with him in silence drinking in the ambiance of Hogwarts and letting her thoughts flit through happy memories from her childhood.

A long while later, once Hermione had finished stuffing her face inelegantly with all of her favourite foods, Malfoy started talking suddenly, causing Hermione to jump.

“I thought that this would be a good place because it was home for both of us, for a long time. I know I would have rather lived here than at home for most of my childhood. And Hogwarts for you means so much more; it was the beginning of your magical world...”

Hermione tried to decipher the look in his eyes. He stood and went to lean on the railing of their elegant raft. Hermione joined him.

“You said you wanted something extravagant, but I thought this would be nicer.”

“You don't call this floating picnic extravagant?” she scoffed, her eyes tracing the squid as it swam large circles around them.

Malfoy chuckled lightly. “Extravagant to most witches would mean fireworks or the most expensive restaurant in the city...but that didn't seem like you.”

Hermione's eyes widened as she realised what he was about to do. Malfoy took a deep breath and slid a box out of his jacket pocket. He turned to her, dropped to one knee and opened it. Hermione's jaw dropped. It was a modest opal encircled by shimmering diamonds.

“I know that this marriage was forced upon us, but that doesn't mean that you don't deserve to have the proposal that you always dreamed of. Especially since my mother is high jacking the wedding.” He smirked at that.

Despite herself, Hermione felt tears welling up in her eyes. He was being so thoughtful.

She held out her shaky hand to his.

“Hermione Granger,” Malfoy continued, “Will you do me the honour of wearing this ring since the Ministry already forced us to get engaged?”

Hermione let out a genuine laugh. “Yes,” she declared.

He slid the ring onto her finger with ease. She felt it heat for a second before cooling and resting snugly on her finger. Malfoy almost tripped on his own feet while trying to stand up again. Hermione steadied him. Quite suddenly they were very close to one another, her hand wrapped around his bicep. His hands found their way to her waist. Hermione's heart pounded

as she moved her arms around his neck. He lowered his head and she thought for sure they were going to kiss, but instead his forehead rested on hers.

They stood in silence for a long time, the castle sparkling behind them.

“I’m sorry it’s not what you want,” Malfoy said in a strangled voice. “You deserve so much better,” he whispered the last part. Realising what he said, he stumbled away from her, almost tipping over the edge of the barge. “We should get back; it’s almost been two hours.”

Hermione’s heart was still racing. She simply nodded. He returned to the sunshade and pointed his wand so that they began moving back to the docks. Hermione kept staring at the opal ring.

Just before they reached the dock she asked, “How did you know?”

He saw her staring at the ring and responded, “Ginny.”

Hermione couldn’t believe that this man spoke to Ginny Weasley for her. That he got McGonagall to let them into Hogwarts. That he found out her favourite place, food, and desired engagement ring. She couldn’t help it; she pulled him into a hug. Malfoy stumbled back a step, not expecting her to initiate contact. Hermione had to overcorrect for his stumble so that they didn’t go toppling into the lake.

“Thank you,” Hermione whispered into his ear.

She thought for a moment that he shuddered, but she assumed that she had imagined it. She pulled back and looked away in embarrassment. Malfoy, following her lead, said nothing. They took their carriage back to the gate in silence. Malfoy side-alonged them (even though Hermione could have apparated herself) and even walked her all the way back to her office. When he dropped her off, her heart was still swollen in happiness.

“I hope it...I’ll see you tonight to get the contract signed,” he said, then departed as if nothing life-changing had just happened.

Seconds after arriving back, Hermione’s phone rang. She answered it without looking, still feeling like she was walking on a cloud.

“So, what did he do?” Ginny demanded.

Hermione recounted the proposal, a smile on her face the whole time.

*

The whole contract affair was shockingly painless. His lawyer said nothing, probably because he had already warned Malfoy what a terrible deal he was signing and the blond had ignored him. In his obnoxious dining room, their lawyers watched them sign the contract. Malfoy signed with a confident hand and his golden pen (Hermione was distracted again by the way he held it—so confident, so strong, so—). Hermione signed with her cheap Bic, shaking as she went along. She felt a warmth travel up her hand as she signed it and wondered idly what that meant.

The lawyers then both signed and dated it as witnesses. Then it was done.

Hermione did her best to not stare at the Floo when they had all made their way back to the front foyer. It kept bringing up inappropriate images that she could frankly do without.

“Thank you,” she said to both of them, who in turn left through the Floo.

“That wasn’t so bad, was it?”

Hermione conceded, “It wasn’t. Where does the contract stay?”

“Since we’ve both signed it, a copy has been sent to the Ministry. It will remain confidential, don’t worry.” He handed her a duplicate she hadn’t noticed he made. “This one’s for you and my copy is back in the dining room.”

Hermione nodded, clutching the paper with trepidation. She was yet again wondering if she had made the right decision. Trying to distract herself she said, “I now have access to the flat?”

He nodded. “To everything, more or less.”

“Huh?”

“The contract is basically the same as actual marriage.”

“Pardon?”

“Yeah. So now you have access to my vaults. The flat. The houses. Flopsy. Everything.”

“Why did no one mention this to me?”

Malfoy shrugged. “It seemed obvious. It is a contract. You must know how magical contracts work.”

Hermione didn’t want to admit that he was right. This was an unexpected oversight on her behalf. She knew how tricky contracts were. She sighed.

“It’s like an unbreakable vow, isn’t it?”

He hesitated. “Similar. Not as intense. Non-fulfillment of the contract can result in illnesses, in a coma, hair loss, that sort of thing. Death is not on the table though. It’s mostly legal repercussions.”

Hermione nodded, now consumed with images of her bald and in a coma in St. Mungo’s. “I’m going to go pack up some stuff and bring it back here.”

“Did you want to have dinner?”

“Oh. Um. Sure. Yeah. I’ll. I’ll go get some stuff and then we can eat when I get back?”

Flopsy who was apparently eavesdropping appeared suddenly and chimed in, “Excellent, Mrs. Malfoy! I will make ravioli.”

Hermione flushed. “I’m not taking the Malfoy name.”

Flopsy bowed. “Mrs. Granger.”

“No, I mean. Please call me Hermione, Flopsy,” she tried again.

“Yes, Mrs. Hermione.”

“Close enough,” she muttered. “I’ll be back in about an hour.”

*

Hermione appeared in the front hallway of her future home with several shrunken boxes stacked in her arms. The second she arrived she heard the tell-tale crack of house elf apparition.

“Mistress,” Flopsy greeted. “Flopsy will take your things.”

Before Hermione could protest, the boxes and Flopsy had vanished. Hermione grumbled in annoyance. Malfoy strolled into the hallway a moment later.

“Granger,” he greeted. he jerked his head down the hallway. “Your room’s this way.”

Hermione followed him. “Is there anyway you can make Flopsy not help me?”

“You enjoy lifting heavy boxes?”

“They were charmed.”

Malfoy rolled his eyes and led her down the hallway. “I try to do something nice...” he mumbled.

“You set Flopsy on me?” she accused.

Malfoy brought her to a large mahogany door that he swung open. “It is quite literally the job that she is paid to do, Granger. Besides, she’s your elf too.”

Hermione’s retort was cut off by the massive suite in front of her. It was like one of those elegant hotel rooms that rich people got only to spend ten minutes in.

“Bed,” he pointed at a king size elegant four poster with white gossamer curtains, “Walk-in closet,” he pointed at a set of dark mahogany double doors, “en suite,” he pointed at another dark mahogany door, “Floo-connected fireplace that only you have access to,” he gestured at the large marble fireplace. “Shelves for the obnoxious amount of books I’m sure you’re going to bring here.” He pointed at the two sturdy bookshelves to the right of her bed.

Hermione's jaw was on the ground. The room itself had a large rug, but apart from that, dark hardwood floors, light blue walls with one full wall a row of windows leading out to a spacious balcony.

"How large is this flat?" Hermione asked despite herself.

Malfoy shrugged. "Technically it's the entire top floor of the building, so there's loads of space."

Hermione approached the skyline, they weren't in downtown London, but she could make out a few of the tell-tale buildings along the skyline.

"Wow," was all that she managed to say.

Malfoy chuckled slightly.

She mumbled a goodbye, staring out at the beautiful view before her. It was only when he cleared his throat that she realised that Malfoy had not left the room, but was in fact hovering by the door, looking somewhat awkward.

"Er—I was wondering," he said awkwardly. "Would you be free Sunday evening to have dinner with your family?"

Hermione blinked at him in confusion.

"It's just that... I feel as if I should meet them before the wedding." He shuffled his feet when she didn't respond. "I figured you could come here after your shopping trip and we could have a meal as—a... together... And by then you'll probably have finished moving in..."

Hermione picked at her thumb nail absentmindedly. An awkward Malfoy was a strange sight, indeed. "My father wasn't planning on coming to the dress fitting. But I can bring him here afterward. What time?"

"I thought 7 might be reasonable, in case your appointment takes longer than you expect."

Hermione nodded slowly. "But you have to promise that your mother will be nice."

Malfoy dipped his head in acquiescence. "I'll talk to her. Ready for dinner?"

"Right. I totally forgot. Where's the dining room again?"

Malfoy walked her to the large dining room and sat at the head of the table. A plate was set before the other head of the table (comically far away from Malfoy), which is where Hermione sat down inelegantly.

They shared a few words here or there, but mostly ate in silence. It wasn't entirely uncomfortable, but it certainly wasn't what one would classify as comfortable. Malfoy finished eating before her and stared off into space. Once she had cleared her plate, Malfoy stood immediately and said he would be in his room. She hadn't realized he had been waiting for her.

Hermione wandered back down the familiar path to her room. *Her room*—what a weird thought. Flopsy had returned the boxes to their regular size. Hermione went looking for her speakers and old mp3 player first. She set them up and put on shuffle as she began to unpack and explore the room. She placed her pictures on the fireplace mantle and began hanging paintings and photos on the bare walls. She was humming along to her new favourite band and admiring how cozy her room was already beginning to look when she noticed Malfoy by the door.

“What is that, Granger?” he asked, pointing at her mp3 player. He hesitantly approached it and turned it over in his hands cautiously. “It’s different from your rectangle.”

“Plays music,” Hermione responded, fixing a crooked painting of Hogwarts. Luna had done it for her and it was excellent. “It’s pretty old now, but it has all my playlists on it so…”

“But how?” he pressed a button and suddenly a dance beat shook the room. Malfoy yelped and dropped it.

Hermione laughed at him. She walked over and switched the song back. “Science,” was all she responded. Malfoy gave her a look, so she explained, “Muggle magic.”

Malfoy nodded, but it was clear that he didn’t understand. “Are you staying the night?” he asked instead.

Hermione asked, “What time is it?”

“Nearing 11:30.”

Her eyes widened. “Time flies! No, I’m heading home. Crooks will tear up the couch if I don’t come home—and he’s already done it once this week, so I’d rather not have to hand-mend my sofa again.”

“Crooks?”

It suddenly occurred to Hermione that she had never mentioned that she would be moving in with a cat.

“I—er—forgot to say that… erm… I have a cat.”

Malfoy groaned. “Yes. How could I forget that orange monstrosity that you had in school?”

Hermione crossed her arms. “He’s not a monstrosity. He is very intelligent and an excellent judge of character. You’re not allergic, are you?”

“No. I just hate them. Hair gets everywhere.” He wrinkled his nose.

“Well, he’s moving in with me, so get used to it,” she replied frostily.

Malfoy grumbled under his breath.

“Now, where did I put my purse?” she wondered under her breath.

Malfoy walked her out. When they passed the kitchen, Hermione noted a cup of tea on the stove top and the evening *Prophet* open. She rolled her eyes at it.

“Don’t waste your time reading that rubbish,” she admonished him. “Honestly, the *Prophet* has turned into nothing less than a tabloid magazine these days. Absolute garbage.”

“I’m assuming you’ve read today’s feature on us, then?”

Hermione grunted. She had read it, cursing the whole time. It felt like an homage to Rita Skeeter’s old days of glory, except this was written by Lavender Brown. The woman had been quick to accept a job at the trash news journal and seemed to fit right in. It was the fifth article about them since the matching had been made public.

The article went on about how they were star-crossed lovers who had been seeing each other in secret for years. How it was actually their affair that ended the Weasley-Granger relationship and that they were already expecting twins. It was riddled with false testimonies. The most disturbing part to Hermione, however, was the pictures that Lavender had managed to get her hands on. They were from that fateful Saturday night at the bar. There were a few of Hermione cuddled up to Malfoy, him looking at her with something akin to desire or adoration. Then there were the pictures of her pulling him into an aggressive kiss outside the loo. And one photo of them laughing together. Anyone could have taken the photos as Hermione had not exactly been discreet that evening. Now she was paying for it. She had already had to diffuse two arguments with Ron about having a secret relationship with Malfoy and blush her way through an entire phone call with Ginny about how cute they looked together and how hot their kiss was.

“Brown’s quite the shark, isn’t she?” Malfoy commented.

Hermione grumbled, “I’d use a different word.”

They had reached the apparition point. “You continue to surprise me, Granger.”

“Get ready for a lifetime of that, Malfoy.”

“Lunch tomorrow?”

“Oh.” Hermione was surprised by how much time he wanted to spend with her. “I’m supposed to meet with Harry and Ron for lunch. We usually have lunch on Wednesdays... well most days really.”

He clenched his jaw shut. “Right. Thursday?”

She blinked at him. “Sure. Yes.”

“And will you be by tomorrow with more things?” he asked lightly.

Hermione considered this. “I think I’ll need more time to pack still. But I’ll let you know before I come by so it’s not a surprise. I probably won’t make it here again until Thursday or Friday night.”

He nodded stiffly. "I await your owl then, Granger."

Hermione nodded back. The silence stretched on. "Well...Goodnight."

Malfoy inclined his head and turned away from her. Hermione popped home.

Wednesday, March 17

Hermione sat with Harry and Ron in the Ministry cafeteria. Ron was shovelling food into his mouth in a way that only he could while Harry discussed the interdepartmental Quidditch league. Hermione, having little to no interest in Quidditch, had spent the last several minutes ignoring them in favor of thinking through the budget to implement mobiles into the Auror department. Her proposal had been approved and was now in the logistics stage.

"Will you be there, Hermione?" Ron asked intently around a mouth full of food.

Hermione stared at him blankly. "Huh?"

"Pansy's bachelorette party. She wanted to invite you. I figured you wouldn't much enjoy my stag party."

"Pansy...Pansy Parkinson wants me to attend her bachelorette party?"

Harry also looked surprised.

Ron shrugged and gulped his chocolate milk. "She said she wants to know you better since you're 'so important to me' or something like that. Also, she said, quote 'she owes me.'"

Hermione frowned, then she remembered Pansy calming down an angry Ron the night she shagged Malfoy. "I—um. When is it?"

"In two days. It's got to happen before next Tuesday."

Hermione blinked slowly her brain in a fog. "Tuesday?"

Harry and Ron exchanged confused looks. "Our wedding is next Tuesday," Ron said slowly. "Are you alright, Hermione?"

She had completely spaced in fact. Tuesday was less than a week away. Her best friend was getting married and she completely forgot. What a tit she was.

"Of course. Sorry. Sorry. My mind was far away on my mobile budget."

Ron nodded, accepting her excuse, but Harry frowned at her for much longer, clearly sensing that it was odd that Hermione didn't know such an important date.

"Did you ever send me the details or colour scheme?" Hermione asked, her mind racing and not remembering anything.

Ron shrugged. “No idea about any of that. Pansy’s mom’s doing it all. You’d have to ask her. They even bought my suit for me,” Ron seemed pleased.

“Wait. Her mom is doing it? Not your mom?”

Ron heaved a sigh. “Don’t you start now too. I thought you of all people wouldn’t care about pureblood traditions, Hermione.”

“I don’t care about pureblood traditions,” she threw back. “I’m just confused that Molly isn’t insisting that she plan the wedding.”

Ron flushed a bit. “Well, the Parkinson’s have a lot of money, don’t they? Besides, Pansy really wanted her mom to do it, so...it’s in our contract.”

Hermione eyed his embarrassment and could guess what Pansy did to get that little line added to their marriage contract. Hermione was surprised Molly Weasley didn’t put up more of a fight.

“So, the party?” Ron asked.

“Hmm? Right. I can go if you want me to...” she responded hesitantly. “Why can’t I go to yours?”

Ron flushed and scratched the back of his head. “Well, it might get a bit wild...”

Hermione imagined strippers and too much testosterone. She then compared that to an evening with Pansy Parkinson and honestly didn’t know which one she would prefer.

“Fine. I’ll go to the bachelorette.”

“There are so many parties and weddings over the next week,” Harry commented. “It’s hard to keep track.”

Hermione agreed with a nod.

“I can barely keep my own wedding straight let alone anyone else’s,” Ron said. “I’m Tuesday. Seamus and Romilda are Saturday morning. Luna and Zabini, Saturday at midnight. Neville and Hannah Friday...who am I missing?”

Hermione was shocked that Ron seemed more aware of the world around her than she was. Ron knew many things that Hermione didn’t. If that wasn’t enough of a testament to how much her impending marriage was affecting her, she wasn’t sure what was.

“Dean is getting married at the Ministry. They didn’t want a party. Don’t even know each other, do they? What’s her name again?” Harry asked.

“Linda? Julie? I can’t remember,” Ron replied.

“She moved here last year from America. Rotten luck for her...” Harry trailed off. “What other weddings are you going to?” Harry asked.

Ron shrugged. "Pansy's taking care of all that. She just tells me when to show up and I do."

Hermione scoffed. Pansy really was a perfect match for Ron; she was just like Molly Weasley. Hermione felt affirmed in the fact that she and Ron were 100% the wrong choice for one another. Not that her and Malfoy were the right choice.

Harry asked, "What about you, Hermione?"

She frowned. "I actually don't know. I haven't received any invites... Except for you, Ron."

"That is odd," Harry responded with a frown to match her own.

Hermione felt weird about it, her old insecurities of not being liked creeping back in after all those years. "I'm sure it was an oversight. Besides, most of the weddings will be very small," she commented softly, hoping the boys would drop it.

"What's that?" Ron asked abruptly.

Hermione followed his line of sight down to her engagement ring. She flushed deeply, holding back a smile. Hermione covered it quickly with her other hand. "Nothing."

"Is that an engagement ring, Hermione?" Harry asked.

Hermione nodded slightly.

"Malfoy got you an engagement ring?" Ron asked, dumbfounded. "Should I have got Pansy one?"

"No, purebloods don't usually get engagement rings," Harry piped in. "Ginny explained it to me when I proposed. You should know that, Ron."

Ron just shrugged, unbothered back his lack of knowledge. "When'd you get that, then?"

Hermione had hoped he would drop the subject. "Yesterday." She thought if she tried to say less it would be better, but instead it seemed to further provoke Ron's curiosity.

"When? What'd he say? Why'd he give you a ring, anyway? It's not like it's a real wedding."

"Why would I know why he gave me a ring?" she snapped, uncomfortable with this line of questioning.

Ron held out his hand. "Show us, then."

Hermione sighed and placed her hand in his. Ron and Harry inspected the diamonds with wide eyes. Hermione glanced around uncomfortably, hoping this interaction would end, only to have her eyes land on several people glancing her way as she seemingly showed off her new engagement ring. She pulled her hand back and covered it quickly. She just knew somehow Lavender Brown would be writing about this engagement ring in the *Prophet* the following day.

“I should get back to my budget, lots to do today,” Hermione said briskly and stood.

“When’s your wedding again, Hermione?” Ron asked loudly, a few heads turning their way.

Hermione shushed him. “Next Thursday,” she responded quietly. “Just text me your questions, that way less people will hear about my private information.”

Ron glanced around at the curious faces and flushed. “Sorry, Hermione,” he apologized quietly.

Hermione left them, resolved to double check her mail to see if she had missed any wedding invites and with a renewed resolve to not let her own impending nuptials take over her ability to process the rest of the world around her.

That night, she spent the evening packing more boxes of her things. She did find invites to weddings that had somehow fallen behind a bookcase. She had also been invited to Luna’s, Seamus’, and Neville’s. The weddings were all rapidly approaching, combined with having to spend Friday evening with Pansy, Hermione wasn’t sure exactly how she was going to manage the next several days.

She decided to get her major packing and moving out of the way sooner rather than later. She wanted to be almost entirely moved in by Saturday. She wasn’t ready to spend her first night in her new home and probably wouldn’t until the night of their wedding—her mind faltered on this thought before carrying on—so for the time being, she contented herself with packing and spending her last few days in her small flat with only Crookshanks as company.

She wondered idly what it would be like to live with Malfoy. Would he be annoying as usual? Quiet? Loud? What would it be like to live with a house elf? Flopsy already seemed quite taken with Hermione.

Hermione packed away her spare clothing and her winter clothing, stacking it by her balcony doors. She planned to pack her outer wear the following evening. She figured she would leave most of her kitchen things since Malfoy’s kitchen ware was bound to be far better than her own. So, she’d leave her kitchen until the end then pack it all up for donation.

Hermione treated herself with a luxurious bath after dinner, trying to get herself to relax, despite her imminent unwanted marriage. It half-worked. Her mind only ran to Malfoy twice, which was an improvement.

Thursday, March 18

“I do think the photo is rather well done,” Malfoy said in way of greeting as he casually walked into her office and shut the door. He offered her the *Prophet*.

Hermione scowled. “Don’t start with me on that. I swear Lavender is just like Rita, a little bug buzzing about taking illegal photos. How on earth did she get this without me even realizing?” Hermione ranted, snatching the photo from Malfoy’s hand.

It was a closeup of her ring finger accompanied by a photo of Hermione's smiling face while she showed off her ring to Harry and Ron.

"She might be," Malfoy mused, sitting in her office chair stiffly. "At least you're smiling in this one," he added after a beat.

Hermione shot a look his way. "What do you mean?"

"Hm?"

"What do you mean—"

He cut her off. "I was thinking we could go to that muggle café for lunch again."

"No need to cut me off."

"You tend to rant, Granger. It is lunch time. I would like to eat some lunch. Then you can rant away."

She narrowed her eyes. "That café isn't very good."

"Yes. But at least there, we avoid Lavender Brown and her incessant reporting."

Five minutes later they were seated in the muggle café around the corner, shoved in with other muggles going about their lunch hour. Hermione ordered a soup and sandwich combo. Malfoy ordered the same.

They sat in silence.

"So, you like the ring."

Hermione held back her grin. "It's adequate."

"C'mon, Granger, just admit you like it."

She stared at the perfect opal and the glittering diamonds. "I like it," she conceded.

He hummed but said nothing. Hermione noted that his lips were quirked upwards ever so slightly.

"What is your job?" Hermione asked eventually as the awkward silence stretched on.

"Department of Law."

Hermione waited for him to elaborate, but he remained quiet. "Fascinating."

"What's your job?" he asked cheekily.

"Muggle Liaison Office," she responded tit for tat.

"Fascinating," he mimicked.

Hermione rolled her eyes. This was going to be a trying marriage.

Lunch wrapped itself up somehow with neither of them saying much. Hermione felt odd about the whole affair. Malfoy kept insisting they spend time together, but then never had much of anything to say to her. She could swear she caught him staring at her sometimes and she didn't know how to react. She could never discern his expression and many times stopped herself from asking where he learned occlumency, worried about what the answer would be.

Friday, March 19

Malfoy strolled into her office again and launched into a request without greeting her. "Will you please respond to Pansy? She keeps hounding me for an answer to her bachelorette party."

Hermione glanced up at him from her list of phone brands to choose from. "Hm?"

"Pansy. Bachelorette, tonight. Keep up, Granger."

"Oh, right. I don't know why on earth she wants me there..."

"You're in the wedding party, Granger."

"On Ron's side."

"Yes, and I'm on Pansy's side, but I'm still attending the stag party that promises to be horrendous."

"You're going to Ron's stag?!"

Malfoy leaned back slightly in her guest chair; he was more at ease today. "Yes."

"Why?"

He lifted a shoulder casually. "Pansy asked me to."

Hermione frowned. "I think she's scheming."

"Obviously she's scheming, Granger. She's a Slytherin."

Hermione chuckled despite herself. "I already told Ron I would go."

Malfoy sighed dramatically. "Of course, you did. He didn't tell Pansy that, though."

"That's Ron for you." Hermione put down her pen and looked at Malfoy. "What should I expect at this party?"

Malfoy adjusted his cuff links. "I assume she'll try to get you sloshed enough to admit your deepest secrets so that she has blackmail on you."

Hermione groaned. “I can’t believe I have to attend a wedding and a bachelorette in the same day. Tonight is going to suck.”

“Wedding?” Malfoy asked, confused.

“Yes, Neville and Hannah are tonight. Starts at 5. I’ll have to leave early to get ready...”
Hermione huffed thinking of all the work she still had to do today.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

Hermione zoned back in to see a faint line appear between Malfoy’s brows. “Tell you?” Now she was confused.

“That we’re going to a wedding tonight.”

Hermione blinked at him. “We?”

He twirled his signet ring around. “I am your fiancé.”

“And...?” Hermione asked, still confused.

“Seriously, Granger, how dense are you?” She bristled, but he cut her off and kept talking. “You can’t expect to show up to a wedding without your betrothed.”

“Malfoy, it’s not like—”

“Besides, think of the headlines...” he commented.

Hermione shut up fast after that. She assumed Lavender had been invited to the wedding. Hermione showing up without Malfoy was a sure-fire way to get back on the front page of the gossip column instead of being a footnote. She grumbled, “I can come pick you up at 4:45 at the flat.”

Malfoy inclined his head. “What colour is your dress?”

Hermione thought for a moment, mentally going through her closet. “I haven’t decided yet. Either black or purple.”

“Go for purple,” he suggested. “Black is too dour.”

Hermione thought of her scandalous purple dress, unsure if it was suitable for a wedding, but she conceded that it was definitely suitable for the bachelorette happening right afterward. She could pair it with a cardigan or a shawl to make it a bit more suitable.

Hermione realized that they had been sitting in silence for a while, Malfoy fiddling with his ring, as usual.

“Will you tell me more about your job now?” she asked.

His fingers froze and he stared off into the middle distance. "I'm a paralegal in the Department of Law," he responded blandly.

"And...do you like it?" Hermione asked hesitantly.

Malfoy's eyes were curiously blank. "It has its benefits."

Hermione was yet again seconds from asking him about his occlumency skills, when he asked her a question.

"And you? What is it you do in the Muggle Liaison Office?"

Hermione was unprepared for his intent stare. She felt a heat creep up her neck. "I—mostly I try to find ways to improve relations between muggles and magical folks. But I've been on a tech kick for the past few months."

"Tech?"

"Technology."

"Right."

Hermione looked at his blank face. "I thought you had to take some courses about—"

"Yes," he responded quickly. "I took many courses. But I was unfamiliar with the short form. It was also years ago. What...tech," he tried out the short form, "are you trying to kick?"

Hermione laughed despite herself. "I mean that I want to implement technology into the magical world."

He nodded, his eyes blank again. Hermione was dying to know what he was really thinking. "What tech?"

"Right now, it's phones and mobile phones. Your department has a landline installed, so you must know. But I'm just trying to make phones more accessible across the magical world."

"Mobile phone? I remember reading something about that, but they didn't cover the more recent muggle technology in my Ministry mandated courses. It was mostly the basics, like electricity, washing machines, televisions."

Hermione pulled out her phone and showed it to him. "This is my mobile phone. You called it my muggle rectangle."

Malfoy plucked it from her hand and turned it over without asking her. Then it handed it back to her. "And what does it do?"

"It is a phone. But it is mobile. It doesn't need to be attached to a wall like a landline."

Malfoy nodded. "That seems very convenient."

Hermione blinked at him rapidly. His open admittance of muggle technology being something good threw her a bit. “Yes. Yes, it is.”

“What’s the problem, then?”

“You know wizarding society, very slow to accept change. Right now, I’m just trying to start with the Auror division since these are most helpful for instant communication, something that they desperately need. My proposal has been very delayed by the marriage law, though, so I’m actually behind,” Hermione flushed slightly, not liking admitting that she wasn’t perfect.

“What do you need a proposal for? Isn’t Potter basically the head of the department?”

“He’s junior head.”

“Same thing.”

“And it’s the principle of the thing. I need to prove that it is sound for the department and I shouldn’t be getting special treatment.”

“Why not?” Malfoy questioned.

“Because that encourages corruption and nepotism.”

Malfoy shrugged. “You should take advantage of your connections, Granger.”

Hermione pursed her lips.

“So, what’s after mobile phones?” Malfoy asked casually.

“My next big move is computers and the internet.”

“Yes, I remember reading about the internet. It’s some big web?”

Hermione smiled. “Yes, more or less.”

“Don’t patronize me, Granger. I’m not the Wonder Twins. What is the internet and what is the benefit of it to wizarding society?”

Hermione frowned at his mocking nickname for Harry and Ron, but dutifully launched into her spiel about the internet. Malfoy asked clarifying questions and even gave her some suggestions that she noted down for her proposal. Before Hermione knew it, her lunch hour was up and Malfoy was rising.

“I’ll send Flopsy with some food, Granger. Sorry for monopolizing your lunch hour.”

“That’s—that’s not necessary. I’m sure—”

“You’re going out drinking tonight with Pansy. You need to make sure that you have a full stomach.”

Hermione nodded weakly. She had temporarily forgotten about that.

“I’ll see you at 4:45, Granger,” he said softly before leaving her office.

Flopsy appeared ten minutes later with a steaming bowl of soup and a sandwich. Hermione thanked her endlessly.

Chapter End Notes

Draco can't quite make up his mind about his wife to be, but one thing is for sure: he likes to spend time with her! We'll learn more about his weirdness in coming chapters.

These are some inspo that I had for her engagement ring:

[Ring 1](#)

[Ring 2](#)

Ring 3

Thanks so much for reading and reviewing :)

Parties

Chapter Notes

Spoiler:

Hermione gets a lap dance and it is not from Draco. How I've written it, I wouldn't really say it is cheating--but I know others might disagree.

Thought I would warn you in case you hate that. To completely skip by the lap dance and the related fallout, once you get to the start of the strip club scene with Hermione, skip to the second * on Saturday, March 20 - Luna and Blaise's wedding. I've updated the tags.

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

Friday, March 19

Hermione looked over herself and felt somewhat disappointed. Her hair was hanging down, slightly smoothed back, but still rather frizzy. Her makeup was fairly bland for a wedding, just some eyeliner, mascara, and a deep red lip. Her dress was flattering, but she covered most of it with a black shawl so as not to be too sexy during Neville and Hannah's ceremony.

She made sure there was food in Crooks' bowl, then apparated to Malfoy's before she could chicken out. He was standing in the front hallway wearing a black tux with deep purple lapels and a very light purple shirt. His tie matched the colour of her dress perfectly. His hair was perfectly coiffed and Hermione wanted nothing more than to drag her hands through it. She shook herself of that desire and cleared her throat.

"Hi."

"Hello," he responded, his eyes travelling up and down her body slowly. Hermione felt herself heat.

"Ready?" she asked him.

He nodded and stepped toward her, holding out his arm. Hermione linked with him and spun them away to the national gardens. They released arms and walked side by side toward the tent in front of them. The various trees and freshly blooming flowers were mesmerising.

"Lovely location," Malfoy said quietly.

"Yes," Hermione responded quickly.

The gathering was small with a smattering of seats, a lavish archway, and a table for dinner off to the side. Someone had strung up lights the muggle way over the clearing. It was rather

romantic. Hermione spotted Harry, Ron, Ginny, and Pansy and made her way over to them, Malfoy lagging behind.

“Hiya, Hermione,” Ron greeted with a wave.

Hermione ought not to have worried, Pansy’s makeup and outfit were entirely inappropriate for a wedding. Pansy was wearing a bodycon dress with various cut outs and dark makeup with a scandalous red lip. Ginny was in a simple long green dress and Harry and Ron were both wearing nice dress shirts with dress pants.

“Hey, guys,” Hermione responded, Malfoy coming to a stop beside her.

“Draco,” Pansy greeted. “Hermione.”

Hermione held back her shiver at Pansy addressing her directly. As she noticed more about her, she noted that Pansy was holding Ron’s hand as if they did this all the time. Ginny and Harry were also holding hands. It was just Hermione and Malfoy who stood a foot apart in discomfort.

“Should be a nice wedding,” Harry commented into the silence.

“Yeah, ‘cause these two don’t mind marrying one another,” Ginny threw in with a snort.

Everyone laughed but Hermione and Malfoy.

“Draco, can I speak to you for a moment?” Pansy asked in her posh voice.

Ron watched them leave to go converse beneath a tree with an odd look on his face.

“Wow, Ron,” Ginny began, “I can’t believe how smitten you are with Pansy.”

Ron flushed deeply and tore his eyes away from his fiancée and Malfoy. “I’m not...I mean. She’s alright.” He shrugged. “It was weird but—well...” he cleared his throat. “It helps that there’s a strong...physical connection.” Ron’s signature tomato red blush was overcoming his face.

Everyone laughed good-naturedly.

“You don’t think,” he was glancing at Pansy again, then at Hermione, “You don’t think her and Malfoy still...”

Hermione shook her head quickly, wanting to reassure her best friend who was clearly falling very fast for his fiancée. “No. No, I actually asked him if he wished he was with Pansy instead of me,” her friends were all very intrigued and gave her their full attention, “And, he said no. He said they’re just best mates and that when they used to date it was really bad for them...kind of like you and me, actually, Ron.”

He smiled at her. “Good. Good. I mean—anyway. I’m excited about our parties tonight.”

Harry patted Ron on the back. “We should get seated. I think I see Neville.”

Harry, Ginny, and Ron moved to sit in the front row together. Hermione moved to sit beside Ron when he gave her a funny look. She realised that he wanted to sit beside Pansy. *How strange*. Hermione sat behind her friends, an empty seat for Malfoy beside her.

He joined her shortly afterward. While they had gotten used to spending time in one another's presence by that point, Hermione was unsure if they had ever sat so close. She was acutely aware of his presence, of his breathing. Every shift he made—it was like she felt it vibrate through her bones.

Hannah walking down the aisle in a stunning mermaid dress distracted Hermione from Malfoy and let her focus back on the wedding at hand.

The ceremony was brief, but beautiful. Hermione could see the tentative joy on both their faces. Like Ginny had said, both Neville and Hannah were in no way upset by their pairing. The couple just needed more time to get to know one another better. But they were happy to be wed, and looking forward to a future together. Hermione felt happy for them. She also felt a deep pull of sadness to see that Neville's parents could not attend his wedding, nor his grandmother who had passed away after the war.

After the ceremony, everyone mingled briefly. Hermione took this time to separate from Malfoy, his extended presence by her side made her feel weird. She also skirted away from Lavender so that she wouldn't have to submit to her piercing questions about her fiancé.

Hermione caught up with a few members of the DA, including Luna who was holding Blaise's hand the whole time, swaying gently. Blaise seemed uncomfortable, but also unwilling to let go of her hand. It was an odd dynamic. They ended up talking about mobiles for a while and Blaise said he wanted to follow up with Hermione since it seemed like a very useful tool. Hermione also spoke with Minerva McGonagall about the ongoing difficulty in filling positions at Hogwarts.

At the dinner table, Hermione sat beside Malfoy and Ginny and across from Pansy and Ron. She was once again thrown for how odd it was to be so close to her almost husband. She flushed thinking about how close they were going to be if she hadn't succeeded in overthrowing the marriage law in two months time.

Dinner was a very casual affair and the food was delicious. She just wished she didn't have to watch Pansy eat so daintily. It pulled on her insecurities to see how refined and frankly hot Pansy was. Hermione remembered thinking that she wasn't especially beautiful, but clearly when the woman wanted to look a certain way, she could pull it off.

Pansy whispered into Ron's ear many times throughout the meal and Hermione noticed he ate with more grace than usual. It was weird for her not to know much about her best friend's fiancée. Hermione was actually glad to spend some time with the woman who would be entering her inner circle.

Malfoy engaged her in conversation a few times, but mostly stuck to conversing with Pansy and Blaise about whatever pureblood nonsense interested them.

By the time the meal came to a close, Hermione was in an excellent mood and very well fed. Neville and Hannah wished everyone a happy evening and left in a horse drawn carriage. Hermione's heart swelled with the romance of it all.

She turned to Malfoy who was standing beside her for the couple's send off.

"Ready to party like a Slytherin, Granger?" he asked with a smirk.

Hermione took in his perfect face and found herself yet again wanting to mess up his hair. "Ready to party like a Gryffindor?"

Malfoy smirked. "Touché." He gazed at her for a moment longer, hands in his pockets. "Just make sure that Pansy doesn't spike your drink."

Hermione's heart seized. "What?"

"And don't let her convince you to do anything you don't want to."

"I'm sorry, what on earth are you expecting to happen at this party tonight?"

He looked over his shoulder. "Pansy won't do anything to hurt you, I've ensured that," he muttered, "But, she has a moral compass that can be a bit...off-kilter sometimes. Just make sure you look out for yourself tonight, Granger."

Hermione was panicking now. All warm and fuzzy feelings from the wedding were evaporating. Malfoy sensed this and placed a hand on her shoulder firmly.

"Don't worry. You'll be fine. Just trust your instincts."

Hermione's body heated at his touch. Something about him touching her while looming over her and acting all protective had her heart racing. She nodded silently.

He removed his hand and her mind cleared (slightly). "Have fun, Granger. I'll see you tomorrow. You'll have to pick me up for Finnegan's wedding, I'm not sure where it is."

Hermione nodded again, her body still thrumming and her mind still anxious about the bachelorette.

"Did you want to do dinner tomorrow?"

She nodded again, not thinking.

Pansy was suddenly beside her, linking arms with a broad smile. "Okay, Granger. It's party time. I almost convinced Ginny to join us, but then Potter had to butt in about how important her training sessions are. What a bore *that one* is. It's a wonder he ever broke any school rules at all!"

Hermione laughed nervously.

"Say goodnight, Draco," Pansy sing-songed to him.

He scowled at her. “Remember what we talked about, Pansy,” he responded gruffly.

She rolled her eyes and pushed her hair back dramatically. “Yes, yes, Draco. I won’t do anything to your preci—”

“Have a good night, ladies,” he cut her off and walked over to Harry and Ron.

Hermione stared at his retreating form before looking over at Pansy. “What did you two talk about?” she asked.

Pansy smiled wickedly. “You.”

Hermione’s heart stuttered. “Me?”

“Enough about that, Granger. Tonight’s about me. Not you.”

Hermione almost rolled her eyes. “I thought tonight was about getting to know one another better?”

Pansy nodded, her eyes landing on Ron’s form. “Yes, that and dicks.”

Hermione’s jaw dropped as Pansy spun on the spot, apparating them away.

*

Draco was uncomfortable, but at least he was well on his way to being trashed. He knocked back another firewhiskey and signalled the waitress for another.

Pansy had apparently told Ron that he needed to get his bachelor life out of his system and that he had a pass for the night. To do whatever he wanted. As long as no babies resulted from it. Draco wouldn’t have believed it but for the fact that Pansy had told him this herself. Draco was naturally very possessive and jealous and couldn’t imagine giving Granger any sort of pass whatsoever—especially since they had agreed to only be with one another once they married. Pansy, however, was hardly possessive or jealous and would likely be inviting many people into her marital bed over the course of their marriage, so Draco wasn’t entirely surprised. Weasley seemed torn between discomfort with the idea of being with another woman, and pure ecstasy, if the bulge in his pants was any indicator.

The strip club they were at was muggle, mostly to avoid reporters, but also because there were very few magical strip clubs. Weasley was currently getting a rather hands-on lap dance. His bachelor party consisted of himself, Potter, Finnegan, Thomas, and George Weasley. Draco thought it odd to be receiving a lap dance in front of his brother, but Draco wouldn’t know what it was like to have siblings at all, so he supposed it might not be that weird.

Potter looked distinctly uncomfortable, drinking quietly and trying not to look too closely at anything in particular. Draco was doing the same. He glanced at his watch, knowing that they would only be at the club for another 30 minutes or so before they hit the casino. At least there he could have some fun.

He watched as Weasley was led to a back room by two mostly naked women. One resembled Pansy while the other looked suspiciously like Granger. He frowned and occluded to try to get the image from his mind. It took much longer than usual, which he blamed on the alcohol.

*

Pansy's bachelorette was very small. It was Hermione, Astoria and Daphne Greengrass, and Pansy. The party started at a pole dancing class. Hermione was beyond flustered. Pansy clearly had experience doing it while the other women were comfortable looking sexy and trying out scandalous moves. Hermione could barely do a spin, let alone acquire anywhere near the level of sexiness that the others had.

"Granger, just relax!" Pansy shouted as she twirled in a plank position around the pole.

Astoria hopped off her pole and handed Hermione another shot of whatever they had been drinking. "Bottoms up!"

Hermione accepted it happily, hoping to smother her embarrassment by being drunk. She found she quite liked Astoria, but Daphne was very cold toward her and Pansy was still elusive.

Astoria handed her another shot and Hermione drank it without question. "Don't compare yourself to them," Astoria commented quietly. "Pole dancing is less about the skills and more about the attitude. If you feel sexy, you look sexy."

Hermione nodded, a flush on her face. "I don't feel sexy," she admitted.

Astoria was taken aback. "But look at you!" they stared at Hermione in the mirror. "This dress is nothing but boobs and ass, Hermione."

Hermione did admit the dress was very flattering. She remembered Malfoy's raking gaze when she had taken her shall off. "I know, but c'mon..."

Astoria frowned again. She took Hermione's face in her hands and stared her dead in the eye. "You are hot, Hermione Granger. Everyone has known it since you showed up in that dress during the Yule Ball."

Hermione blinked back at her, not believing her.

Astoria growled and dropped her hands. "Just feel the music. And pretend you're dancing for..." her eyes lit up, "Draco."

Hermione felt a heat crawl up her neck. "Why would...I don't..."

Astoria chuckled and started back for her own pole as a new song started up. Hermione had heard it before and remembered remarking that it was deeply sexual. She watched as the other girls danced and twirled to the song, the pole being used and ignored as suited them best. Hermione glanced at the row of chairs in front of the mirror. She let her mind wander briefly and suddenly was imagining Malfoy sitting in the chair directly in front of her, staring at her intently in the dim lighting.

Hermione closed her eyes and walked around the pole. She began swishing her hips and imagined his eyes following her ass as it moved. She did a slight twirl on the pole, then went back to dancing slowly to the sultry music. She was really getting into it, rolling her body and pushing out her assets when a wolf whistle distracted her. Her eyes snapped open to the empty chair where she had been imagining Malfoy, then to Pansy who was once again at the top of her pole doing some intricate move that looked like it involved more muscles than Hermione had ever had. The woman was whistling at Hermione.

Hermione looked at Astoria who had a knowing look in her eye. Hermione flushed deeply, but instead of stopping, closed her eyes again and got lost in the music, the imagined heat of Malfoy's eyes egging her on.

*

Draco flew unsteadily, his earlier fire whiskies catching up to him. Drunken Quidditch was fun, but entirely dangerous. Potter had planned ahead and made it so the brooms couldn't go higher than 5 feet off the ground. Despite that fact, the men gathered were well beyond sloshed and kept almost crashing into one another. Draco had to admit that he was actually having fun.

He wondered idly what Granger was up to.

*

Pansy was throwing muggle pounds at the dancers on the stage. The most recent one had just thrust his junk into the woman's face, much to her screaming delight. Hermione was very uncomfortable and vaguely turned on by the whole affair. She hadn't been with anyone in three weeks and it was definitely getting to her. Their earlier sexy dancing combined with a room full of very attractive mostly naked men wasn't helping.

Pansy sat back down at the end of the song and ordered them all more shots.

"I'm taking that one to a private room," she declared.

Hermione couldn't believe that both she and Ron were supposed to sleep with other people that night. She supposed it was something that they had agreed on, so it was consensual, but the idea was a bit odd to her. She wondered what Malfoy was up to, suddenly worried that he was shoving his face into a woman's breasts.

"You should take him, Hermione," Pansy shouted, pointing at a tall muscular blond who was taking the stage next.

Hermione's jaw dropped. "That's not—I can't—"

Pansy cackled along with Astoria and Daphne.

"I'm sure Draco won't get mad about breaching your contract just one time," Pansy said. "Besides, you're not even married yet."

Hermione's heart clenched. *Pansy knows about our contract?* Had she been less drunk, she definitely would have freaked out more. But she was mostly trying to understand why Pansy thought Malfoy would be fine with Hermione sleeping with someone else.

"I can't—not with anyone else," Hermione responded weakly, her eyes roving over the blond in question who had caught her eye and was staring into her soul. Hermione's core throbbed.

The girls laughed loudly again at Hermione. Pansy leaned toward her, "Is it cheating if you sleep with someone who looks exactly like him?"

Hermione blinked and tore her eyes away. She was flustered.

"You could always just have a private dance. No need to go further..." Astoria suggested. "I'm getting a dance with that one," she pointed at an attractive dark-skinned man.

Daphne was already rising, talking to another muscled hunk and following him to a back room. Hermione's heart pounded. She couldn't even imagine having a private dance with someone. But she was rather drunk and wound up.

Somehow, ten minutes later, she was in a small booth with the platinum blond, sitting on a bench while he gyrated in her face.

"You can touch, if you want," the man drawled.

Hermione clenched. "I—that's—I'm engaged," she stuttered.

He rolled his body up hers, his head hovering over her exposed cleavage. "Me too," he responded.

He gyrated in front of her slowly, matching pace with the music. Hermione clenched her fists as she felt her nipples harden. She had never received a lap dance before. It was a bit ridiculous, if she were honest, but she was also wet. So, there was that.

The man picked her up easily. He wrapped her legs around his waist and pressed her against the wall. The alcohol in her veins, the pounding music, and his hips against her own were overwhelming. Hermione stared into his light blue eyes and realised that they were completely the wrong colour.

She unhooked her legs quickly, realizing how inappropriate it was what she was doing. He helped her down gently and looked entirely unoffended by her closing him out.

The man smirked, reminding her of a different blond. "Too hot?"

Hermione nodded and coughed awkwardly. "My...my fiancé wouldn't appreciate..."

The man nodded. "Don't worry, gorgeous, no need to apologize. I just hope he takes good care of you when you get home tonight..."

Hermione gulped. "And your fiancé?"

He smiled a genuine smile. "He knows it's nothing serious at the club...no offense."

Hermione was relieved. The guy was gay. At least it felt less horrible now. "No offense taken. I...you're a really good dancer," she admitted softly.

The man laughed. "Thanks, gorgeous. My fiancé likes that bit too."

Hermione laughed. She fished in her purse for some pounds and handed them to the man. "Thanks for the dance."

He winked at her and shoved the money into his G-string. "Anytime, love."

As Hermione made her way back toward the main area, she could swear she heard Pansy screaming in pleasure from behind one of the private rooms. Hermione hurried back to their table.

*

George was lighting off fireworks as the gathered men drank deeply and chatted casually. The Quidditch game had been abandoned a while ago when they stopped keeping track of the score and Seamus accidentally flew into a tree (Draco may or may not have pushed him by accident). Luckily, he was fine, otherwise Romilda would probably have murdered Ron.

Draco was having a surprisingly easy conversation with George about the benefits of skipping classes when there was a flash of light that wasn't from the fireworks. He looked over as Pansy, Granger, Astoria, and Daphne appeared all at once, dropping a wooden ladle.

Draco wondered for a moment what his plan was for getting home since they were all trashed in the middle of a random field and apparition and flying were out of the question. But this thought was quickly dismissed as he took in Granger's appearance. She was flushed drunk and her dress was much lower than before, showing off her breasts.

Draco's eyes darkened as he imagined shoving his face into her exposed chest. He shook himself but did not succeed in schooling his features.

"So, you do like her, then?" George asked casually, looking between Granger and Draco.

"Huh?"

George smiled. "Don't worry, Malfoy, secret's safe with me." George patted him on the back, then located more fireworks to set off.

Draco stumbled toward Granger, his only coherent thought that he needed to be closer to her.

"Ron!" Pansy was shouting across the field at him. The ginger was off a bit with Potter having some quiet conversation.

Ron, seeing Pansy, ran toward her and pulled her into a fierce hug, followed by a lascivious kiss. The couple fell to the ground, still kissing aggressively. Draco crumpled his face at the sight.

Draco had reached Granger's side by that point. He smiled at her vaguely, wishing he were less drunk and able to occlude better. *My gods, she's hot.*

"Draco!" Astoria greeted and hugged him briefly. Daphne nodded in greeting.

"Ladies."

"You should have seen Hermione tonight," Astoria gushed, clearly just as wasted as everyone else. "The girl has moves. You'll have to install a pole in your flat."

Draco choked on his own salvia. The memory of the girls from earlier at the strip club were replaced with Granger's face. He really needed to occlude, but was having issues building any sort of wall in that moment. He glanced at his intended to see her staring at the ground with a deep red flush creeping up her neck.

Astoria grinned wickedly. "Anyway, have a good night, you two. Say bye to Pansy for us, if she ever resurfaces!" Astoria laughed. She pulled out a coin from a hidden pocket and grabbed Daphne's hand, the sisters disappeared in a flash of colour.

Draco looked to Hermione who was now taking in the fireworks. He wanted to shove her to the ground much like Pansy had done to Ron. Instead, he said, "Want to sit?"

She fidgeted. "Actually. Can we...talk? Maybe just a bit over there. Away from..."

Draco was intrigued and would also follow her anywhere at that point in the night, so he nodded. He watched her remove her heels and walk through the damp grass toward a grouping of trees. She shivered in the late March air. Draco removed his jacket and handed it to her. She took it with a smile and wrapped it around her shoulders.

Once out of earshot, Granger stared at the fireworks in the sky again. Then she glanced at him before looking away quickly.

"I have to tell you something," she said quickly.

Draco stepped closer to her, desperate to close the distance between them, barely listening to her. "Mhm."

"I got a lap dance."

He moved his gaze from her deep red lips to her concerned eyes. He narrowed his eyes. "What?"

"I didn't mean to. Pansy and Astoria kept pushing me. And then this guy who looked—he just sort of brought me to a room. And he—he gave me a lap dance." She descended into silence and kept glancing at him. "He was gay!" she added on, just remembering.

Draco felt weird. He supposed they should have talked about boundaries pre-marriage, but he was definitely upset that another man had been touching her. Making her flush red.

"What sort of lap dance?" he asked, moving closer to her.

She backed into the tree and bit her lip. Then she looked up at him. “It was...” she cleared her throat, but was unable to say anything else.

Draco felt a flash of anger. He moved in closer to her. “What did you do?”

“I—nothing. I didn’t do anything. I even kept my hands to myself. He just—”

“Were your clothes on the whole time?”

Hermione nodded.

“Did he touch you?”

She gulped. That meant yes.

“Where?”

“It was. I mean mostly. His...” her eyes landed on Draco’s crotch.

Draco’s mind conjured images from earlier that evening of the woman gyrating on Weasley’s lap. He assumed this is what Hermione had also received.

“He also...lifted me and...well I asked him to put me down after that.”

Draco’s body was on fire. He was torn between anger and horniness. His body moved against his will. He made a mental note to meditate the following morning since his occlumency needed some serious work. He had a hand up on the tree beside her head and was crowding her in seconds. Her breathing sped up.

He brought his hand to her arm and slowly ran it up and down her flushed skin. “Did he touch you like this?” Her eyes widened and her breath hitched.

“Y-yes.”

Draco, uncertain why he was being so foolish, let his hands trail to her waist. He lifted her leg without a thought and hooked it around his waist. “What about like this?” He pressed into her core.

She let loose a tiny whimper and nodded. He stared into her large brown eyes that looked almost black in the dark of the night. Draco brought his head to her neck and breathed in deeply. She smelled amazing somehow, despite just coming from a strip club. His hand on her leg massaged her, but he refrained from grinding his waist against hers, somehow.

She cleared her throat. “He—actually...it was both legs—that were—”

Draco opened his eyes and stared at the tree bark behind her. She wasn’t putting an end to this. He grabbed her other leg and wrapped it around his waist, pushing her into the tree. She was breathing heavily.

“What else?” he asked softly into her ear.

“I stopped him—it was only a-a few seconds of this,” she managed to say breathily.

Her hips twitched against his own. Draco could not believe what was happening. Her hips canted forward again, then stopped. Draco felt her hands wrap around his neck and curl into the bottom of his hair. He brought his hands round to her glorious ass and slowly canted his hips against hers, his mouth finding its way to her neck. Draco was hard in seconds, desperate to be joined with her through their layers of clothes.

She whimpered.

“Did you move your hips against him?” he demanded into her neck, his hips not ceasing their slow roll against hers.

“No-no. I—” she gasped. “I stopped it.”

But Draco didn’t stop his hips and she didn’t seem to want him to. He ground against her core slowly and insistently, his lips trailing up and down her neck. She groaned in response, her own hips rolling against his, her breath loud and uneven.

“I have to say, Granger,” he murmured, “I’m disappointed that you let someone else touch you when you were so insistent on not sleeping around.”

She groaned as he hips pressed against hers with more insistence. “I’m sorry,” she groaned into his ear. “I didn’t—I didn’t touch him. I promise.”

Draco palmed her breast. “Whatever am I going to do with you?” he asked.

Draco brought his head to hers, every intention of pressing their lips together. Of taking her right here against this blasted tree. Of reminding her of the only person who was supposed to make her pant and groan. Of making her—

“Draco!” someone had shouted from behind them.

He pulled back as reality crashed down on him. He was in a random field dry humping Granger at Weasley’s bachelor party. He unwrapped her legs from his body and stepped back, carefully not looking at her. He tried his best to occlude and failed, so he readjusted his pants and turned around.

They were actually quite a ways from everyone else, the darkness working in their favour. He saw Pansy near the bonfire, Weasley holding her hand tightly. It was her who was shouting his name.

Draco looked back at Granger. She looked thoroughly mused. He wanted to resume their previous activities but thought she would deeply regret their actions should they continue, much like she regretted them sleeping together in the first place.

“Fuck,” Draco muttered, unable to contain himself.

“I—I’m really sorry, Malfoy,” she said softly. “I didn’t mean—”

He couldn't look at her or he might jump her. "We should probably go see what Pansy wants."

He started back toward the bonfire trying to clear his mind of her tantalizing body. Pansy was looking for him to give him a portkey to head home whenever he wanted. When she saw the two of them emerge from the darkness, she smirked triumphantly.

Pansy and Ron wished everyone who was still there a good night, which to Draco's surprise was only George and him and Granger. George promised to put out the fire but wanted to stay out for a bit longer. Draco turned to Granger who was pulling out her own portkey from her bag. She looked as flustered as she had pressed up against that tree.

"Not leaving together?" George asked cheekily. Draco wanted to hit him.

Granger stuttered out something unintelligible before wishing them goodnight and disappearing. Before George could insinuate anything else, Draco took his own portkey and disappeared in a flash of colour.

Saturday, March 20

Seamus and Romilda's wedding was extremely awkward for many reasons, not the least of which had to do with Hermione dry humping her fiancé in a drunken lust-ridden haze the night before. But to make matters worse, Seamus very much disliked Malfoy and kept finding ways to subtly dig at him or ignore him. It made Hermione wonder how they had survived the bachelor party. She'd have to ask later.

The wedding was similar to Neville's; slightly larger attendance and a little longer, but nothing over the top with the couple leaving fairly quickly to head to their honeymoon suite. Most people were waiting on the actual honeymoon trip until after the marriage deadline so as not to miss their friends' weddings.

Hermione was happy to leave the wedding at 4, making an excuse to Malfoy about needing to shower or something or other before dinner. She really just needed to leave his intoxicating presence and frankly, masturbate. She was still horny beyond belief from the night before and needed some relief. Which she got, twice.

Too embarrassed to acknowledge her new fantasies that focused on blond men, she got ready for Luna and Blaise's wedding, assuming she would just spend the evening at Malfoy's and then they would leave together.

Hermione donned her flowy floor length yellow dress and left her hair down as before. She brought some flowers to add to her hair just before they left.

Malfoy was waiting in the front foyer when she appeared with some shrunken boxes. He greeted her with a nod, then took the boxes from her and walked her to her room in silence. There was a certain tension in the air that she wasn't prepared for. She thought her bathtub time would have put the tension behind her. But it was not the case.

They had a quiet meal together, tension permeating the first half of it, until Malfoy spoke.

“I’ve been thinking.”

Hermione looked up at him from across the long table. “Yes?”

“I might be able to help you.”

Hermione flushed, her mind running to her earlier fantasy. *Let me help relieve some of that tension, Granger.*

“Oh?” Hermione asked, cheeks pink.

He looked down at his plate, the only thing betraying his discomfort. “I am a paralegal. Perhaps I can help you research overturning this law.”

Hermione felt a brief constricting feeling in her chest. Of course, he wanted to get rid of her. “Right. Yes. That makes a lot of sense actually. You must have access to all sorts of legal records and testimonies!”

“Actually, most of what I am referencing is available through the Manor. You’ve already read through everything at the Ministry.”

She gulped and put down her shaking fork. “The Manor?”

He nodded. “Mother has renovated quite a bit, so it’s hardly recognizable. Besides, you’ve never seen the library, have you? It’s...quite expansive.”

Hermione’s eyes glazed over imagining the Hogwarts library on crack. She found herself nodding. “I would like that.”

“We can start the weekend after the honeymoon.”

She looked up at him sharply. “Honeymoon?”

“Yes.”

“What?”

“You said you received a copy of the wedding plans, Granger.”

“I didn’t see anything about a honeymoon.”

He frowned, then remembered something. “I told my mother to keep it a secret, but I meant the location, she must have misinterpreted. We’ll be gone from Thursday to Sunday.”

“What about work?”

“And this is why I added that line about you being a workaholic to the contract.”

Hermione glared at him.

“Don’t worry, I’ve already spoken to your boss, you’re cleared for the time off.”

“I wish I had known about this sooner. I need to prepare since I’m losing a half day already for the wedding, now it’s a day and a half!”

Malfoy rolled his eyes but refrained from saying anything else.

“I look forward to Blaise and Luna’s wedding tonight,” he said after the silence was once again overwhelming.

Hermione nodded. “It’s sure to be interesting.”

They finished dinner in silence, both remaining seated and unsure of what to do since the wedding wasn’t for another 3 hours.

“Should we talk about—” he started, but Hermione cut him off.

“I’m very sorry, Malfoy. I understand if you wish to implement some sort of repercussion for my actions. I know that it violates the contract.” She was flushing darkly again.

He paused. “I was going to ask about dinner with our parents tomorrow.”

Hermione’s heart stuttered. Of course, he was. He just wanted to put yesterday behind him and their embarrassing and unwanted touching that was merely a result of far too much alcohol. Just like the first time they had touched.

“Right! Yes. Tomorrow.”

“But we can talk about last night, if you want,” he replied darkly, the tension getting thicker.

Hermione felt herself clench at his tone and felt like slapping herself across the face. She needed to invest in a better vibrator.

He continued in a normal voice, “While I am aggrieved that my future wife would allow another man to touch her, I am satisfied that it did not technically break the agreement in our contract. You did not touch him, so you claim—”

“I didn’t,” Hermione insisted, “It was all him.”

Malfoy continued, an eyebrow raised, “We are not yet married, so your actions are excused.”

Hermione stared at him, wishing she were closer just to get a better read on his emotions. He was definitely occluding again.

“Did you—with anyone last night?” she asked for some reason she couldn’t fathom.

He remained impassive. “No.” He paused. “Well. I did touch a woman. But she’s currently sitting across from me, so I don’t believe that counts.”

Hermione flushed, and looking for anything to talk about that wasn't the Tree Incident, she asked, "Where did you learn occlumency?"

If she thought he was impassive before, it was nothing compared to now. He got a far-off expression, much like Luna and smiled vaguely.

"Whatever do you mean?"

Hermione frowned. "You're doing it now. Occluding. I've tried my hand at occlumency, but I'm rather bad at it. How did you learn?"

He blinked at her slowly. "Family."

Hermione narrowed her eyes. "Can you give me a straight answer please?"

Malfoy blinked again. "I need to excuse myself to get ready for the wedding. Perhaps you can spend unpack in the meantime?"

He stood and left in an occluded haze. She desperately wanted to know what he was truly thinking and also how she could improve her own occlumency. She wondered if family meant his mother, father, or even his evil aunt.

Hermione left the dining room, wandered to her new room and began unpacking boxes. She realized pretty early on that she would have to get more book shelves, but it wasn't a priority, so she stacked the extra book boxes in a corner of her room until she had more mental capacity to deal with organization.

*

Blaise and Luna's midnight wedding was a fairy's dream. It took place in Xenophilius' backyard (Luna and Blaise were living at Blaise's manor). Luna walked down the aisle in wings and covered in glitter. Blaise was wearing a suit that had a sparkling sheen to it and all the guests had wreaths of flowers and fluttering dresses and sparkling suits.

The couple had a short, bizarre ceremony that involved lots of bubbles and speaking gibberish to one another. This was followed by a dance in the yard lit by floating ethereal balls. Luna and Blaise spent the whole time wrapped in one another's arms and dancing together. They clearly had a strong connection between them. It was bizarre to Hermione how fast their connection had grown.

Hermione ended up drinking quite a bit again because of her nerves from being around Malfoy. He asked her to dance a few times and she let him twirl her across the grass to the more elegant songs. He always pulled apart when a modern record was put on. After each dance Hermione found herself chugging more alcohol in an attempt to distract herself from her fiancé. Instead, it gave her a confusing laser focus on him. She was always aware of where he was; talking to Blaise, dancing with Pansy, talking to Theo and Astoria, arguing with Blaise.

"How was the rest of your evening yesterday?" Astoria asked Hermione at some point.

“Huh?” she pulled her eyes from Malfoy’s ass as he twirled Pansy through the grass. Pansy had loudly insisted that they dance together and that ‘Hermione would just have to get over it.’ Not that Hermione was mad, given her current view.

Astoria chuckled. “Your night. What did you get up to with your fiancé?”

“What?” Hermione flushed deeply. “Nothing. We didn’t.”

Astoria laughed again. “You’re a terrible liar, Hermione. There’s nothing to be embarrassed about. Draco’s fit. You’re fit. Besides we all know you two are sexually compatible—you matched each other after all. Might as well enjoy,” the blonde said with a shrug.

Hermione downed the rest of her champagne. “I should—” she excused herself poorly, looking for someone who wouldn’t encourage her obsession with her fiancé’s body. Unfortunately, she ran into her fiancé.

Pansy made a big deal of excusing herself and leaving them alone. They were in a semi-private corner of the yard near a large tree. Hermione tried to move away from it, worried about what might happen if she moved toward it.

“Having fun?” Malfoy asked easily—he had had a few drinks and was no longer a distant ice wall.

“Oh, yes. It’s a lovely night. I think I’ll have to head out though, the dress shopping is tomorrow. Wouldn’t want to be too exhausted.”

Malfoy nodded. “Let me walk you to the Floo.” He gestured his hand toward the house and placed his palm against her lower back as they made their way over.

Once inside, the noise of the wedding became muted and Hermione realized how alone they were, and that his hand was touching her back, the heat travelling through the thin fabric easily. He guided her to the large fireplace and reached for some Floo powder. This brought him into her personal space, leaning rather close to her face. Her breath hitched. He pulled back and threw the powder into the grate. Green flames leapt to life.

“Have a goodnight, Granger,” he murmured, then turned back to the party and disappeared outside.

Hermione tried to calm her beating heart as she stepped into the Floo and swirled home.

Sunday, March 21

Hermione realised that putting off the planning until so late into the month of allotted time was a mistake. She had to decide on a dress right then and there. There would be no consulting other stores, no major tailoring. She had to find the perfect dress.

Given the rush of magical brides, she chose the muggle dress shop near her great aunt’s old house.

She invited her bridal party: Ginny, her mother, Luna, Harry, and Ron. And of course, Narcissa, who sat to the side. Hermione had invited her father, but he complained that he didn't want the surprise to be ruined for him. In reality, he hated shopping more than cavities. Narcissa had seemed affronted that any males were present, but Hermione had made Harry and Ron part of her bridal party, and she refused to back down on that point.

Hermione was standing in the changing room with the attendant, staring at her reflection. She hated that she was like those cliché shows on television, but she knew that this was the dress for her. It has a sweetheart bodice embroidered with flowers and a princess-style skirt. The back had those classic wedding dress buttons. Hermione was in love. Luckily, they actually had her size too, which was imperative given she was to be married in mere days and all the seamstresses were working triple time.

She was nervous to come out and face Narcissa. The woman had already been awful, commenting on the fact that Hermione's previous two dresses were unflattering and cheap. Hermione hated that the woman had been right; she could have at least said it in a nicer way.

Hermione finally plucked up the courage to leave the changing room and face her entourage. She stared at them nervously as no one said anything. Finally, and to everyone's surprise, Narcissa was the first to talk.

"It's just lovely," she breathed out. Hermione hated that she glowed after the woman's proclamation. "It does show a lot of skin on the top though," Narcissa muttered.

Hermione ignored her. Hermione instead looked to her mother as she wiped tears from her eyes. The woman, who was a spitting image of Hermione, pulled her into a tight hug.

"You look fabulous, Hermione!" her mom sobbed.

Hermione was crying and suddenly Ginny was joining in on the hug and everyone was laughing and crying. Even Harry and Ron were beaming at her.

"Now, if only she didn't have to marry the ferret," Ron mumbled under his breath to Harry.

Narcissa was whispering something to the attendant and handing over a credit card. Hermione walked over briskly.

"Please, my mother and father would like to pay for the dress, since you've so graciously paid for the rest of the wedding," Hermione said sweetly, despite feeling anything but.

Narcissa pursed her lips.

"I've already given Melissa our credit card information, but thank you, Narcissa," Hermione's mother called from her seat. Hermione could swear Narcissa's eye twitched, but the woman eventually acquiesced and returned to her seat.

Hermione got out of her dress and the fun part for her began; finding outfits for Ginny, Luna, her mom and the boys. Everyone was in a good mood, flitting about the store, arguing over colours, Harry and Ron even trying on some dresses. They settled on a simple floor length

sweetheart dress made of the same flowy material as Hermione's, each of the women wearing a different muted pastel. The boys found classy suits and also chose a pastel colour shirt and tie. When Narcissa finally approved after fixing Ron's tie for the *n*th time, it had been hours. Narcissa made a big deal about paying for everyone else's purchases, almost causing a fight, but eventually getting her way. Hermione thanked them all for coming out to support her. It had been a surprisingly fun and emotional experience.

Narcissa stood to the side while Hermione hugged all of her friends goodbye. When it was just Linda, Narcissa, and Hermione the awkwardness set in again.

"I will see you at my son's—at the flat," Narcissa said tightly before strolling down an alleyway and popping away.

Her mom cast a dirty look in the direction that Narcissa had taken. "I don't like that woman."

"I think she's an acquired taste." At least, Hermione hoped she was, since Narcissa would be in her life for a while yet. "Oh, mom, I didn't tell you." Hermione led her mother down the same alleyway to apparate. "Malfoy actually proposed to me."

"The same man that teased you for years? Why?"

Hermione had been questioning the same thing since it had happened. "I have no idea. It was actually such a nice proposal..." her mind wandered back to the lake and she realised that no matter what the future brought, she was going to remember that moment fondly for the rest of her life.

Linda took note of the ring. "Heavens!" she exclaimed. "That is gorgeous. How did he know you wanted an opal?"

Hermione smiled slowly. "He asked Ginny. I honestly can't believe that he would ever ask a Weasley for help."

Hermione held out her arm and her mother took it, used to side-along apparition by that point, but preferring Floo.

"I think that this Draco might not hate you as much as you think," her mother said with a knowing look.

Hermione brushed her off and instead turned them into oblivion. She dropped her mom off to freshen up with her dad and returned to her flat. She changed into something more casual and cuddled Crookshanks for a bit before she had to go back and pick up her parents.

They were waiting patiently by the fire place; their usual spot for when Hermione would appear out of thin air.

"Are you ready?" she asked them.

Her father, tall, balding and boisterous, responded, "We were born ready."

Hermione laughed and pulled them toward her so she could apparate into the front lobby of her new home. Malfoy was standing there, clearly waiting, his mother was nowhere in sight. Hermione released her parents and immediately felt awkward.

“Malfoy—er... Draco, this is my father, Greg, and my mother, Linda,” she introduced haltingly.

Malfoy reached out his hand to shake her father’s then her mother’s hand. It was obvious that her dad had given him the death grip.

“It is a pleasure. My mother is in the kitchen checking on dinner. Please, follow me.” Malfoy was surprisingly cordial. He led them to the extravagant dining room. The table was already full of salads, breads, cheeses, and an expensive bottle of wine.

Malfoy walked around to the head of the table. Hermione stood awkwardly, not sure where her place was and not used to high society dining.

“Granger,” he said softly, but when all three turned to him, he corrected, “Hermione.” He pulled out her seat for her. It was the one beside him.

Hermione sat down uncomfortably beside him. Narcissa entered the room and sat across from her. Her mother sat beside the frigid woman with her father taking the seat to Hermione’s left. Half of the seats were empty. The table was really far too large.

Narcissa held her hand out daintily to Hermione’s father. “Narcissa Malfoy,” she stated in her cold voice.

Greg took her hand. “Greg Granger,” he responded.

The table descended into silence.

“Thank you so much for coming tonight,” Malfoy began, placing his napkin on his lap. “It means a lot. I know that Granger—Hermione must have told you all about how awful I was to her in school and that I...” he took a breath, “was on the wrong side of the war,” Narcissa made a noise, but didn’t comment. “So, I appreciate that this matching must be as difficult for you as it is for us.”

“Seems like a violation of rights,” Greg responded, filling his plate with salad and passing it along.

Hermione saw Malfoy look between her and her father, seeing the similarities in character. “I agree wholeheartedly,” Malfoy responded, earning a look of surprise from Greg.

More silence.

Hermione ate her salad and could swear she could hear the sound of her mother chewing her croutons from across the table.

“I have given your wife the wedding plans,” Narcissa told Greg. “So that you know where you’ll be sitting. I will come to find you before the ceremony as you will have to be

accompanied inside.” Narcissa seemed annoyed by this fact.

“Despite it being a forced marriage, it will be beautiful,” Hermione commented quietly.

Her father patted her on the back gently. Silence took over the table again.

“So, this is where you’ll be living?” Linda asked finally. “Would we be able see more of the place?”

“I would be delighted,” Malfoy responded.

Flopsy appeared and added the main course to the table with a snap of her fingers. Her parents were a bit surprised to see a house elf, but they had seen Kreacher before, so they weren’t shocked. The meal continued in stunted conversation and overwhelmingly uncomfortable silence. When dessert arrived, her father brought up the topic that everyone was hoping to avoid.

“I may be overprotective of my little girl,” he began, “and in denial about what she gets up to,” Hermione was already blushing, seeing where this conversation was going, “but I don’t think that I’m wrong when I say the point of this marriage law is to have children.”

Malfoy simply nodded, his mask in place.

“I would just like to go on record saying that if you touch my baby girl without her permission, no amount of magic is going to save you.”

Hermione gasped at the threat; she had never heard her dad sound so violent. It was clear from his tone that he was not joking.

“They can force you two to live together, but they’re not forcing you to touch her, you hear me?” He was pointing at Malfoy menacingly.

Malfoy nodded stiffly. “I wouldn’t dream of it,” he responded. “Besides, I’m sure your daughter will find a way out of this marriage. If not, there’s always the insemination route.”

Her father examined him for a moment longer before nodding curtly. Hermione was mortified. Narcissa was frowning at Malfoy’s last comment and her mother looked vaguely amused.

“Dad, did you have to?” Hermione groaned.

He patted her on the back again. “Just looking out for you, pumpkin. Even though I know that you can look after yourself.”

“This meal was absolutely delicious!” Linda proclaimed. “Where is Flopsy so that I can thank her?”

Flopsy appeared with a crack at the sound of her name. She bowed. “May I help Mrs. Hermione’s mother?” Flopsy asked happily.

Linda smiled. “I just wanted to thank you for the meal, Flopsy. It was wonderful. Don’t you agree, Greg?”

Greg nodded. “Yes, thank you, Flopsy.”

Hermione also conveyed her thanks. She was surprised that Malfoy did as well. Flopsy cleared the table with a snap and wandered off.

“I do believe some people wanted a tour,” Malfoy said, sounding almost happy.

He stood and led them back to the lobby. Narcissa wished them all a goodnight and left with a pop, claiming that she knew this apartment like the back of her hand—a thought that disturbed Hermione greatly.

Malfoy led them to the living room, the kitchen, a guest bathroom, his room—which he did not open—, another bathroom, and finally Hermione’s room. The whole time Hermione kept having horrible flashes of their sweaty bodies pressed against one another. There was still an unexplored corridor, but Hermione insisted that this was enough of a tour for her parents since her mom had started yawning. He left her with her parents outside her bedroom.

Hermione unwarded it with many flourishes of her wand. They were impressed by the size of it and the fact that most of her things were already there. Hermione noted with interest that another bookshelf had been added.

Her parents toured her room invasively, poking their noses in the closet, the bathroom, her drawers.

“Okay, I think this tour is about over,” Hermione harrumphed as her mother attempted to pull open her underwear drawer, but stung by a ward Hermione had put on it.

“Why is your dresser cursed, Hermione?” the nosy woman asked.

Hermione glared. “So that people don’t go rooting through it,” she responded irritably.

“We should head out, Linda,” her dad said after concluding his tour of her bathroom.

“Besides, way I see it, our Hermione has her own flat in this flat. And that blond git will have a hell of a time trying to get in this room.”

Hermione flushed, understanding her father’s implications. “He’s not going to try to...” she grumbled. It was strange, but Hermione knew that Malfoy posed no threat to her whatsoever. She didn’t feel unsafe around him in the least...very strange.

Greg wouldn’t have any of it though. “Marrying a beautiful woman like you? He’s definitely going to try something. You just remember your jinxes and you’ll be fine. Maybe I’ll have another word with him before we leave...”

“No!” Hermione ordered. “Malfoy will leave me alone. Trust me, the last thing that he wants is to...” Hermione flushed, remembering his head in a certain off-limits place, his hips thrusting against her own as her back was rammed into a tree.

Her mom cut off her train of thought. "I wouldn't be so sure about that, honey, he did propose after all."

Hermione glanced down at her beautiful ring and smiled widely. She shook herself of the warm emotion taking over her chest. "Stop being so overprotective."

"It's hard not to when first these people want to kill you because you're the only normal one ___"

"Witches and wizards are normal too, dad," Hermione began protesting, but he continued on.

"Then they force you into this illegal marriage nonsense. Just consider moving back home, pumpkin. You can come back to the magical world when all of this has blown over."

Hermione crossed her arms. "This is my home now, dad. I can't just abandon these people. Besides, I'm going to make it right again."

Linda placed a calming hand over Greg's raised one. "It's her decision, darling. Come now, I need my beauty rest."

"And how on earth can you be getting married so soon?" Greg muttered, but let himself be pulled away by her apologetic mother. She Flooed them home, then went back to Malfoy's flat with little issue after that.

Hermione sighed and collapsed on her new bed. Her parents' objection to this law was getting worse, specifically her father's. She couldn't blame them. It was an absurd law. Whoever had approved it was clearly lacking some brain cells. But magical London was her home. She couldn't just give it up along with her magic; it was a part of her. Hermione let loose a growl of frustration.

She went to the bathroom to take out her hairdo that she had been sporting all day. Hermione yawned thinking of her to-do list. She heaved herself to her feet and turned on her mp3 player. She continued to put away the belongings that she had transported to her new home.

As before, Malfoy wandered into her doorway.

"Hey, Granger," he greeted when she kept singing along to her music and continued to be unaware of his presence.

Hermione flushed—she was not much of a singer. "Hey."

"Are you not going home?"

"Oh, yeah. I should go see Crooks. I'll move most of my stuff in tomorrow night," she said, reaching for her mp3 and turning it off. "Then I'll move everything in Wednesday night and spend the night. If that's okay?"

Malfoy shrugged. "I told you that you have access to all of my assets now, that includes my homes."

“I keep forgetting that you have homes, plural,” she laughed.

“You keep forgetting that *you* have homes. Plural,” he reminded her.

She frowned. “It’s going to be very strange being rich, isn’t it?”

Malfoy shrugged. “I wouldn’t know what it’s like to be poor, so I can’t really comment.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Well, thanks for dinner, Malfoy. I’ll see you tomorrow night.”

“Did you want to get lunch?”

“Uh...sure...”

“We can talk a bit about the marriage law and what you’ve already researched.”

She was interested now. “Yes. Okay, that sounds lovely.”

“Well, I’m going to bed. Have a good night, Granger.”

“You too,” she called to his retreating form.

Hermione tidied the mess she had made while unpacking and left the flat quickly.

Tuesday, March 23

Hermione shifted around in her boring pastel mid-calf dress. She waited by the altar for Pansy to finally appear. She kept feeling Malfoy’s eyes land on her from Pansy’s side of the altar. She pulled up her dress slightly and cleared her throat.

Ron was shifting, Harry whispering words of encouragement in his ear. Finally, Pansy appeared through the double doors and the music swelled to life. She was in a ridiculous ball gown that was as wide as the aisle itself. She walked down alone, her father absent from the entire affair. Malfoy had mentioned that he was in Azkaban and that Pansy hated him.

Hermione let her eyes drift over the crowd during the ceremony to take in the sea of red on one side and the sea of uptight purebloods on the other. The Weasleys seemed to be enjoying themselves despite the former animosity between the crowd.

The couple had completed a hand fasting, which was less common for the weddings they had seen so far. Hermione and Malfoy were also going to do a hand fasting, so she was thankful to see it in action before she herself would be submitting to the ritual. When the ceremony concluded and Ron and Pansy shared an indecent kiss, Molly Weasley broke into loud sobs. George wolf whistled and Hermione pulled a face.

The couple left the hall quickly, Pansy’s mother saying something about photos and directing the guests to the reception area. The wedding was surprisingly nice. There was very little tension between the two previously warring clans present and especially once the alcohol was

flowing liberally. Everyone mingled and joked about tainting pureblood lines with blood traitors or bringing the dark side to the light.

Hermione and Malfoy ended up dancing together again quite a bit. It seemed like he enjoyed dancing and since Pansy was distracted by her new husband, Hermione found herself on the dance floor for most of the night.

“I like your dress,” Malfoy said softly as the beat slowed.

Hermione heated under his compliment. “Thanks.”

“Now you compliment me, Granger,” he replied with the hint of a smile.

“I like your tie and your suit, but in all honesty, I think the shirt is a bit tight,” she said. His shirt was quite tight, clinging to his lean muscles. Although, she actually really liked that bit.

“No wonder you were single; can’t even compliment a man.”

Hermione let out a gasp of mock anger. “I can compliment men, when they’re deserving.”

Malfoy twirled her out then back into him. “Doubt it.”

Hermione stared into his stormy grey eyes. “You’re an excellent dancer,” she stated.

Malfoy looked pleased for a half a second before putting his smirk firmly back in place. “You’ll learn yet, Granger,” was all he responded.

She let her head drop into the crook of his neck and closed her eyes as he swayed them across the marble dance floor. Hermione was very cozy curled up against him and loved the feeling of his arms around her.

They spent a long time in each other’s arms and it was only when the band stopped playing and started packing up that Hermione realized they were one of the last ones there. The wedding was over and she hadn’t even noticed when Ron and Pansy had left because she was so distracted by Malfoy’s arms on her body.

She felt like she was in the twilight zone.

He wished her a goodnight and promised to bring by a book he had been reading about litigation over lunch before she reminded him that she had lunch with Harry and Ron on Wednesdays. He stiffened as he always did whenever she mentioned them but merely said, “Another time, then,” and wished her goodnight.

Hermione had a lot less to drink at this wedding because it was a work night and also because she had spent most of the evening dancing and far away from the alcohol. So, she apparated herself home with no issues and stared at the boxes lining her floors. It was unsettling to think that she would move out tomorrow and be married in two days.

Wednesday, March 24

Ron was missing from their weekly lunch and had not come into work the following day. Hermione laughed when Harry told her as such.

“Weird seeing them together, but they are well matched,” Harry commented.

Hermione nodded. “I agree. Very weird. But they both seem happy.”

“And what about you?” he asked her.

Hermione felt her stomach flip. “What do you mean?”

“Your wedding is tomorrow. How are you feeling about it?”

Hermione ate some of her sandwich to delay her response. “I feel...I mean. I’m still very outraged at having to be married against my will.”

“Mhm. And what about Malfoy?”

“What about him?”

“How does he feel?” Harry asked tentatively.

Hermione blinked at him, not really understanding his angle. “I have no clue. I mean he told me he’s not mad about marrying me.”

Harry nodded as if she had confirmed something for him. “Why?”

“I think your pairing is the most...contentious and unexpected,” he supplied. “I’m just curious how you’re handling it all.”

“I’m less angry than I used to be. He’s been very...well, *kind* since we found out. Quite tolerable actually...at least once the contract was signed.”

Harry’s eyes sparkled and Hermione worried that Ginny had told him everything. “And what’s in your contract, then? Ron showed me his but you’ve been very hush hush, Hermione.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “It’s called privacy, Harry.”

“I know you told Gin. I’ll find out eventually,” he warned her.

“I’ll make her swear an unbreakable then,” Hermione tossed back, annoyed.

Harry raised his brows. “That tells me a lot about what you put in your contract.” He laughed to himself as Hermione scowled. “Don’t worry, I’m sure the wedding will be fine.”

Hermione changed the topic to Luna’s magical garden that they had all seen at the wedding asking Harry what he thought of the glowing mushrooms.

*

Hermione appeared in her new flat with her remaining boxes shrunk into one hand and an angry Crookshanks in the other. Uneasy with herself, but clearly needing help, she called for Flopsy who appeared with a crack in front of her.

“Mrs. Hermione needs help?” Flopsy asked with a bow.

“Er—yes, yes please Flopsy. Can you please bring the boxes to my room. I need two hands for Crookshanks.” Flopsy bowed again and took the shrunk boxes and vanished.

Hermione took her struggling cat down the long hallway to her room. The door was warded, for which she cursed herself and juggled Crookshanks back into her other hand so that she could fish out her wand. She unwarded the door with difficulty and placed Crookshanks on the ground.

“This is my new bedroom, Crookshanks,” she said clearly, the cat staring up at her in annoyance. “And this is our new home. Please explore as you would like.”

The cat skittered under her bed with a hiss. Hermione sighed and attended to her many boxes. She played music again and left her door open a crack in case her cat wanted to explore.

At some point, she heard a knock at her door and it swung open.

“Granger,” he greeted.

Hermione waved awkwardly and made her way to the music to turn it down a bit. She looked at all the empty boxes littering her floor and vanished them with a flick of her wrist.

“What time is it?”

“Nearing 10:30.”

“Unpacking took longer than I expected,” she grumbled. She sat on her new and comfortable bed. Crookshanks appeared from underneath the bed and hopped onto her lap with a meow.

“Merlin that is a large cat, Granger,” Malfoy commented taking a hesitant step into her room.

Hermione grinned. “He’s half kneazle.”

“That explains it.”

They descended into silence. Hermione scratched behind Crooks’ ears making him purr happily. Malfoy took another step into the room. Crookshanks finally noticed him and cautiously made his way over. Hermione watched the interaction with interest. Malfoy pat the cat’s head tentatively and Crooks immediately began circling his legs, purring happily.

“He likes you,” she said in disbelief.

“Great,” Malfoy huffed.

“Maybe you’re not all that bad, Malfoy.”

He looked at her and replied, “I doubt it.”

Hermione glanced down at her ring again and contradicted his words in her head. Something popped into her head suddenly as she watched Crookshanks try to climb up Malfoy’s body.

“Why did you tell my father we were going the insemination route?” she asked abruptly.

Malfoy looked up from Crookshanks and she swore she saw a faint blush on his cheeks.
“Your father is scary.”

Hermione laughed. “I’m sorry about that. He’s a bit overprotective.”

“He loves you,” Malfoy said simply. Then, mumbled, “must be nice.”

“What?”

“Hm?”

“What did you say?” Hermione asked again.

“Nothing. Anyway, Granger. We have a wedding tomorrow. Try to get some sleep.” He stepped away from her cat and left the room hastily.

Hermione tried to follow his advice. But her nervousness kept her up most of the night.

Chapter End Notes

Are you still hanging in there? The spice is coming (pun intended), I promise.

Fireflies

Chapter Notes

TW: magic-induced lust. To skip, stop reading after they say their vows.

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

Thursday, March 25

Hermione was fussing with her dress in the mirror as Ginny buttoned her up. Her mother had tears in her eyes and kept taking awfully framed photos of Hermione's bridal party. Harry, Ron, and Luna were chuckling about something.

Narcissa entered the room in her elegant grey dress.

"We have ten minutes until the procession is due to start," she said calmly. Despite not raising her voice at all, everyone had quieted and heard her clearly. Hermione hated how graceful and elegant Narcissa was.

Hermione twisted one of the hairs hanging down from her face and Ginny swatted her hand away. "Leave it, your hair looks perfect," the redhead scolded. She was the one who did it, so she obviously felt that way. But her hair did look perfect. It was in one of those sleek updos with curls and diamonds and it all made Hermione feel like a princess. Even Narcissa couldn't find something negative to say about it.

Narcissa was making her way around the room adjusting Harry and Ron's ties and jackets, pinning Luna's flowers in place, tightening Ginny's belt, cleaning up the running mascara on her mother's face with a lazy flick of her wand, before finally ending up at Hermione. She took her in and nodded curtly.

"Let me take a photo," Narcissa suggested, "Of you and the bridal party."

Hermione was rather taken aback, but she acquiesced. The group of them gathered in front of the large window that overlooked the gardens. What ensued was a surprisingly thorough photo shoot (which admittedly was done by her house elf, Glo, not by Narcissa herself. Narcissa was just directing). Narcissa seemed to have an eye for that sort of thing. When she deemed that there were enough images, she handed the camera back to Hermione's mother.

"We need to head out now," Narcissa declared calmly.

Hermione felt a sea of hippogriffs running about in her stomach as she followed the Malfoy matriarch out into the gardens. She shouldn't have been nervous; it wasn't like she was marrying someone that she loved or even liked, and it wasn't like this was her choice.

But she was nervous, *very* nervous.

The gardens were beautiful. A circular row of hedges marked the centre, where the ceremony was taking place. In the very centre sat a glorious water fountain with an intricate sparkling arch resting in front of it. Malfoy was standing by the arch with Arthur Weasley—their Ministry-appointed official. The sun was hanging perfectly above the archway. Its descent bathed the spring sky in rich oranges and pinks. Narcissa's timing could not have been more perfect.

Narcissa disappeared once they were within sight of the seated crowd. She reappeared by Malfoy's side moments later. Malfoy turned and saw Hermione standing there nervously. He was too far away for her to make out his facial expression, but somehow, she felt his eyes connect with her own, despite the distance. Her heart started pounding even harder. Hermione looked away.

The bridal party and groomsmen joined together and walked down the aisle toward the groom as the string quartet started to play a soft and slow wedding dirge (*dirge* was perhaps too morose of a term for the lighthearted song flowing from their instruments, but Hermione's overall nervousness made it near impossible for her to even notice that the band was playing anything at all).

Hermione watched her party line her side of the archway, then Malfoy's. Malfoy only had three members of his party (compared to Hermione's four): Pansy (who took up the coveted place of best woman), Blaise, and Theo. Ron and Pansy were talking to one another across the archway. Malfoy shot Pansy a look and they stopped talking. Hermione wondered what they were saying.

Hermione's heart pounded as her father joined her, grasping her arm and leading her down the walkway.

"You look beautiful, pumpkin," he whispered to her.

Hermione was thankful for his presence and thankful that he wasn't making a scene despite the many phone calls she had fielded from both her parents in the past two weeks. A glance at her mother showed that she had given him a strict speaking to. "Thanks, dad," she replied.

Hermione was expecting to feel more dread during her short walk up the aisle, instead it was mostly nervousness. Her eyes flitted from the opulent floral arrangements to her guests—very few of whom were smiling. She brought her gaze back to the intricate white carpet lining the pathway, focusing on her breathing and doing her best to ignore the stares.

Her father let go of her arm too soon and ushered her over to Malfoy. Hermione stared back at him. He did look rather dashing in his tux. He had clearly opted for a muggle outfit which was an odd decision to her. At least he seemed to understand muggle fashion and wasn't wearing something from years ago that horribly mismatched. She wondered idly why he had such good fashion sense.

Malfoy smiled at her weakly before offering his hand. She accepted it with shaking fingers. He clasped it firmly and turned to Arthur, his expression unreadable. His eyes were distant,

making Hermione assume that he was once again occluding.

“Welcome friends and family to this union of Hermione Jean Granger and Draco Lucius Malfoy,” Arthur began. “Although this marriage was not their choice,” he threw a pointed look at Kingsley who was sitting in the crowd on Hermione’s side, “these two are both willing to give it a go. It is our hope that this union will bring together not only these two young people, but also the wizarding world. May their union represent a harmonious future together,” Arthur spoke stiffly. “Now, for the handfasting vows.”

Hermione and Malfoy had decided beforehand to follow simple vows stated by Arthur, both feeling uncomfortable with writing their own for their former enemy.

Arthur cleared his throat. “Repeat after me please, Draco.” Malfoy nodded and turned his gaze to Hermione. “I vow to protect, respect, and honour Hermione Jean Granger.”

Malfoy repeated, his voice shockingly steady. Hermione had trouble breathing when he looked at her intently like that.

“Now you, Hermione.”

Hermione did the same, her voice trembling. Arthur waved his wand over their joint wrists and a ribbon appeared tying them together. Hermione had been expecting this, having been present for Ginny and Harry’s and Pansy and Ron’s weddings.

“I vow to never betray Hermione and to accept her and her family as my own,” Arthur continued and they both repeated after him. Another ribbon tied them together. “I vow to honour, protect, respect, and love any and all children born from this union from this day until my last day.” They both repeated this vow, their voices much more convicted on this note; they both would love their children no matter what.

The last ribbon appeared around their hands, sealing them together.

“Please seal the union,” Arthur said this a bit awkwardly.

Malfoy leaned toward her before she could back out and pressed his lips against hers softly. The ties around their wrists sunk into their skin until they disappeared. Hermione felt butterflies explode in her stomach as the string quartet started up an upbeat song.

“The union is made,” Arthur pronounced.

And it was horrifyingly fast. She was married. Just like that. A married woman.

Malfoy pulled back from the kiss, a blush barely there on his cheeks. Hermione, on the other hand, was blushing fiercely. They walked down the aisle hand in hand, Malfoy leading her toward the reception area, the crowd behind them. Hermione kept her gaze trained on the ground, afraid to see the expressions of her friends and family.

Hermione kept glancing down at their entwined hands, expecting the ribbons to be visible, but there was nothing there. Still, she felt a strange compulsion to not let go of his hand.

He tilted his head toward her and said softly, “You look gorgeous, Granger.”

Hermione flushed in response and felt a heat slowly growing in her lower belly. She was somewhat horrified that a simple compliment turned her on so much. Something about his voice when he spoke directly into her ear like that...

Luckily, she didn't have to respond because Narcissa was intervening, directing them and the wedding party to move back to the gardens for an expedient photoshoot. Several house elves with multiple cameras appeared and began taking individual photos and group shots with a speed and efficiency that was somewhat terrifying.

Hermione prised her hand from Malfoy to take a few photos with her bridal party while he had some done with his grooms' party. These photos may have been enjoyable were it not for the aching, burning sensation that overtook her body the second she was no longer touching Malfoy. She kept looking over at him and being reminded by the house elf to look at the camera please. The two separate parties joined for a full group photo. Malfoy grasped her hand again and Hermione's body calmed immediately.

After a few stunted poses, the wedding party was dismissed. The sun was rapidly descending. Narcissa made them return to the archway and take more photos just the two of them. Hermione was blushing far too much because of the intimate poses Narcissa insisted they do: *yes, rest your forehead on hers, Draco; no, closer than that; turn so that your back is touching his chest—closer; bring her flush against your body; move your hand onto her waist, Draco, her waist; try to relax your shoulders Ms. Granger*; and so on. At least she didn't insist on any kissing.

Finally, the sun sank beyond the horizon and Narcissa clapped her hands with a small smile. She ought to be proud—the number of photos she had managed to capture in fifteen minutes was astounding.

Hand in hand, they had made it to the ballroom. It was expansive; there was marble everywhere and at least five chandeliers glittering with lights. Hermione was blown away by Narcissa's planning. She realised, begrudgingly, that she was going to have to thank the woman. Malfoy brought her to their seats at the head table and detached his hand from hers. He pulled out her chair and they both sat.

Dinner began. The whole time Hermione kept itching to retake Malfoy's hand. Instead, she filled her hand with a glass of champagne. And then another. The same string quartet was playing some ambient music that filled the ballroom.

Dinner was delicious, albeit awkward. She didn't engage Malfoy at all and instead looked out at her guests. There was an air of awkwardness that hung over the hall. To make matters more awkward, she kept finding her hand in Malfoy's, despite her attempts at filling it with alcohol. They held hands for a rather long time, the meal lasting at least two hours with course after course being served magically. As each course was magically served before her, Hermione felt herself getting warmer and warmer. She could barely focus on the delicious food before her, her mind and body alike abuzz with a heated energy. At the very least, the food was soaking up the mass amount of alcohol she had consumed.

She excused herself to pee, not sure if she actually needed to or if she needed to get away from the magnetic presence of her new husband. She was feeling overheated. Malfoy reluctantly let her hand go.

Hermione asked Ginny to help her with her dress and they walked off together.

“Malfoy looks fit,” Ginny commented as she helped Hermione hoist her dress above her hips in the expansive private bathroom.

Hermione flushed and her vow hand flinched.

“I’m surprised you two didn’t immediately go to find a broom cupboard.”

Hermione frowned. “What?”

Ginny blinked at her like she was missing something obvious. “Because—oh my Merlin, no one’s told you.” Ginny started laughing. “No wonder you’re so flushed!”

“Told me what?” Hermione asked impatiently. She awkwardly rose from the toilet and flushed. Once she was washing her hands at the sink, Ginny continued talking with a smirk.

“About handfasting.”

“What about it? I’ve seen it done twice before, it’s not a big deal.”

“Oh, Hermione. For someone so smart, you can be a bit of a dunce sometimes.”

Hermione pushed her shoulder in protest. “Rude.”

Ginny leaned against the sink and appraised Hermione, landing on her flexing vow hand.

“Handfasting is one of the more traditional ways to be wed for a few reasons. One, it is a vow which means that people will be less likely to turn tail after a few days living with their terrible husband.” Hermione frowned. “Two, it links the couple together giving them a certain awareness of the other which has been known to be useful in emergency situations.”

“Pardon?”

“Three,” Ginny continued, a wicked smile on her face now, “The spell makes the couple extremely hot for one another until they consummate the marriage. The whole point of getting married used to be—well I guess it is again—getting pregnant. Weddings used to be timed around the woman’s ovulation cycle...Merlin, you’re not ovulating now, are you? I wouldn’t put it past Narcissa Malfoy to somehow know that!”

Hermione’s world was moving in slow motion. “Consummate...?” she asked shakily. Her vow hand was burning now—her whole body was.

Ginny, no longer teasing said, “Yes, Hermione.”

“Oh god.”

“I thought you two agreed to sleep together anyway?”

“Yes...months from now and only if I didn’t manage to get the law turned over. I didn’t think—it was just a back up plan. A just in case...oh my god. I—”

It wasn’t that Hermione didn’t want to sleep with Malfoy. She did. She *really* did, if this past weekend was any proof of that at all. The problem was that she had not been mentally prepared for such a thing. And she knew that he was only sleeping with her because of need, not actual desire for her. His disinterest in her as a person was not something that she necessarily enjoyed to think about—even if he was fantastic in bed (as far as she could remember). Hermione was not used to casual sex. Part of the reason she had requested a two-month delay was to attempt to get to know him better, to feel less weird about getting tangled in her former enemy’s sheets...again.

Hermione was sweating.

“Deep breaths, Hermione, it’s not that big of a deal. He’s hot, he’s tall,” she raised her eyebrows suggestively, “I assume he’s excellent in bed based on the rumours. Just bang him. Everyone else is getting some these days.”

Hermione wanted to splash water on her face, but she was worried it would ruin her makeup. “I...” Her brain was a jumble of disconnected thoughts. The only thing even remotely clear in her mind, and frustratingly so, was that she needed to get back to Malfoy. Everything in her being wanted them to be touching. “What’s happening to me?”

“You have to have sex with him,” Ginny responded softly, trying to not encourage her breakdown. “The magic will draw you two together until...Honestly, with Harry it was amazing. We’ve never had an experience where we were so connected since the handfasting. It was...” Ginny trailed off dreamily.

“This isn’t the love of my life here, this is Draco fucking Malfoy!” Hermione nearly screamed.

“Or rather *fucking* Draco Malfoy,” Ginny responded cheekily.

Hermione wanted to hit her, but the anger disappeared quickly, her need to be by his side once again igniting. “I’m sure it will be fine.”

Ginny smiled. “That’s the attitude. Now go get some. This loo’s big enough, bring him here!”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “I meant it will be fine if we don’t sleep together. Besides, I’m not having sex in public during my wedding!”

Ginny shrugged. “I guarantee you, every single person who got handfasted did that exact thing.”

Hermione scrunched her face. “I’m—this conversation is over. I need to get back to—”

“Draco?” Ginny asked with a smirk. Hermione didn’t respond. “Of course, get back to your dashing husband. And, by the way, you’re going to owe me 10 galleons if you two sleep

together in the next three hours, because frankly, there's no way you can last longer than that."

Ginny sauntered away.

Hermione, still reeling, followed the ginger back to the head table and took her seat beside Malfoy. He inclined his head at her, but continued his conversation with Blaise to his right. Malfoy's hand, however, found its way into her own. Much to Hermione's instantaneous relief. Her body cooled somewhat, but what she now consciously recognized as desire remained very present.

As she finished her dinner, she glanced at Narcissa seated near the end of the head table and wondered why one earth the prejudiced woman would want Hermione to complete a handfasting with her son. Why would she want her sleeping with him, tainting the bloodline? Leading up to the wedding, Narcissa had been unhappy with their matching...but now, she was making them take romantic wedding photos and complete a ritual that would result in sex. It didn't add up.

The cake came as a happy distraction. The newlyweds stood and cut into the five foot tall confectionery together with house elves dishing it out to guests. Hermione had forced Narcissa into hiring the elves instead of bringing in the Malfoy Manor ones, so at least her wedding didn't have slave labour.

Hermione was so distracted by her rising need for Malfoy that she barely took in the extravagance of it all: the perfect flower detailing on the cake, the hall, the champagne tower, the ice sculptures, the phenomenal flowers...

After cake, the lights dimmed and music began.

Malfoy led her out onto the dance floor with his smooth confidence that she found bizarrely attractive, and twirled her softly to the music. Having danced with him at many weddings by that point, she was very comfortable as he spun her expertly across the cavernous room. The press of the crowd disappeared as Hermione melted into Malfoy's arms. He led her easily through song after song as more people joined in. Hermione kept pulling herself infinitesimally closer to him after each song.

Every once in a while, she would glance at their 'tied' hands only to be reminded that they were no longer actually tied together. That didn't stop the almost death grip that they both had on the other, nor the feeling of the cords around their hands. Malfoy stared intently into her eyes with his alluring grey ones as he spun her around. They had barely said a word to one another the entire evening.

After what felt like hours, but was in reality only five songs, her father butted in for a dance. Hermione pried her hand from Malfoy's. He frowned, but didn't have time to dwell as his mother was in his arms, spinning them away.

"That Narcissa woman sure knows how to throw a party!" her father declared as he swayed them from side to side. He was in an unexpectedly good mood, making Hermione believe that he had had quite a bit to drink.

Hermione merely nodded, subtly scanning to find Malfoy in the crowd, her hand was twitching.

“You seem to be enjoying your new husband,” her dad said, succeeding in gaining her full attention.

“What do you mean by that?”

“You two were dancing pretty close. And for a long time.” He raised his eyebrows and chuckled.

Hermione felt the need to be defensive, but had no real rebuttal. Instead, she said, “He’s a good dancer.”

“Sure, he is, pumpkin. I’m sure it has nothing to do with how tight his slacks are.”

“Dad!” Hermione scolded, scandalized (because she did spend a strange amount of time staring at Malfoy’s toned ass in his perfectly fitted trousers).

Her dad shrugged. “If even I can notice how attractive he is, you can too, Hermione.”

“I thought you didn’t want us to get married?” she reminded him.

Her dad shrugged. “He seems alright,” he smiled vaguely. “Besides, you can just punch him out if he tries anything.”

Hermione choked on a laugh. Her dad was definitely *very* drunk.

When the song ended, Harry requested a dance with her and so on and so forth for the next five songs or so. By the time Ginny and Luna let her go from their three-way huddle dance, Hermione felt like her whole body was on fire.

“It’s only been an hour and a half, Hermione,” Ginny said with a knowing smile.

She needed to find Malfoy. She had lost track of him at some point and now he was nowhere in sight. “Shut it, Ginny,” Hermione snapped.

“Want to go see the photo booth your mother-in-law set up?” Ginny asked in a cheeky response.

“I want some of those sweets,” Luna said, pointing at the dessert table that had just been wheeled out. There appeared to be party favours on that table as well, full of decadent sweets and treats. “Oh, and there’s Blaise.” The blonde wandered off.

Hermione continued to look around haphazardly for her newly minted husband. Narcissa materialised beside Hermione suddenly.

“Draco went to the gardens to see the fireflies, he asked me to tell you when your ‘horde of friends’ stopped dancing with you,” the woman stated before slinking off to request a dance with Kingsley.

Hermione didn't need to be told twice. She tried not to run as she made her way to the gardens. Ginny shouted something at her, but Hermione couldn't hear her over the music and her need to get to her husband. On the way there she passed a floating tray and downed a flute of champagne. Once outside in the cool evening air, it was as if her hand came to life. It led her down a side path toward a large stone bench. He was sitting there. He turned as soon as she appeared on the path, as if sensing her.

Hermione rushed to his side and clasped his hand again. They both sighed and stared into each other's eyes. As the aching feeling began to dissipate, though the desire remained, strong and heady. Hermione felt rather embarrassed. Malfoy seemed to be feeling the same way.

She looked away from him to take in the millions of fireflies silently blinking above them. It was truly a beautiful sight—if only she could enjoy it and was not too hot for her husband to focus.

“You should have told me beforehand what happens at a handfasting.”

Malfoy shrugged. “I thought you knew. You've been to one before. Also, how was I supposed to know that the desire was going to be this strong?”

“How do most people make it through their wedding?” she asked for the second time that evening.

“Most people have shagged by now,” he responded.

Hermione flushed. “But...at their wedding, surrounded by all their friends and family?” She desperately tried not to think of Ron and Pansy, but she remembered that they had suspiciously disappeared for a lengthy stretch of time.

Malfoy shrugged again and stared at the stars. “How else are they expected to act like normal human beings?”

Hermione didn't respond. They lapsed into silence.

“So, Granger, tell me,” Malfoy began, “are we going to consummate our marriage, or are we going to be in a constant state of need until you figure out how to overturn this law?”

Hermione blushed again. She refused to look at him, but she responded, “It might be a little hard overturning this law when I have to be holding your hand at all times...”

She could feel him staring at her, so she finally looked at him. She shouldn't have looked at him because the look he was shooting her way made her want to climb him. She flushed hotly at that realisation.

“Excellent,” he mumbled before attaching his lips to hers.

Hermione's heart sang in delight and she shoved her hand into his immaculate hair as she returned his kiss. Their kiss was deep and fierce and Hermione blamed it on the spell that was

forcing them together, but she was able to remember their first kiss at the *Leaky* which had been equally as passionate.

As her hand found the front of his slacks, he growled, “Fuck, Granger.”

Any other action was halted by the sudden sound of Luna’s soft voice.

“I just love the fireflies, don’t you, Blaise?” she asked serenely.

Hermione and Malfoy slid away from each other quickly. Malfoy patted down his hair. Hermione blushed crimson.

“There they are,” Blaise declared. “Your mom’s looking for you, Hermione,” the man stated. “And, Draco, your mom keeps insisting that you leave for your honeymoon.” Blaise was drunk. He sat down on the bench between the two of them, draping his arms over their shoulders amicably. “Your wedding was great. Nothing compared to mine and Luna’s though,” Blaise said confidently, looking over at his new wife.

She nodded her head. “I do think we’ll be a good match. Plus, Blaise is rather skilled with his tongue,” she said unabashedly.

Hermione’s jaw dropped while Blaise chuckled. He clapped Malfoy on the back. “They sure got that sexual compatibility right.”

Luna smiled vaguely. “You two should go see your mothers. I’d like some time alone with Blaise in the garden.”

Hermione’s jaw dropped at Luna’s patented boldness. She didn’t need telling twice to flee the scene of her almost public ravishing. Hermione jumped to her feet and left the gardens quickly.

Absently, Hermione was glad that Luna and Blaise were working out, but it still surprised her. It gave Hermione some hope for her and Malfoy. Blaise was right, though, they did seem to have sexual compatibility right, if Hermione and Malfoy’s drunken night was any proof of that.

Her earlier hesitancy to sleep with Malfoy had all but disappeared, her need far outweighing rational thought.

Back in the ballroom her parents welcomed her with a strong hug. Another flute of champagne had found itself in her hands and she downed it quickly.

“I know this marriage was not planned,” her mother said with a slight slur, “But I think that Narcissa isn’t all that bad. And that boy’s face when he saw you walking down the aisle...” she trailed off.

“We have to head home, pumpkin. Your mom’s had too much to drink. Harry said he’d bring us!” her dad commented happily, always a fan of Harry. He was also clearly still very drunk. She was happy for her parents who almost never let loose and who were barely ever involved in her life these days.

They both took turns hugging her tightly and vowing to keep in contact and to let her know if she needed anything or somewhere to stay. Hermione nodded and kissed them goodnight, but she was already distracted, feeling the pull to find Malfoy again. She spotted him across the room having a serious-looking conversation with his mother. She wandered over past the now lively crowd—everyone was drunk—and toward her husband. It was strange thinking of him as such.

Narcissa smiled tightly as she arrived. “I hope the wedding was to your liking,” she said.

Hermione smiled broadly, her hand once again in Malfoy’s. “It was beautiful, thank you, Narcissa.” She didn’t even feel bad admitting it. The several glasses of champagne also helped.

Narcissa’s lips curled slightly upwards and the woman surveyed the event with pride.

“Flopsy,” Malfoy called making the elf appear with a crack. “Have you packed our things?”

Flopsy nodded enthusiastically, her ears flapping. “Of course, Mr. Draco, sir. Your things are in your hotel, sir.”

“Flopsy packed for us?”

Malfoy smirked at her. “It’s all taken care of, Granger. Did you honestly think that we were just going to return home after the wedding?” he asked in that posh voice of his that she hated. “We are Malfoys, after all.”

Hermione scowled at him. “I’m not a Malfoy,” she reminded him, “I kept my name.”

He ignored her and hugged his mother tightly. He whispered something in her ear that Hermione didn’t catch and suddenly she was being spun away in a whirl of colours.

Chapter End Notes

Here is the inspo for [Hermione's wedding dress](#).

The Honeymoon

Chapter Notes

TW: Magic-induced lust leading to sex (dubcon/noncon)
(Also more drunken sex) Details in end of chapter notes.

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

Thursday, March 25

They reformulated an instant later in a dark room. Hermione was angry.

“You shouldn’t just portkey without telling me,” she berated him. “You could have made me sick!” she pushed him away from her and instead took in her surroundings. “Where are we?”

“France.”

Hermione looked out the window and saw the shimmering Eiffel Tower outside her window. She walked toward it in wonder. She had a small obsession with the Eiffel Tower. How on earth he knew that...

Malfoy was beside her again, shoving his hand into hers.

“It’s getting worse,” he commented.

Hermione nodded. The short seconds they had been apart her whole body had rebelled.

“So...” Malfoy said, his thumb ghosting over her knuckles.

Hermione took a shuddering breath. Her nerves about sleeping with him had once again arisen. Faced with the quiet reality of what was about to happen, Hermione muttered, “I think I need another drink.” She knew pushing this off would only make things worse, her body so warm she considered stepping out of her dress completely. But her Gryffindor courage had abandoned her.

Malfoy halted his thumb over her knuckles and she swore that he sounded tense when he responded. “Let’s sit on the balcony.”

Hermione nodded and opened the beautiful glass doors. She sat on a chair facing the Eiffel Tower and wrapped her arms around her legs. Malfoy joined her moments later, his jacket missing and his tie loosened. He was even sexier with fewer layers of clothing on. He handed her a flute of champagne, filled both of their glasses and set the bottle between them.

They sat in silence for a while, listening to the sounds of the city. Their hands, of course, clutching one another.

Finishing her glass, Hermione finally asked, “Paris?”

Malfoy chuckled. “It’s supposed to be romantic, no?”

“You keep surprising me with your romantic gestures.”

He shrugged and didn’t look at her. Finally, “We promised to not hate each other.”

“Yeah, but that in no way means that we have to be romantic...”

He shrugged again.

“What’s your favourite colour?” she asked suddenly.

Finally, Malfoy looked over at her and she felt a spark shoot through her. She knew her cheeks darkened from his gaze.

“Blue.”

Hermione cleared her throat. “Not green or silver? I swore you bleed Slytherin colours,” she tried to tease him, but her voice sounded horribly off. She looked away from him.

“I was a proud Slytherin, doesn’t mean that I loved the colours. Besides, blue looks better on me.”

Hermione laughed. “You’re so self-obsessed.”

Malfoy looked affronted. “I am not self-obsessed, I’m beautiful.”

Hermione laughed again. Malfoy smiled at her.

“Tell me about when you went to Paris the first time,” he said.

Hermione frowned at him. “Ginny?”

“A gentleman never reveals his secrets.”

“You’re supposed to be a gentleman?”

Malfoy rolled his eyes. “I brought you to Paris, didn’t I? And stop avoiding the question.”

Hermione wanted to rebuff the fact that he considered himself a gentleman, but instead launched into the story of her third-year trip to Paris with her parents. Somehow during the story, they both found their way onto the floor of the balcony, glasses abandoned, with the champagne bottle in Hermione’s hands. She was sitting between his legs, her back pressed to his front while she stared at the Parisian skyline.

Hermione took another swig. “...and that’s how I broke my leg.”

Malfoy was slowly dragging his hand through her curls, removing pins as he went. It was deeply relaxing. He had offered to help with her hair and she had accepted, not realizing how it would be both comforting and torturous. Hermione lolled her head to the side as he gently massaged her head and neck. Somehow, without her noticing when, he had started to kiss her neck softly.

She let him pepper kisses along her neck and jawline, each kiss becoming a little more intense until she actually let out a groan. Malfoy wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her closer to him. Her head was swimming and her body was on fire.

“I don’t remember seeing you in one of those muggle contraptions,” he murmured.

“Huh?” Hermione asked, her eyes popping open to take in the glittering tourist attraction before her.

“You broke your leg in the Louvre,” he prompted her. “But at school you weren’t wearing one of those casts.”

His hand began stroking her leg slowly. When she didn’t say anything, he reminded her that he was waiting for an answer. “Why no cast?”

Hermione shook her head to clear it—it kind of worked—and explained, “I convinced my parents to take me to St. Mungo’s when the…” his hand was dangerously close to her hip now.

Malfoy kissed her neck. “When the…? Keep up, Granger, you’re trying to tell a story here.”

She smiled at his teasing and cleared her throat. “When the doctor told me it would take two months to heal…” his fingers were circling mere inches from her ridiculous lace panties. “So, we went to St. Mungo’s instead,” she practically squeaked.

Malfoy, who had clearly given up the pretense of listening to her, was trailing kisses up and down her neck again. He turned her head and placed a kiss on her lips softly. Hermione pulled him into a deeper one. Her whole body was pulsing with magic, making her desire for him increase tenfold.

When they pulled away, Hermione removed herself from his embrace and lugged herself to her feet. With unsteady steps she walked inside and gestured for him to follow. She closed the door with a silent flick of her wand which she then placed on a side table. Hermione took a deep breath and refused to look at him.

“Can you help me out of my dress?” she asked with a blush.

Malfoy didn’t respond but instead began unbuttoning the back of her dress like his life depended on it. She let it pool around her feet. Hermione could feel his gaze on her, but didn’t want to meet his. So, she stood there, staring at the Eiffel Tower and wondering how in the world she got to where she was in that moment. She heard him removing his clothing until quite suddenly his hands were on her waist.

“I like your lingerie, Granger,” he grumbled, running his hands over it.

She was braless and was wearing the most ridiculous excuse of a scrap of fabric you could call a thong. Ginny had insisted.

She let his hands trail over her body as he circled to the front of her. She briefly eyed his chest in the dark room before he was pulling her into another kiss. This one was even fiercer than the last; their tongues battling each other, their hands roaming. They stumbled their way to the king-sized bed and crashed onto it. Malfoy suddenly had his wand out. He cast the contraception charm and vanished their undergarments with a flourish. Hermione gasped at her sudden nakedness before him.

“I liked it, don’t get me wrong,” he said with a smirk and tossed his wand over his shoulder carelessly. “But I like you much more without it.” He eyed her hungrily.

Hermione didn’t have long to feel self-conscious because he was on her again, kissing her neck down to her breasts. She groaned in encouragement, but he didn’t stay long there instead winding his way down between her legs. She might have screamed when he first licked her, but she would never admit that. He hummed in delight as he laved his tongue over her clit. Hermione groaned unabashedly, her hand flexing in his stupid perfect hair to hold him in place.

Malfoy didn’t spend long between her legs, unfortunately. After preparing her briefly with his fingers he was sliding into her, causing them both to gasp and groan. Hermione wrapped her legs around his lower back, bringing him even deeper into her. Malfoy dropped his head beside her ear muttering a whole myriad of swear words as he rocked into her. He pressed close to her, his chest scraping against her pointed nipples with each thrust. Hermione was surprisingly vocal, whimpering and groaning with each thrust.

There was a strange sensation within her, a wholeness, a completeness that she had never felt before. Her body burned for him, making it almost impossible to think about anything at all besides the points of connection between them; his hand on her hip, near bruising her, her ankles on his back, his lips ghosting across her neck and face, him, within her.

He picked up the pace, occasionally kissing her cheek or jaw. His hot breath blowing over her face and neck was oddly stimulating to Hermione and made her ache even more for him. Ginny was right, she had never felt this way before. It was everything. He was everything. It felt like their hearts were beating in tandem as their bodies moved against one another in a desperate dance that would last forever.

She felt like she was on the edge for longer than had ever happened in her life. Hermione’s whole body was tensed in readiness for her climax, but instead that deep feeling of building pleasure didn’t snap, it just kept growing.

“You’re so fucking hot,” Malfoy rumbled in her ear.

Hermione clenched around him in response. “You...” was all she was able to gasp out as he pounded into her.

“So wet,” he muttered, “so good.”

Hermione kept nodding, a guttural whine being drawn from her mouth as his hand came between them and his fingers rubbed at her clit roughly. She thrust her hips up against his begging for something, but not even sure what it was. Her never-ending moment of building pleasure stretched on, impossibly. She was near sobbing with desire.

He changed his unrelenting pace to slow, smooth, and deep strokes, looking deep into her hooded eyes with each thrust. Hermione felt her cunt clench. Malfoy brought their lips together in a slow and sensuous kiss. His fingers on her clit did not relent, and continued their bruising pace despite everything else slowing down.

Finally, after what felt like forever (and actually was), she could feel the end coming.

“You’re perfect,” he muttered.

“Nngh,” Hermione managed to say.

“You’re mine,” he growled possessively.

Hermione nodded fervently. She was his. All she wanted was him. All she wanted was this never-ending moment to last forever. “Yes!” was all she was able to say in response.

Their vow hands found one another and gripped tightly. One more deep thrust and hypnotizing look into his large pupils and it was over. Hermione let loose a noise she had never once made in her life before. It was so unlike her; she would replay it later and wonder if she imagined it. It was a high-pitched plaintive whine of pure ecstasy. Her brain went blank as the waves of pleasure rolled through her.

Her hips continued slowly jerking against his as he too came undone with a loud groan of pleasure. Hermione’s toes were nearly cramping from how long they had been curled in delight. It was the longest and strongest orgasm she had ever experienced. Malfoy was similarly taking a very long time to recover.

Their heavy panting slowly subsided as Malfoy held himself above her, with his head nuzzled into her neck. He kissed her neck, then pulled away slightly, looking down at her with some sort of emotion on his face that Hermione didn’t know how to read in her blissed state of mind.

Several more moments passed of them staring at one another as their bodies took their sweet time calming down. After a while, Hermione and Malfoy both turned their focus on their still entwined hands because they were glowing bright gold. Hermione wondered distantly if they had been glowing the whole time they were having sex, or if it had just started. As their breathing finally returned to normal, their hands stopped glowing.

“Blaise was right about sexual compatibility,” Malfoy finally said, looking at their hands.

“So, you don’t remember that Saturday night either?”

Malfoy hesitated, but eventually responded, “Bits and pieces. You?”

Hermione vividly saw his head between her legs and willed her blush away. “Bits and pieces.”

Malfoy glanced at her and she saw him start the process of occluding. His eyes, which were previously blown wide in pleasure, were now returning to pinpricks, bringing back the silvery grey of his irises. He pulled out of her, making Hermione gasp as he did. She felt... weird without him on her...in her. She tried to shake that feeling off as Malfoy rolled onto his back.

The heat between her legs slowly cooled down and Hermione felt the distinct need to clean up down there. As if sensing her need, he waved his hand and she was suddenly much more comfortable.

He was shockingly good at wandless magic and it was a definite turn on for her. “Thanks,” Hermione mumbled, afraid to say anything more, like ‘Let’s go again’ or ‘you’re a sex god.’

Hermione shivered as her body was no longer exerting itself and was fully exposed. Malfoy pulled the covers over them both. This process made him let go of her hand. Hermione realised then that she no longer felt the unnatural need to be holding onto him. Although, she did still want to be holding him. She wanted to reach out to take his hand again. Run her hands through his mussed up hair. She wanted to roll onto him and—

“Goodnight, Granger,” Malfoy mumbled before turning away from her.

She stared at the ceiling long into the night, not knowing how to react to what had just happened, but knowing that something had just fundamentally changed for her.

Friday, March 26

The following morning Hermione woke up with a flush on her face and heat between her legs. Awkwardness began creeping in when she realized that she had enjoyed herself far too much the night before. Hermione tried to rationalize it all by being wildly drunk and the compulsion from the handfasting. It helped that when she had woken up, he was in the shower and she was able to pull on a robe.

She had barely tied her robe when he was walking from the bathroom, steam pouring out and clouding his face momentarily. Hermione stared at his naked, dripping chest and tore her eyes away quickly as her face heated.

“Morning,” he said gruffly.

The gruffness of his voice had images and sounds from the night before flooding her mind. Hermione flushed deep red.

Hermione made a vague noise in response to his greeting. She stared out the balcony windows to give him some privacy while he got dressed. She heard the bathroom door close again, and glanced over her shoulder to see that he was back in the bathroom. She hung up

her wedding dress in the closet, then let herself onto the balcony to enjoy the morning ambiance of being in Paris.

Hermione jumped a few minutes later when she heard the balcony doors open. Malfoy closed the doors behind him, sat on the chair opposite her, and stared out at the Parisian skyline.

“Do you want to order breakfast?” he asked.

Hermione nodded. “Yes. That would be—what do you want?” She stuttered awkwardly.

“Probably just something small: coffee and croissant. Some bacon.”

Hermione nodded. “I can place the order. I want to have a shower, so I’ll just—” Hermione all but fled back inside, her face red. She couldn’t handle being in his presence at the moment.

Hermione called for room service, then grabbed her bag and locked herself in the bathroom. She undressed and examined herself in the mirror. She noted with a confusing combination of horror and pride that there were finger shaped bruises on her hips and ass. She didn’t even remember him gripping her tightly. Hermione jumped into the steaming hot shower, failing miserably to dispel images of their night together. Hermione almost did the unimaginable and indulged in the shower, when a loud doorbell could be heard.

She turned off the taps and hastily threw on the plush robe provided by their ridiculously expensive hotel suite. Hermione wrenched open the bathroom door, only to see Malfoy coming in from the balcony. She tied her robe tighter around her body.

“I got it,” he said casually, his eyes barely glancing at her and making his way to the front door of the suite.

Hermione closed herself back into the bathroom and dried herself off quickly. She threw on some jeans and a jumper, leaving her hair down to drip dry. Hermione inspected her face while she brushed her teeth quickly and realized with shock that there were several love bites and bruises on her neck. She scrambled in her makeup bag for her foundation and blended them quickly. She could hear Malfoy moving plates around and a clinking of cutlery.

Hermione inspected her neck meticulously and any visible skin for proof of their wedding night foibles. She seemed to be in the clear, so she hastily threw her things into her bag, and returned to the main room, only to find it empty. Hermione glanced around the lavish suite. He was on the balcony, as was their food.

She placed her bag beside the bed and gathered her courage to face him again.

Malfoy was calmly staring out over Paris. The food was displayed impressively on their small balcony table.

“Ah, there you are.” He poured them both some coffee and took a hearty sip.

Hermione added milk and sugar to hers and sipped at it quietly. “Thanks.”

Malfoy nodded and downed the rest of his coffee. He poured himself another cup.

“How’s your head?”

Hermione was surprised to find that she didn’t have much of a hangover, despite how vigorously she had been drinking the day before. “Not terrible, actually,” she replied.

“Yours?”

Malfoy downed his second cup of coffee. “Better now.”

They descended into silence and ate their small breakfast. It wasn’t terribly awkward, but it wasn’t terribly comfortable either.

“What did you want to do today?” Malfoy asked once Hermione had finished her food.

“Oh. Uh. Well, obviously I want to visit the Louvre. I also wouldn’t mind exploring magical Paris. When I was here with my parents, we didn’t get to do much of that and stuck to more muggle Paris.”

“The Louvre? You’re such a swot.”

Hermione glared at him. “I like museums.”

Malfoy finished the dregs of his third coffee. “I suppose the Louvre isn’t awful, it’s just such a long day of walking...” he sighed dramatically.

Hermione noted a brief smile tugging at his lips. “You’re such a snob,” she retaliated.

Malfoy shrugged. “And?”

Hermione bit back her smile. “I think I’ll head out soon. What do you think you’ll get up to today?”

He blinked at her, his eyes absent. “I hear the Louvre is absolutely thrilling.”

Hermione wondered why he was occluding and almost asked him as such, but didn’t want to ruin the equilibrium that they had finally reached. “It *is* absolutely thrilling.”

They took turns using the bathroom, Malfoy taking far longer than Hermione on his morning primping. When he exited the room, he did look more dashing than when he entered, so Hermione supposed it was worth the wait. He had changed into muggle jeans and a deep green jumper that looked fantastic on him. Hermione found herself wanting to check out his ass in the jeans and had to look away, remembering her dad’s comment from the night before.

She pulled out her phone and launched into a speech about the best way to get to the Louvre from their hotel.

“Speaking of our hotel, I forgot to ask if we’re staying somewhere magical or muggle. It’s hard to tell. I mean, they do have a phone, but those are fairly common in magical hotels these days.”

Malfoy glanced around. “It’s muggle, I think.”

“You don’t know?”

He shrugged. “Mother took care of the arrangements.”

“And she would have chosen a muggle hotel?” Hermione asked, surprised.

“Well, she would have chosen the most extravagant hotel she could find that would offer the most privacy. Since we’re both rather prominent magical figures—for different reasons,” he muttered, “—she may have chosen muggle.”

“I just...I really thought she was still...” Hermione cleared her throat and shifted, her eyes wandering away from his.

“Racist?” Malfoy’s expression was unreadable. “Of course, she is. She is, however, extremely posh and not above reaping the benefits that muggle life can give her. Also, she wants me to be happy or some other tosh and last time we stayed at a—” he cut himself off and his expression went curiously blank again. “So, we’re probably at a muggle establishment.”

“What happened last time?” Hermione asked despite knowing that he wouldn’t answer.

Malfoy predictably didn’t respond.

“Wait a minute. We portkeyed here last night. How are we supposed to explain getting into the hotel room without receiving our keys?”

Malfoy shrugged, unconcerned. “People don’t ask rich people questions, Granger. Don’t worry, you’ll get used to your new station over time.”

Hermione clenched her jaw, but said nothing. She took a deep breath, then focused back on the map on her phone. “Did you bring any muggle money? I have some back up, but since I wasn’t informed what country we would be in, I don’t have many Euros.”

Malfoy smirked. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a black credit card. “Yes, I have money.” Hermione rolled her eyes. He pushed the card toward her. “This one’s yours.” It even had her name printed on it. He pulled out another matching card from his back pocket to show her his.

Hermione knew it was useless arguing with him about the need for her own credit card. They had agreed that he would pay for everything, so this was just part of that deal coming to fruition. She shoved her new credit card into the inner pocket of her expanded purse.

“You really ought to keep your cards in a less obvious place,” she berated, turning the fancy credit card over in her hands.

“My clothing is charmed against thieves, Granger,” he said with an eye roll.

Hermione pursed her lips. “Fine, off to the metro, then.”

“Can’t we just apparate to the magical side of the Louvre?” he whined.

Hermione sighed. “You can do what you want, Malfoy. I actually enjoy travelling the muggle way, especially when I am visiting a different city because you get to actually experience what it is like to live here. And I rarely get to use muggle transit, so this is my chance to do so.” Hermione slung her bag over her shoulder.

“You’ll probably want a jacket,” Malfoy said, pulling on his own sleek black spring jacket. “I charmed our balcony to be warmer and less windy than it actually is outside.”

Hermione felt weird knowing that he had done something so thoughtful. Instead of responding, she rummaged through her bag until she found her own jacket and threw it on.

“Okay, I’ll see you there,” she said and made her way to the front door of their massive and opulent suite.

She heard his footsteps behind her. Hermione glanced at him. He said nothing, but simply opened the door for her, then followed her out and to the elevator without a word.

They stopped at the front desk to officially check in and get their cards. To Hermione’s annoyance, the staff did not comment on the fact that they had somehow managed to enter their suite the night before without checking in first. Malfoy had smirked at her, but at least he remained quiet.

*

The trip to the Louvre was hilarious. Hermione snuck a few pictures of Malfoy’s horrified face with her phone. He would not admit that he was terrified of the metro, but it was clear that he disliked being underground and kept jumping whenever there was a slight bump or noise from the tracks. He ended up pressed against her, holding onto a pole and her hand in a death grip.

“Don’t worry, Malfoy, it’s completely safe,” Hermione tried reassuring him. She waffled between wanting to reassure him, to wanting to laugh at how ridiculous he was. It was strange to know that holding her hand was offering him some sort of comfort in his time of great distress.

When they emerged from the twisty stairs near the Louvre, Malfoy was rather white faced, even for him. He leaned against a wall and breathed deeply with his eyes closed while Hermione consulted her phone and pretended to not notice his panic. After a minute or so, his breath had evened out and his eyes were dead. Hermione frowned. He buried his feelings a lot. It couldn’t be very healthy.

“I’m sorry—”

“Don’t,” he cut her off. “How do we get there from here?” he asked, pretending to be fine.

Hermione pointed down the street. “That way.”

A minute or two later, when they were approaching the iconic glass pyramid, Malfoy spoke again, sounding much like his normal self.

“Why didn’t we take one of these automobiles?”

They both watched a couple exit a Tesla.

“Cars are expensive to rent, besides traffic is terrible. It’s much faster to take the underground during rush hours. And like I said, I miss muggle transit.”

“Cars are muggle transit,” he retorted.

Hermione rolled her eyes. “We can take one back to the hotel this evening.”

“This evening?” He stopped walking. “How long are you planning on being here?”

Hermione blushed lightly. “I was hoping to spend most of the day. Even at a brisk pace, there’s so much to see. Plus, I haven’t spent any time in the magical side of the Louvre. We should start there.”

Malfoy groaned. Instead of commenting on what Hermione had said, he asked, “What are they doing?”

Hermione looked where he was gesturing. Some young women were taking perspective photos in front of the Louvre pyramid to make it look like they were leaning against it. She explained the concept to Malfoy. He nodded, intrigued.

“Well, do you want one?”

Hermione’s eyes snapped to his. “What?”

“A perspective photo. I want to see how it works. I can take one of you. I think I know how to use a camera. You do have a camera, right?”

Hermione nodded slowly and handed him her phone. Malfoy picked it up surprisingly quickly and he kept talking about muggle ingenuity and almost dropping the phone in surprise and delight. Hermione laughed good naturedly. Malfoy then directed her to do poses that would make for an interesting perspective photo. He seemed to be enjoying himself, probably because he was bossing her around. It was oddly reminiscent of Narcissa the evening before.

“No, to the left, Granger. More. More. Too much, back a smidge. Okay. Hold that. Don’t blink! Smile more. No. *Smile*, Granger. That’s not—”

“Just take the photo, Malfoy!”

“Well, now you’ve moved too much and we have to start again,” he berated. “To the left a bit. Too much...” This continued on for almost 15 minutes before Hermione put an end to it.

“Do you want one?” Hermione asked when she hopped off the pedestal she was standing on.

Malfoy glanced around at the people milling about. “No that’s fine.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “You won’t look stupid, everyone’s doing it.”

Hermione had guessed correctly that he was self conscious, because he immediately denied it. She bullied him into hopping on the photo pedestal and began ordering him around. She could see why Malfoy enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun to tell her so-called husband what to do. He finally relaxed and Hermione actually got a few good pictures of him where he wasn’t full on scowling at her.

As he stepped down to join her and inspect the photos she had taken (“get rid of that one, Granger!”) a tourist asked if they wanted their photo taken. The newlyweds glanced at one another self consciously.

“No, that’s fine,” Hermione tried to say, but the woman was already taking her phone and gesturing for them to hop onto the small pedestal together.

Malfoy sighed and muttered something about nosy muggles before pulling Hermione up onto the pedestal. They were forced to touch and stood awkwardly beside one another. Hermione glanced at Malfoy’s face to see that it was once again curiously blank. She huffed and glowered at the tourist taking their photo.

“Smile!” the woman insisted.

They stood still for a moment longer, Hermione trying to force a smile onto her face, refusing to look at Malfoy.

“Oh c’mon, you can do better than that!” the woman said again. She approached them, and pushed them together, placing Malfoy’s arm around Hermione’s waist and angling Hermione into his chest. “That’s better. Now, I know it can be uncomfortable to have your picture taken by a stranger, but just pretend I’m not here. Smile at each other!”

She returned a distance away and began taking photos again.

“That’s it! Imagine something that makes you really happy!”

Hermione glanced at Malfoy’s stiff face to see that he was still rather closed off. Knowing that this woman would not leave until she captured an excellent photo of the couple, Hermione whispered to him, “Imagine that you just caught the snitch from under Harry’s nose.”

He looked at her and grinned. Hermione flushed, not used to seeing him smile so openly at her.

“Perfect!” the woman screeched. She returned the phone to Hermione with a broad smile. “That one will look great over your mantle!” the woman stated, then wondered off.

Malfoy stepped down from the platform, and offered her his hand to help her down as well. Hermione swatted away his hand and jumped down without him.

“Just trying to be nice, Granger,” he huffed.

She rolled her eyes. “I am capable of jumping down from a 2-foot platform without your help, Malfoy. I’m not a child.”

It was his turn to roll his eyes. “Let’s see the photo then,” he said instead of commenting on her snark.

Hermione unlocked her phone and opened her photo gallery. She swiped through them slowly. There were actually quite a few good ones in there, the best being the last one when she had made him smile at her. Hermione had been smiling back, which she hadn’t noticed at the time. It was surprisingly romantic.

“Yes, mother would like that one,” he said quietly. “Let’s get going then, we have a long day ahead of us.”

Malfoy brought her to a nondescript door which turned out to be the magical entrance to the Louvre.

*

It was a lovely, if not exhausting trip through the Louvre. They spent four hours in the magical side and three in the muggle side, much to Malfoy’s horror. He was an insufferable twit for most of the trip, complaining about everything, mostly being hungry and his feet hurting. He did at least have some interesting insights about the art, particularly on the magical side. He also happily took photos of her when she asked for them. As she had noted earlier, he really enjoyed bossing her around—and part of her enjoyed it as well. Not that she was likely to admit as much to him.

There had also been a strange flirty energy that emerged because he kept coming up behind her and leaning over her to read a sign or tell her some fact or opinion directly into her ear. This caused her to shiver, her heart to race, and her vow hand to tingle where the magical ropes had been.

Because of their disappointing lunch at the Louvre’s café, Malfoy insisted that they have a fancy dinner out in magical Paris. Hermione conceded that she would enjoy a nice meal and that she was exhausted and starving. Malfoy convinced her to call an Uber Black and a sleek Tesla picked them up outside of the Louvre and brought them to a random alleyway. Malfoy thanked the driver—he was clearly far more comfortable above ground—and grabbed Hermione’s hand. He pulled her down the alleyway with confidence. As they approached the end, Malfoy subtly waved his wand and walked through the wall.

Hermione was reminded of the first time she entered Diagon Alley and gasped in wonder. The street was slightly more organized and less haphazard than Diagon Alley. It was full of beautiful lampposts that lit up the cobblestone walkways romantically. Malfoy dropped her hand once through the wall and gave her a moment to soak up the ambiance. The closest stores were an owlery and a bookshop, the latter immediately grabbing Hermione’s attention.

“Granger, focus. It’s dinner time.”

Hermione chuckled and let him lead her down the snaking alley toward a well-lit restaurant. Malfoy opened the door for her and followed her to the host stand.

“Bonsoir,” the hostess greeted coldly. She eyed them with disdain, nose scrunched up like they smelled bad.

“Bonsoir,” Malfoy responded. “Une table pour deux?” The hostess took in their muggle attire with a judgemental eyebrow. Before she could say anything about it, Malfoy added. “C’est pour *Malfoy*.”

The hostess nodded quickly and flushed red. “Bien sûr. Suivez-moi.” She led them to a private booth and left two menus.

“I always forget you’re French,” Hermione said once they were seated.

“Every respectable pureblood knows at least two other languages,” he responded poshly.

“What a shame you’re not respectable.”

Malfoy smirked, then his expression became serious. “I’ll have to have a word with the manager about their treatment of us at the door.”

Hermione raised an eyebrow.

“Honestly, you’d think we appeared in rags.”

“Are you offended?”

“It’s just muggle clothing!” he huffed.

Hermione smiled slowly. “You’re defending muggle clothing.”

He blinked at her and his expression disappeared into one of careful indifference. “I would recommend going with the special and the suggested wine. The menu is a bit convoluted here.”

Hermione sighed heavily. She was beyond annoyed with his occluding. “Yes. Fine.”

A server appeared and Malfoy ordered for them. A bottle of wine appeared on their table moments later and poured itself into their glasses. Hermione took a hearty sip, hoping to fill the awkward silence by getting drunk. Malfoy seemed to be following suit.

The silence stretched on. “Today was nice,” she commented quietly.

“Quite,” Malfoy responded.

Their salads arrived. Hermione dug in, happy for the distraction and overall ravenous. When she finished wolfing down her salad, she looked up at Malfoy who was daintily making his way through his.

“Why did the hostess recognize your name?” she asked as he bit into a large chunk of feta.

Malfoy smirked. “Everyone knows *our* name, dear. We’re rich and famous.”

Hermione smiled and sipped her wine. “More like infamous.”

Malfoy toasted her with a chuckle. “Rich and infamous. That should be the new family motto.”

Hermione nodded. “We should find a way to have that changed on all the family crests.”

Malfoy looked thoughtful for a moment, before saying, “Besides, we own this restaurant, so I would expect better treatment.”

Hermione’s jaw dropped. “Pardon?”

Malfoy glanced around at the luxurious space. “Doesn’t it just scream: rich and infamous?”

Hermione laughed. “You’re joking. Of course you’re—”

“No, Granger. We own this restaurant. We own several. This is one of three in Paris. We own five in London. One in Rome.” He reflected, “There’s more I’m sure I’m forgetting, but it’s not coming to me now. Mother would be horrified with my lack of knowledge of the estate.”

Hermione blinked at him. “But you’re joking. Right?”

Malfoy twirled his wine. “I never joke about the estate.”

“You—you own this restaurant?”

“*We*, wife. *We* own this restaurant.”

Hermione’s heart clenched at his use of the term wife. It was still so new it was hard to believe that they were in fact husband and wife. Truly bizarre.

“Hence my anger at the poor treatment. You’d think they’d recognize the signature Malfoy hair,” he grumbled.

Their food arrived and they both dug into a fish dish that Hermione didn’t really understand the contents of. It was, however, delicious. They spoke easily of their trip to the Louvre throughout the rest of the meal. This mostly consisted of Malfoy making fun of her expression of wonder and desire to learn everything about the works of art. By the end of the meal, Hermione was fairly drunk on the expensive wine.

She went to the swanky loo to pee and when she returned Malfoy was speaking to a chef of some sort in rapid French. The woman kept apologizing from what Hermione could gather, then she excused herself to go speak with the hostess.

“Don’t tell me you just got her fired,” Hermione said in horror.

Malfoy shrugged. "The decision is up to Francette."

"Malfoy, it's not that big of a deal."

"Let me stop you there, Granger. One: it *is* a big deal because the woman is clearly racist against muggles and muggleborns. And two, get used to being rich and infamous, because it is just beyond my comprehension that I would ever be treated that way, especially in my own restaurant."

Hermione refrained from rolling her eyes, because he did have a point about the woman being a racist. She did say, "You could use with your ego being brought down a few pegs."

Malfoy simply fixed his jacket and held out his arm for her. Hermione took it without thought and he brought her to the now far emptier street. Malfoy walked them through the wall back into muggle London.

"Can you get one of those cars again?" he asked her, leaning slightly toward her ear.

Hermione flushed at his proximity, only then realizing that he was also drunk, otherwise they could have just apparated back to their muggle suite. She fumbled in her extended purse for her phone and summoned an Uber Black again. It was another Tesla. Malfoy was ecstatic. They rode in amicable silence back to the hotel. There was a strange tension between them that did nothing but mount as they entered the hotel, rode the shiny gold elevator to their floor, and let themselves into their honeymoon suite.

They stood in silence in the entryway to their suite, staring into one another eyes. Hermione almost said something crazy about him undressing her again, but Malfoy spoke first.

"I'm going to have a shower."

"Oh. Right. Yes. That's a good idea."

"Did you want to order more wine?" he asked, still gazing into her eyes.

Hermione nodded. She was struck dumb by his gaze. It was hypnotic.

"Fantastic. I assume you know nothing about wine, Granger," he murmured.

Hermione, who had been subconsciously leaning closer to him, shifted backward. "What do you mean I know nothing about wine? I have excellent taste!"

Malfoy chuckled. "I don't know about that, Granger."

Hermione huffed and stomped off to the menu to prove him wrong.

*

Draco made quick work of locking and silencing the bathroom. He looked at himself in the mirror and let loose a heavy sigh. Hermione was killing him with her tight pants and her big earnest eyes. He nearly pushed her against the wall and had his way with her at least ten

different times at the Louvre. Then again just now in the entrance way. His desire for her was less than it had been following the handfasting, but barely. His hand itched when he wasn't near her. The smell of her seemed to be doing things to him that he would never have imagined.

Draco undressed quickly and stepped into the steaming shower. It had a shower head that made it feel like you were in the rain. It was absolutely delightful. The water pressure was also unparalleled. He let his mind wander to the image of her look of delight whenever he told her some insignificant fact, to how she flushed lightly whenever she would obey his instructions while taking her photo, to her sighs of pleasure while he thrust into her. Draco moaned as he came against the white shower tiles. After a moment he cursed, then cleaned himself.

He turned off the tap and scourgified the shower.

Draco shook himself. He needed to cool it. He stared at himself and methodically built his walls in his mind, watching as his facial expression slowly disappeared. It took much longer than usual because he was drunk and the images from a few moments ago were still playing in his mind.

A gentle knock at the bathroom door shook him from his occlusion.

"Malfoy—er—the wine is here."

He removed his silencing charm. "Perfect."

"It's a merlot."

Draco's lip twitched. Were he less occluded, he probably would have smiled. Instead, he threw on a robe, vanished his clothes, and squared his shoulders.

She was standing near the balcony, clearly unsure of what to do with herself.

"A merlot?"

"It's good, I promise," she responded, then poured them both wine with a surprising expertise.

Draco took the glass, swirled it slightly, then sniffed at the rim poshly. It did smell quite rich. He raised an eyebrow. Draco held out his glass to her. "To our happy marriage!" he toasted with a smirk.

Hermione rolled her eyes, but toasted him and took a sip of her wine. Draco was surprised by how tasty it was. He simply nodded briefly. "Adequate."

"*Adequate*? It's excellent!" she responded in a huff. "This bottle is from 1979." Granger placed her glass down and took off for the bathroom. "I'm bathing!" she declared and slammed the door behind her.

Draco smirked. He levitated the bottle and their glasses onto the balcony. He rather enjoyed the Parisian skyline. Nothing quite like it when seen from high enough. The long promenades and the strange geometrical shape that delineated the city was oddly satisfying to look at. He got lost in tracing the shape of the different roads—an occlumency technique to clear the mind. The balcony doors opening brought him back to himself.

She was in frumpy plaid pyjamas, her hair up in a messy bun. Draco had to shove down the desire to remove her pyjamas so that he could better see her exquisite figure. Instead, he raised his glass of merlot.

“More than adequate,” he admitted.

Hermione wiggled her eyebrows. “I know.”

She sat in the chair beside his and sipped at her wine slowly. They descended back into silence. It was only when pouring their second glasses, that she spoke again.

“Will you teach me occlumency?”

Draco flinched, yet again lost in a meditative state, wholly unaware that he had drained his first glass at some point in time.

“Why would you want to know occlumency?”

She glanced at him, then back at the glittering Eiffel Tower. “I’m bad at hiding my emotions. I don’t like that everyone knows what I’m thinking, sometimes before I am even aware that I am thinking it.” She flushed lightly.

Draco traced her neck with his eyes. He found himself saying, “Yes.”

“Yes? You’ll teach me?” She threw her full gaze on him, causing Draco’s heart to clench uncomfortably.

He cleared his throat. “Yes,” he repeated.

“So, what’s the first lesson? How did you learn? What can I do to practice during my free time?”

Draco looked away from her and chose his next words carefully. “Occlumency is based on a lot of meditation. You need to start practicing clearing your mind.”

She shifted in her seat, still looking at him. Draco refused to turn back to her, afraid of what he might do in the face of her eagerness.

“Meditation?”

He nodded. “It’s a sort of a combination of meditation and...muggles call it disassociation.”

“How do you know what muggles call it?”

He glanced at her curious expression, then looked away again, pretending that the Eiffel Tower was just too riveting to look away from. He avoided her question. “I meditate every morning and every night. Sometimes I do it during the day as well. It helps to focus your mind.”

She shifted again. “And how do you meditate?” she asked earnestly.

He smirked and looked at her finally. “Depends.”

Hermione huffed. “Just give me a straight answer here, Malfoy.”

“Making your mind go completely blank is almost impossible to do, especially for beginners. I suggest starting with visualization. Think of a scene that calms you and focus in on those details. It could be a tropical beach, or...” Draco chuckled, “a library.”

Hermione smiled. “I like a library.”

“Basically, you just envision it with as much detail as possible. Ignore everything else around you. Imagine that you are actually there. What does it smell like? What temperature is it? how is the lighting? How many rows of books are there? What section are you in...? That kind of thing.”

She nodded and closed her eyes with a frown. “I might be too drunk to do this right now,” she said after a moment.

Draco chuckled. “It’s actually a good idea to practice while you’re drunk. It will make it far easier to focus when sober. Also, most of the time that you need to occlude you are not prepared to do so. So, practicing while drunk, sober, happy, sad, energetic, or exhausted is important.”

Hermione nodded and her finger twitched. “I wish I was taking notes. Wait. Can I get my phone?”

Draco looked up at the sky as if in annoyance—to hide his amusement. “Yes. Go get it.”

She bounced to her feet and into the suite. Draco repeated himself and Hermione took notes on her phone, asking question upon question. Finally, he told her that was enough for the night when the Eiffel Tower finally stopped its late-night twinkling. Hermione nodded, admitting that she had grilled him for the better part of an hour.

Then came the awkward moment about sleeping in the same bed. Draco almost elected to sleep on their plush sofa just to avoid the tension, but part of him was physically incapable of putting space between himself and his wife, even if his sanity depended on it.

She came out of the bathroom with her non-descript black toiletries bag and shuffled under the covers. Draco went to brush his teeth and forced himself to occlude again before exiting the large marble bathroom. She had turned to face the balcony, her back to him. It was still incredibly awkward sliding into the bed beside her. The bed was a king, so they were far

from touching one another. Draco still thought he could feel her heat radiating from a few feet away.

He imagined his solarium at home instead of thinking of his wife laying two feet away from him. He clearly saw an orange sun rising in his mind's eye, bringing light to the quiet and warm room. He imagined the various plants and traced their leaf shape, counting the leaves as he went. Draco was just floating away in his occluded haze, when her quiet voice made him flinch.

"Thank you, for today. It was...it was lovely."

Draco took a slow deep breath. "Happy honeymoon," he responded sardonically.

Hermione shifted and fell silent again. Draco let his mind wander back to his solarium, his body warming in the imagined heat. Draco drifted off to sleep, his solarium suddenly populated by a curly-haired brunette and her mangy cat.

*

Saturday, March 27

Hermione awoke feeling well-rested and incredibly warm. Her head was nestled into a sturdy chest, her hand wrapped in another's, her leg thrown over strong thighs. Hermione nuzzled in closer.

Her eyes snapped open suddenly. She froze, her state of complete relaxation destroyed.

She was cuddling Malfoy. She was cuddling him and he had a boner.

Hermione's face flushed a deep red as her heart (and other parts of her) clenched. She forced herself to breathe and tried to return to deep breathing so that it wasn't evident how awake she actually was. Really, she ought to just roll away and pretend nothing had happened. He was asleep anyway, how would he ever know?

And how dare he, getting a boner? Very ungentlemanly or whatever tosh he was always going on about.

Hermione tried to roll away, only to feel herself being held in place by an insistent hand on her lower back. She flinched as Malfoy's hand pushed her waist back against his erection. Hermione needed to vacate the bed as quickly as humanly possible. She tried to move again, but his hand stopped her once more, his hips shifting against hers. Hermione bit her lip. That had felt...she didn't want to think about how that had felt.

Gearing up to roll over with all her strength, a gruff voice froze her in place again.

"Shouldn't've had that last bottle of wine..." Malfoy grumbled, his hand moving from her back to rest on his forehead in pain.

Hermione took her chance and rolled away quickly, pretending to still be asleep, rather poorly. She heard him grumble something else unintelligible, then he rolled onto his side and

started snoring lightly. Hermione almost sighed in relief. She practically sprang from the bed and locked herself in the bathroom with the help of a few charms.

Taking in her flushed expression in the mirror and her haphazard hair, she had the strange thought that it looked like they had spent the night banging. That made her flush more. Hermione groaned in frustration and decided to have a shower.

“Stupid Malfoy and his stupid penis,” she grumbled to herself as she aggressively washed her skin and conditioned her hair.

Once out of the shower, she tried to meditate, imagining the Hogwarts library in the early fall at sunset. The library was warm and she was sitting in her favourite armchair in the far corner that barely anyone ever visited. She had *Hogwarts, A History* in her lap and was staring off at the Black Lake at the setting sun. It was extremely calming to her soul and she was proud of how well she was taking to visualization. In her mind library, someone was suddenly standing beside her in Slytherin robes. Hermione looked up at Malfoy with a frown. He smirked at her and her heart started racing.

A sharp knock stopped all thoughts in her mind—luckily.

“Granger, hurry up in there!”

Hermione shook herself and splashed water on her flushed again face. She noticed that the love bite on her neck was darker today and the finger prints on her hips were as well. She threw on a clean robe and tried to pull it tight against her neck so that he wouldn’t notice it.

Malfoy was sitting on the chaise with a cup of coffee in hand. He swivelled around to see the door open and quickly got to his feet. He nodded at her briefly without saying anything, then disappeared into the bathroom.

Hermione was glad that he had nothing to say to her, she had no idea what on earth to say to him after waking to a very prominent hello. Hermione tried to clear her mind again, but now when she imagined the Hogwarts library, he was there. Watching her. It hardly calmed her down.

She noticed that he had ordered them the same breakfast while she had been in the shower. She took her plate onto the balcony and read over the *Prophet* that he had left on the coffee table. There were several photos from the hundreds of weddings this past week. She and Malfoy featured in a large spread as they stared into one another’s eyes at the handfasting. Hermione’s hand tingled.

The balcony doors opened and she dropped the newspaper in fright.

“Why’re you so jumpy, Granger?”

Hermione glared at him. “You scared me.”

He ignored her and drank more of his coffee. His hair was perfectly styled and he wore an outfit that reminded her of what royalty might wear on a casual day; fitted pants, a soft

looking sweater, a flashy gold watch.

“What’s the plan for today?”

Hermione picked back up the *Prophet* and looked at Luna and Blaise’s wedding photos. What a strange and nice wedding that had been. She turned the page to read about Goblin taxes.

“I’m not sure. I would love to just walk around and be a stereotypical tourist. You?”

“Granger. We’re in Paris. We must do two things: go shopping and clubbing.”

Hermione looked up the article on tax reform to stare at him. “Clubbing? You?”

He shrugged. “The repressed upper class like to let loose every once in a while.”

She chuckled. “Fine, but we have to go to the Eiffel Tower and see it up close. And the catacombs. I missed those last time I was here.”

“Shopping first,” he responded.

Hermione sighed. “How late will we be out clubbing for? If I had known we were going to be staying up late tonight, I would have slept in.”

Malfoy smirked. “You can have a midday nap. After shopping.”

Hermione returned to her article with a roll of her eyes.

*

Malfoy took her shopping in the same magical street they had visited the night before for dinner. The magical village was a series of alleys bursting with people and shops. Hermione succeeded in pulling Malfoy into the bookstore and limited herself to only buying five new books. He had ushered her from the store quickly, claiming that they had a limited amount of time to get their shopping done. He brought her to the expensive part of the village, each boutique feeling less welcoming than the last.

Malfoy had insisted on buying her some sunglasses that were beyond expensive and a scarf that she was sure she would never wear. He waved her off, saying something about a winter party with his mother that would require the “appropriate” attire. Hermione didn’t fight him much, because she was trying to conserve her energy for their long day.

He purchased himself sunglasses as well that looked dashing on him. He also put in an order for dragon hide boots that would be delivered to the London flat. Then he had dragged her into a lady’s dress shop and very nearly pranced around as he threw dresses at her. Malfoy then instructed the shop lady to measure her on one of those ridiculous pedestals. Malfoy seemed to be immensely enjoying himself. He insisted that she try on all the dresses that he had pulled for her and no matter how she felt, it seemed it was only his opinion that mattered.

“Malfoy, honestly, this dress is ridiculously expensive,” Hermione countered.

He shot her a withering look. “Granger, your wardrobe is absurdly boring and inappropriate for high society. Trust me. You will be happy to have these clothes down the line.”

“That was unnecessarily rude,” she muttered.

“Yes, Jeanette, we’ll get this one in the purple, pink, and baby blue, I think.”

Hermione glared at him and changed back into her simple muggle clothing. He really had a knack for making her feel inadequate. She was in a foul mood by the time they left the shop. Malfoy, however, was nearly beaming.

“We’ll have lunch at our muggle restaurant.”

Hermione looked sharply at him. “Your father bought a muggle restaurant?”

Malfoy raised an eyebrow and nearly laughed. “Of course not. I did.”

She was dumbfounded. He was continuously full of surprises. Hermione let him carry their many bags as they made their way back to muggle Paris, got in another Uber, and went to yet another swanky restaurant that they ‘both’ owned—as he kept insisting.

This restaurant was far lighter and more casual than the magical one. It also felt more like a lunch/brunch spot than an evening dining experience. It was still far too decadent; marble floors, shining gold accents, chandeliers, a snobby hostess.

Malfoy ordered for them again when Hermione stared at the menu, overwhelmed. The restaurant somehow made a simple soup, salad, sandwich combo simultaneously the best food she had ever eaten and the most over the top. It was somehow even fancier than their dinner the previous night.

They spoke little over lunch, Malfoy still content with his purchases and Hermione still extremely annoyed.

After lunch, they ventured to the catacombs and waited in the long line.

As they neared the front, Malfoy surprised her, by asking her a question.

“Why are you so upset?”

Hermione rolled her eyes and looked away, taking another slow step forward as the line moved. “Because you can be such a—ugh!”

He raised an eyebrow. “I’m simply treating my wife to nice things.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “If you know why I’m upset, why bother asking?”

“I don’t know why you’re upset, Granger. I know that you didn’t enjoy me buying you enough clothing to replace your entire wardrobe back in London. But I don’t think that’s why you’re really upset. You knew that was going to happen.”

He purchased their tickets with his credit card and they began the descent into the catacombs. They joined a tour, putting an end to their conversation for the time being.

“Rather morbid, here,” Malfoy commented when the tour guide gave them some time to explore on their own.

Hermione distanced herself from him; she had no interest in conversing. He ignored her desire to be alone and followed her. Hermione tried to evade him and he simply, and easily kept pace with her, even at the awkward stoop he had to do in the shorter tunnels. She finally whirled around on him.

“Can I not get a few moments of peace and quiet?” she snapped.

Malfoy looked briefly shocked, before his face went neutral. “Are we about to have a domestic in an underground graveyard?”

Hermione poked his chest. “Just leave me alone!” she hissed.

Instead of listening, he stepped closer to her and cornered her in a dead end. Malfoy tilted his head. “Why are you upset?” he repeated.

“Why do you care?” she threw back.

He frowned. “We agreed to get along.”

Hermione laughed without conviction. “Actually, we agreed to not intentionally annoy one another.”

“Answer me,” he responded, leaning toward her.

Hermione gulped at his closeness. “I—what?”

His eyes flickered to her lips before coming back to her eyes. “What did I do, Granger?”

“Why do you care?” she asked again, this time with less fury.

He opened his mouth, then closed it. Then, “I’m asking so that I don’t do it again.”

She felt butterflies start to swirl in her stomach. “Oh.”

“Because, we agreed to get along. So, what was it this time? Was it just me paying for things, because you’re just going to have to let that go.”

Hermione glared at him and crossed her arms. “I will not let that go.”

He rolled his eyes and waited for her to respond to him.

“You—” Hermione looked away from his piercing eyes.

Malfoy leaned in closer. “I…”

Hermione huffed again. “You just—the way you say things. Like I would never have clothing in my wardrobe that is appropriate for high society—that’s incredibly rude. And you haven’t even seen my wardrobe, so how would you know? I have plenty of dresses. I just don’t wear them unless the occasion calls for it! You assuming that I have terrible fashion sense makes me feel—” she cut herself off, not wanting to be so vulnerable in front of him. “It’s just rude, Malfoy.”

He stared at her, then nodded. “I see.” Malfoy’s eyes darted back and forth from her own. “How rude of me.”

Hermione crossed her arms “Let’s just finish the tour.”

He didn’t move. “I want to explain why.”

“We’re going to miss our tour lady.”

“We’ll catch up,” he replied dismissively.

“I hate when you do that too. Just dismiss what I have to say.”

Malfoy frowned, his eyes darting between hers again. Hermione flushed under his gaze.

“I insisted because I am sure my mother will invite you to some event at some point and I did not want you to feel...under-dressed. She has a way about her. While I’m sure you have clothing that would be adequate, I know my mother.”

“I—”

“And I am dismissive because we still have three minutes before the tour resumes.”

“You’re just so—infuriating sometimes.”

Malfoy sighed. “What now?”

She could tell she was annoying him. “Just because you have good intentions doesn’t mean that you’re not doing harm.”

He leaned back slightly, staring at her deeply. “Wise words, Granger. I’ll work on my...tact. You work on accepting my money.” He turned from her and made his way back toward the tour lady. “You coming?” he asked over his shoulder.

Hermione wanted to throttle him. Instead of making her less upset, she was more upset than before. He was clearly a control freak not used to letting anyone else take the wheel.

As the tour went on, Malfoy maintained a distance from her that hadn’t been there before. For some reason, this annoyed her more than his incessant shadowing. Hermione let her mind wander instead of listening to the tour guide (she knew more than the woman knew anyway). Hermione thought about his motivations.

In essence, he appeared to be trying to create a good relationship between them. He wanted her to feel comfortable in his horrible mother's presence. It was actually quite sweet. The whole providing for her thing would take a long time for her to adjust, since she was so used to being fully independent. But she did acknowledge that they were raised very differently in terms of what a man was expected to do in a relationship. He was putting in effort. Even him getting her to admit what was wrong showed how much he was trying. He wasn't letting things build up and he was ostensibly trying to learn from his mistakes. But he really needed to work on his delivery...

They climbed out of the catacombs and began wandering the cobbled streets.

"Eiffel Tower next?" Hermione asked finally, extending an olive branch.

"It's much prettier at night time," he countered. "I think we should return to the hotel for a quick break, go to dinner, go to the Tower, then hit the club." His eyes slid to her frame before returning to the picturesque road before them. "If that works with you."

"You are learning," Hermione muttered under her breath. "Yes, fine. But we still have a lot of time before dinner. I've just had an idea. You can make up for being such a prick earlier."

"I wouldn't agree that I was a 'prick,'" he bristled.

"I'll take you shopping."

Malfoy looked at her curiously. "Elaborate."

"You'll need more muggle clothing if you're going to stalk me as much as you have been."

"I have hardly been stalking you, Granger. Don't be absurd. I've been accompanying my wife on our honeymoon."

"Sure, sure." Hermione pulled out her phone and plunked in the Galerie Lafayette. "You'll find that muggles can be just as posh as you."

Malfoy peered at her phone. "Where are we going? Isn't that the Uber square?"

Hermione chuckled. He still needed some training on phones. "Yes. We're going to the Galerie Lafayette."

"I do not believe I have been there. Is it a boutique?"

Hermione smirked. "You'll see."

*

Draco, despite enjoying the convenience of all the boutiques being in one place, was skeptical about this gallery. It felt rather pedestrian to have multiple stores beneath one roof, but he did recognize many of the brands that he purchased from regularly, so he wasn't entirely adverse to the experience. Hermione seemed a bit put out by how amenable he was.

She declared that she was going to choose his clothes and stood straight and held her nose high. Draco had to hold back a laugh when he realized she was impersonating him. She collected a fair number of coloured shirts, well-made pants, and far too many jeans. He didn't have the heart to tell her that he already owned many of the items since she seemed to be having far too much fun.

She forced him to a change room and waited outside inspecting her nails and making ridiculous comments about needing a certain outfit for the "summer soirée." He had to stifle his laughter.

Draco found he quite enjoyed modelling for her. It made her have to trail her eyes along his body and throw praise his way. Hermione looked very haughty while she did it too, which did nothing but add to his enjoyment. She kept calling on Johan, their attendant to ask if whatever he was wearing was available in a different size or colour, or if other designers might have a better fit for Draco's "toned form." He preened after that compliment.

Hermione ended up choosing several outfits for him, including a pair of expensive shoes. He knew the total on his purchase would be a significant drain to her insubstantial bank account and had to find a way to make her pay with their joint credit card.

It was almost too easy.

"Thank you for the running commentary, Granger, I got it from here," he said cockily at the cash. "Johan, that will be—"

She cut in front of him and threw her credit card down. The black one. Draco schooled his features.

"Granger, I must insist that I—"

"Nonsense, Malfoy. You bought my clothing. I have to buy yours. Plus—" Johan had already swiped the card and was asking for a signature. She signed without thinking and continued speaking, "you need to get used to not paying for everything."

Draco smiled and said nothing. He took their many bags while Granger took her card back. It took her a second, but then she realized her mistake.

"Wait. Johan—that was the wrong card. Is it too late? Can I—?"

Johan frowned. Draco intervened. "Granger, just let it go."

Her eye twitched. "It was my turn to pay, Malfoy," she seethed.

"You did pay," he responded calmly.

Johan edged away from what was clearly about to be a big fight.

"With your money," she threw back.

"Our money, wife. *Our money.*"

Hermione poked him in the chest again, hard. She liked to do that. Draco liked when she did it too. It was odd how much she turned him on when she did barely anything. It might have been that she had used her vow hand. That would make sense.

“You tricked me.”

He didn’t want to lie to her, but he knew admitting it right then would do nothing but escalate the situation. “Listen, Granger. You can buy me things all you want. But don’t insist on buying me the most expensive things in the store, because frankly, you don’t have the funds,” he responded. He realized too late that he was far too condescending.

She snatched the bags from him. “I’m returning it. Everything! It’s all going back. You can’t have—you are just *so condescending* sometimes. Just because you’re rich doesn’t mean you have to be an asshole.”

Draco took a deep breath and stepped in front of her as she searched for Johan.

“I apologize, Granger. That was the wrong thing to say. I only mean that it makes sense for us both to spend proportionally. You spending 4000 pounds on muggle clothing for me is not the same as me spending 4000 galleons on you.”

“Well, that’s not how the conversion works,” she replied swottily.

He refrained from rolling his eyes. “I’m just trying to make a point here. You get what I mean. I very much appreciate the gesture, but there is no need to waste your money on me.”

“Waste?”

Draco blinked at her. She did not think she was wasting money by buying him expensive clothes. That was interesting.

“You paid for the wedding, you will pay for all the bills, you paid for the honeymoon, the meals...the clothes. I’m just trying to get close to even.” She gave up on finding Johan and plopped into a plush armchair in annoyance.

Draco sat beside her slowly, thinking through his words. “I understand your viewpoint, but it is not about trying to get even, Granger.” He looked away at the busy floor as fellow shoppers inspected clothing. “This is what you agreed to. At least the bills, the wedding, the honeymoon. We’ve already agreed to all those expenses. You shouldn’t be thinking that you need to make it up to me. That is just what will happen regardless of our relationship to one another. That is the deal. I appreciate your gesture here, but I also understand that we are in different financial positions—since you refuse to take my money. And I don’t want to bankrupt you on one revenge shopping trip. You should bankrupt me instead.”

She side-eyed him and he could tell she had calmed down. “Fine,” was all Hermione said before handing him the bags and heading toward the exit.

Draco smiled and trailed after her, opening doors like a good husband.

Granger was snoring lightly from the bed, the covers bunched up around her. Draco was never one who was good at sleep, let alone napping, so he decided to just rest when they had returned to their hotel suite. The sun was setting by the time she awoke. Draco noted a dark bruise on her neck in the shape of teeth. He had to steel himself to ward off a flush from rising to his cheeks. He had done that to her. She hadn't healed it either, merely poorly concealed it.

When she returned from the bathroom, her hair no longer a rumpled mess and her neck smooth again, he almost said something. Instead, he dressed for their dinner.

*

They took photos in front of the Eiffel Tower of each other, then Hermione convinced Malfoy to take one together. He led her up the elevator so that they could take in the city at night from one of the highest points. Hermione loved it. She took many more photos, then Malfoy led her to the grass where they split a bottle of champagne. Real champagne.

"To us!" she toasted with a smile. They both drank deeply from their champagne flute, then Malfoy poured them another that they drank slower.

The grass was full of couples and friends drinking before the glittering monument.

"The club we're going to is an all-night club. We can go at any time, but it is best closest to midnight," Malfoy explained. He checked his watch. "We still have about another hour."

Hermione nodded and drank more of her champagne. It was truly the best drink she had ever had. They slipped in and out of conversation, not talking about anything important, but getting more chatty as the second champagne bottle was popped open.

Hermione frowned as Malfoy poured her the last dregs of the second bottle, unsure how they had already had a bottle of champagne each. She looked around and realized her vision was slightly blurred.

"Whoops!" she giggled.

Malfoy smiled vaguely.

"The club!" Hermione declared suddenly. "The club. It's time. It's go-time. What time is it?"

Malfoy fumbled with his watch. "Er—12:30."

"Perfect," Hermione declared and heaved herself to her feet.

She tried to help Malfoy up and they both tumbled back to the ground. This resulted in a round of laughter. This time, he stood first, and helped her to her feet. Malfoy brought her to the shaded treeline and pressed her against a tree. Hermione stared up at him with a wide smile, happy to just be close. He leaned toward her and she leaned toward him.

He shoved a coin in her face. Hermione blinked at it.

“What’s that?”

“Our entry into the club.”

“One Euro?”

Malfoy chuckled. “It’s a magical club.”

Hermione’s eyes grew wide and she shoved him, knocking him off balance momentarily.

“You didn’t tell me.”

“Yes, I did. Did I? I am now.”

She grabbed the coin. “How does it work?” she asked loudly.

He slapped a hand over her mouth and moved them both further into the shadows. This brought his body directly against hers. Hermione nearly groaned. She might have, but at least her mouth was not emitting any noise with his hand over it.

“Shhh! Muggles,” he reminded her. He took the coin, then gripped her hand tightly. “Hold on,” he warned. Then they were suddenly on a crowded dance floor.

The lights were flashing erratically and the music was so loud she could feel it in her bones. Malfoy didn’t let go of her hand. He pulled her toward a bar and did some signal with his hand that she didn’t understand. Next thing she knew they were being handed drinks. He then pulled her over to a booth area that had apparently been reserved for them and sat her down. Hermione sipped her drink while watching the bodies on the dance floor groove and bounce to the upbeat music. She didn’t recognize anything and there were hardly any lyrics to recognize, but she did enjoy it.

She had only been clubbing a handful of times, much preferring pubbing. She snorted at her own joke. Malfoy looked at her with a raised eyebrow. She tried to explain the joke, but it was too loud. Hermione finished her drink and stood suddenly. The world was spinning a little, but not in a terrible way. She wondered idly what was mixed in her drink, but found she wasn’t worried at all with Malfoy around. She knew he’d get her home.

As she thought, as soon as she stood, he followed her. Hermione moved to the dance floor proper and began swaying to the music. She closed her eyes and just let herself feel the beat boom through her chest.

Her eyes opened when she felt someone press up behind her and put their hands on her waist. Hermione looked at Malfoy standing in front of her. He seemed angry about something. She stepped toward him and out of the stranger’s hands. Hermione messed up his hair and began laughing. He swatted her hands away. She turned around and took Malfoy’s hands and put them on her waist, then she continued dancing without thought. It wasn’t necessarily a full grind, but their hips were moving together.

Hermione thought that Malfoy must have done this type of dancing as well before, because he didn’t seem ill at ease. After a while, she turned back around and draped her hands around

his neck and looked into his eyes while swaying drunkenly. He stared down at her, his eyes dark pools. Hermione's fingers played with his hair as her body heated up. He pressed his forehead to hers and put his leg between her thighs. Malfoy's hands migrated to her ass and pressed her against his thigh slowly and insistently.

Hermione, unsure how the night had brought them to this point, found herself grinding against him as their lips connected. The drinks she had at dinner, at the Eiffel Tower, and again at the club had made her head hazy and her body warm with desire.

So, the fact that they were back in the booth, her legs on either side of his as she moved against his waist, hands in his hair, his hands travelling up and down her back to land on her ass appreciatively was a bit of shock—at least it was to her the next morning.

In the moment, she was just feeling. Feeling desired. Feeling warm. Feeling powerful.

Malfoy was breathing heavily and poking into her insistently. In a moment of clarity, she realized that she didn't want to shag him in a random club. So, moments later they were in a car that was speeding toward their hotel room.

The headiness of the club was slowly receding and Hermione thought maybe it wasn't the best idea to pick up where they left off.

They held hands in the car ride and nothing more. She didn't want an audience—hence leaving the club—but Malfoy couldn't tear his eyes from her. He kept tracing her body and stopping at certain areas.

In the elevator, he pulled her to him. Hermione complied easily, despite her earlier thought that it was a bad idea to pursue anything with the man. He pressed her to the wall and hitched her leg up around his waist. Hermione was moving against him without a second thought. Malfoy groaned as she rocked her hips against his.

“Fuck, Granger.”

He picked her up fully as the doors dinged open and stumbled toward their suite. Hermione only pulled her lips away when his fifth attempt at opening the door without breaking apart failed. She waved her wand carelessly and the suite clicked open. Later, she would admonish herself for using magic where anyone could have seen.

Finally inside, Malfoy was pushing her clothing off her shoulders. He pushed her against the wall again and kissed up and down her neck. Hermione rolled against him. At some point they got to the bed and they were both fully naked, but she wasn't entirely sure of how they got there.

Her next coherent thought was when she was sliding onto his cock and groaning in pleasure. He gripped her hips right where her bruises were from their wedding night and she keened in pain and pleasure. Hermione rode him with abandon, her drunkenness and horniness pushing her to seek her own pleasure without second thought.

“Touch me,” she commanded.

Malfoy nodded and brought his fingers to her clit. She hissed and sped up her rhythm. Hermione didn't last long after that. Neither did Malfoy. She clenched around him and then he was coming, hips thrusting up into hers.

Hermione collapsed on him in a sweaty heap. He kissed her languidly as her eyes drooped closed.

*

Sunday, March 28

Hermione awoke with a pounding hangover and penis poking into her naked ass. She cracked her eyes open and looked around in confusion.

“Oh fuck,” she mumbled.

She shuffled awkwardly out of the bed and used a pillow to cover her naked body. She had no idea where her wand was, nor her clothing. She glanced at Malfoy as he stirred. Only his bare chest was visible. And it was glorious, even in her hung-over state of mind.

Hermione felt gross between her legs and realized she hadn't peed or cleaned up after. She wrinkled her nose and made her way to the bathroom. Halfway through her shower, she remembered that she didn't cast a contraceptive charm. She quickly went into panic mode.

Wrapped in a robe, she went on a wild hunt for her beaded bag and her wand.

Malfoy blinked at her slowly, grimacing, still in bed. As she shuffled around their massive suite, she finally found her bag by the front door. Along with a literal pile of their clothing. Hermione flushed.

“Fuck,” she heard him grumble from the bed.

Hermione balled up her clothing and made her way to her luggage. She brought everything into the bathroom and changed quickly. To her horror, she was absolutely covered in love bites on her neck. She didn't have time to deal with that, though and needed to get a morning after potion immediately.

She exited the bathroom dressed haphazardly with a shoddy concealment charm on her neck. Hermione strode toward the door quickly.

“Where're you going?” Malfoy asked groggily, still prone in the bed.

She didn't look back at him. “I need a potion. After last night...”

“Fuck...” he grumbled again. “Wait. Right. I think...” He tried to get out of the bed. Hermione turned to see his face turn a bit green. “Holy shit, I'm hungover. I have...I think I have a potion. I just...Merlin. I need a potion.”

“Not a hangover potion, you idiot,” she snapped angrily, her shrillness bothering her pounding head.

“No—yes. No baby potion,” he responded eloquently. “I think I have one.” He glanced down and saw that he was fully naked. “Oh.”

Hermione almost laughed at his expression, but was distracted by his large penis and her own clouded mind. She threw a robe at him. He pulled it on far too slowly for her liking and tied it up. Malfoy went to his luggage by the settee and began rummaging. He stopped every once in a while and look vaguely green. Hermione wasn’t faring much better. Now that the shower was fading from her senses, she felt like utter shit again.

Malfoy mumbled, “Gotcha, you little devil!” then handed her two potions. He quickly downed a vial for himself and laid down on the settee with an arm over his eyes.

Hermione read the vials slowly, her brain not cooperating. The first one read “Hangover Cure” in Malfoy’s beautiful script. The second read “Morning After.” Hermione took the hangover cure first, then downed the morning after. It tasted like ass. She nearly choked it back up.

“I need coffee,” Malfoy groaned from his place on the settee.

Hermione summoned the phone to herself and ordered them some room service. By the time it got there, the hangover potion was starting to take effect. She could think a little more clearly and was no longer seconds from puking. This, however, meant that she was starting to reflect upon her actions from the previous evening. She almost preferred to be hungover.

They sat in silence, both drinking coffee for once. Once Malfoy finished his, he staggered to the bathroom and didn’t reappear for nearly an hour. When he did, he looked completely refreshed at not hungover at all. Hermione, on the other hand, was feeling ill from the morning after potion, which wasn’t the best feeling. But at least she knew it was working.

“Check out is in a half hour,” Malfoy said, his voice still gruff.

Hermione nodded and began packing her things slowly.

She took one last look out their balcony window at the Eiffel Tower, then took Malfoy’s hand as he portkeyed them home. The thought alone gave Hermione pause. They lived together.

Crookshanks meowed and hopped into her arms as soon as they appeared in the front foyer. Flopsy greeted them with a bow and asked how their honeymoon was with wide eyes. Hermione flushed deeply.

“Excellent, thank you, Flopsy. How was your weekend?” Malfoy asked cordially, making his way into the flat.

“It was quiet Mr. Draco, sir. Flopsy is happy your honeymoon was excellent. Flopsy is excited for when the little ones come.”

Hermione nearly choked on her own spit. Neither dignified that with a response. They both retired to their rooms after an awkward parting. Several hours later, after a nice nap and another shower, Flopsy informed Hermione that dinner was ready.

Instead of the head of the table, Malfoy sat to the side. Hermione sat across from him. The distance between them was now a normal one instead of hilariously far. The meal was quiet, both of them very awkward after their impromptu shag the night before. Hermione kept having flashbacks. She never used to think she was an especially sexual person before. But she couldn't seem to purge the thoughts of sleeping with her husband from her mind.

After the meal, he asked her if she wanted to go to the Manor library. This did nothing to help with the sex thoughts.

Hermione found herself agreeing, not entirely sure what else she could do with her evening and never being one to turn down going to the library. He apparated them directly into the entrance foyer and explained to her that she also had the ability to do so, since she was now part of the Malfoy family. Hermione was still uncomfortable with that fact.

Malfoy led her down a hallway that she didn't recognize—not that she could recognize anything. He was right about the renovations, it was impossible for her memories of this place to match the current reality, which was something at least.

He turned a corner and paused before two grand doors. He looked at her with a smirk. “This is the library,” he stated with a flourish, then pushed the doors open with ease and stood aside.

Hermione gasped. There were four floors to the library with landings on each floor, ladders, and plush armchairs. Soft lights were scattered throughout the room. Upon entering the library, they were faced with two-storey high shelves. There was a podium with ‘Catalogue’ written on in ornate letters near the front of the doors and small open space with tables, chairs and a massive fireplace.

Hermione felt oddly at home, despite the horrors from her past.

She stepped into the room and walked down the main aisle. There was shelf after shelf after shelf of books. Straight ahead of her she saw a large window, so she made her way toward it. It overlooked the Malfoy gardens. They were just starting to grow. Hermione looked back at Malfoy who was still smirking at her look of wonder. She turned back to see another study area in front of the massive window and yet another fireplace off to the side. She walked back down the aisle toward the Catalogue and stepped up to the wooden podium, curious as to how it worked.

“It's voice control,” he explained while leaning against a shelf. “You speak what you want to search and the library will light up a path to where it is in the collection. You can also ask for a list of titles and it will generate a list for you.”

Hermione was overcome. This was literally the best thing she had ever seen in her life. She looked around the massive library and said, “Marriage law.”

A bright line appeared before her eyes at about chest height and zoomed down the main aisle and to the left. She watched as it appeared on a fourth-floor landing, blinking lightly. She looked at Malfoy who smiled at her look of wonder.

Hermione followed the lights to her destination, Malfoy behind her.

“What is this catalogue spell?” she asked.

Malfoy responded, “I’m not sure. The library was renovated in 1895 by my great grandfather and I know his wife installed some new things like the Catalogue, but the magic was never taught to me. I’m sure you could find a journal about it somewhere in the Malfoy family history section,” he grumbled the last part, clearly very familiar with this section.

Hermione nodded. “I will have to research that next.”

She climbed the spiral staircase up to the top floor of the library and found a full shelf of books that talked about marriage laws through the ages, discussed the benefits and the drawbacks and even showed how people had succeeded in overturning the law. Hermione read through the titles and summaries with mounting excitement, turning to Malfoy every once in a while.

He remained impassive for the most part, a slight upturn to his lips the only thing indicating any emotion on his face.

“I can take these out of the library?” she asked him.

Malfoy nodded. “What’s yours is mine and all that.”

“Yes, but isn’t this your mother’s?”

He rolled his eyes. “Don’t worry, I already told her you’d be robbing her blind of all her books.”

Hermione laughed. “I’ll return them.”

He shrugged, uncaring. “Do what you want. She doesn’t do much reading anyway.”

“I’ll return them, don’t worry.”

They descended the staircase, her pile of books floating behind them.

“Thank you for bringing me here,” she uttered quietly as they walked through the stacks of books. “It’s beautiful.”

“I used to spend a lot of time here. It has the best view, in my opinion,” he responded.

Hermione imagined a young Malfoy hanging out in the library in his spare time and smiled despite herself.

“If you want to split the stack of books, I can start on one and you can do the other, then we can compare next weekend. It will make the process go faster,” Malfoy suggested as they left the library behind.

Hermione looked at the beautiful collection of books mournfully, shocking herself by saying, “Can we come back here to study?”

“Oh. Sure. If you want.”

Hermione nodded. “It’s just so lovely.”

“Our library isn’t quite as nice.”

“*Our* library?”

“Right. You haven’t seen the whole place yet. Yeah, we have one.”

Hermione’s eyes gleamed. “You have to show me.”

He nodded. “Anytime.”

“Okay. Well. Maybe not today actually. I’m quite tired from everything in the past few weeks and last night—” she flushed, horrified that she had just said that aloud. Hermione continued quickly, pretending that it hadn’t happened, “and I know that I’ll want to stay up all night reading in there the second I see the place. So maybe we should wait a bit.” She laughed.

Malfoy smiled. “Just tell me when, Granger.”

Hermione smiled back at him. She gave him half the pile of floating books and took the other half. “Home?” she asked tentatively.

“Yes. I’ll see you there.” And they both turned on the spot and disappeared into nothingness.

Chapter End Notes

Re: dun-con/non-con: The handfasting vow is pushing them together pretty aggressively now, however, since we already know that they want each other, it is a strong push on their pre-existing desires. They do both want to sleep together. But they're both still in Egypt (aka Denial). And at this point it is unclear if they would have slept together or not without the compulsion. SPOILERS--they would have. Hermione dressed for the occasion and assumed once she was drunk enough her inhibitions would lower.

To skip non-con/dub-con go to Friday, March 26.

To skip drunk sex, don't read the section after the 4th * on Saturday, March 27.

Married Life

Chapter Notes

An entire Draco POV chapter for you! Enjoy :)

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

Monday, March 29

Draco was drinking his morning coffee quietly when Hermione stumbled into the kitchen. She looked adorable in her oversized t-shirt and capris. Not to mention her hair which was barely staying in its bun. She still had faint bruising on her neck from their weekend romp that she had clearly forgotten about. Hermione let loose a yawn. Draco dragged his eyes from her form and returned them to that morning's *Prophet*.

"Good morning," he greeted cordially, his eyes not leaving the page. Draco tried to dispel the image of his markings on her, but he couldn't banish the memories that were crowding his mind.

"Morning." Hermione yawned again. She poured herself a cup of coffee and joined him at the table.

Draco glanced at her sleep-deprived eyes. "Have trouble sleeping? I assume you were up all night reading your pile of books," he teased her.

Hermione laughed. "I did finish two of them...But that's not why I couldn't sleep. I just don't think I'm used to sleeping here yet," she admitted.

Draco nodded in understanding. "I sleep terribly in new places." He didn't add that he always slept terribly and that the few times that he had slept well were when she was wrapped in his arms.

Crookshanks' meow could be heard as he entered the kitchen. He hopped onto a chair and got himself comfortable.

"About the cat, Granger."

"He's not moving. Leave him be."

"You don't even know what I was going to say."

"I can see the look of disgust on your face right now. Don't worry," she added on, "a little orange cat hair never killed anyone."

Draco grumbled and returned his attention to the newspaper.

“Anything good in there?” Hermione asked after a few moments of silence.

“Just the usual garbage,” he folded the paper and handed it to her; he wasn’t really reading it anyway. Her eyes zipped across the front page immediately.

Draco left the kitchen to find his briefcase and head to the Ministry. Briefcase in hand and hair perfectly groomed, he found her still in the kitchen, pouring through the *Prophet*, but this time with a meal prepared by Flopsy in front of her.

“I’m surprised you accepted it,” he gestured to the bacon and eggs.

“She cried,” Hermione said. “Besides, I don’t want to waste food that’s already been made.”

He shrugged, happy that she would at least accept help sometimes. “I’m off to work. I’ll see you tonight. I might have to work late.”

Hermione waved goodbye. “Have a good day.”

Draco thought that she would be one of those people that left super early for work, like him, but she was still not dressed and taking her sweet time. He supposed that she could just be having a later start or something of the sort, but he didn’t ask. Instead, he made his way to the apparition point and spun off to work.

*

That night Draco wearily loosened his tie while dragging his feet past the kitchen. One glance in revealed that Flopsy had prepared dinner and left it with a warming charm for him. Granger was nowhere in sight. Draco sighed and rubbed at his eyes. He had had an excessively long day.

He trudged down the hall and unwarded his room with a complicated wave. Once inside he flung off his clothes and stepped into the shower. Thirty minutes later, he wandered back to the kitchen and started eating the delicious meal prepared for him.

Hermione padded into the kitchen halfway through his meal. He noted that her neck was blank, so she had remembered to conceal his love bites.

“Hey,” Draco greeted after swallowing a chunk of meat.

“Hi,” she greeted. “I thought I heard you come in...” She took a seat across from him.

They sat not talking. The cat jumped on Hermione’s lap. Draco kept eating.

“Do you always work this late?” Hermione asked finally.

Draco shrugged. “Not always, but since we missed Friday...”

“Sure, but I got home two hours ago, it’s nearly ten.”

Draco quirked an eyebrow, wanting this conversation to no longer focus on him before she started asking more pointed questions. “Miss me, Granger?”

Hermione blushed. “N-no. I just...trying to figure out a routine...”

“Counting down the days until Thursday?” he asked with a smirk.

Hermione flushed again. “No,” she responded quickly. “Besides. One week is Saturday.”

“I barely remember Saturday, I don’t think that counts,” Draco drawled in response. He had no intention of waiting until Saturday—that was days away.

“Also, who said we’re having sex at all? I thought we agreed that the once-a-week rule was two months from now. That is, if I can’t overthrow this law.”

Draco took the last bite of his food in order to mask his disappointment about the no-shagging. “And how is the reading going? I assume you’re done another book from the Manor?”

Hermione shrugged and went back to petting her orange hair factory. “I’ve actually been swamped trying to catch up on my weekend work.”

“What do you mean weekend work?”

Hermione blushed. “I usually work on the weekend...”

“I knew I was right to put in that line about work hours...” he mumbled.

“You’re one to talk. You left at the crack of dawn then got back well after dark.”

Draco cursed himself. He was supposed to be avoiding questions about why he was so late. “So, we’re staying married in the near future?”

“At least until this weekend. We’ll see what our research turns up. I probably have another long day tomorrow and Wednesday, but maybe we can do a tour on Thursday night?”

“I’m surprised you’re not just doing it yourself,” Draco responded, trying to distract himself from Thursday Thoughts.

She sighed. “Honestly, I’m too tired. Maybe I will tomorrow, night, we’ll see.”

Draco’s mind wandered. Surely, she would want to change her mind by Thursday. He wanted to sleep with her again seconds after their first time. He hadn’t stopped thinking about it, in fact. It contributed, in part, as to why he was so late that evening; his mind had wandered too much. He really wished he had a better memory of their Saturday night. It was all flashes, just like the first time they had slept together.

Draco shook his mind of those thoughts. “I’m off to bed.”

Hermione frowned. “You’re not going to just leave your dirty dishes, are you?”

Draco hesitated. "Flopsy will clean it."

Hermione crossed her arms again. "So, you just let Flopsy clean everything up after you?"

Draco, sensing this would not go the way he wanted it to, picked up his plate and headed toward the sink. He waved his wand and the dishes began to wash themselves. "'Night," he called back to her. Had he turned around, he would have seen her proud smirk.

Tuesday, March 30

The next morning Draco found himself as usual, primly dressed, drinking his morning coffee, eating his eggs, and reading the *Prophet*. Hermione stumbled into the kitchen in the same pyjamas as the day before. He decided that he liked them. Likely because he could see that she was not wearing a bra. She tugged at her hair self-consciously. Her neck bruises were once again prominently on display. They had faded, to Draco's displeasure.

"Morning," she greeted after a yawn and plopped down in front of the plate that Flopsy had left for her. She began shoving food in her mouth.

During their honeymoon Hermione had woken up early with no problems and seemed fairly pulled together. However, the last two mornings she was very tired looking and even somewhat confused.

"Still not sleeping well?" he asked.

Hermione looked up from her overladen fork. "Still getting used to the massive bed." Hermione yawned. "I'm sure in time I'll be fine. I mean, it is a lot to adapt to all at once." He saw her look down at her engagement ring.

It suddenly occurred to him, "You don't want a muggle ring too, do you?"

Hermione looked up at him, confused. "Muggle ring?"

"Yeah, don't women wear two rings once they're married?"

Hermione nodded, looking back down at her solitary ring. "Why don't wizards and witches? Actually, come to think of it, how come only I have a ring?"

Draco glanced at his conspicuously bare ring finger. "In most pureblood marriages, you don't get your rings until you've consummated the marriage. The handfasting being enough to prove your devotion. I suppose some couples exchange rings when they get their marriage licence and don't do the traditional wedding, but others just forgo it altogether." Draco shrugged as if it didn't matter to him and he didn't care that she wore proof of their union on her finger every day.

Hermione frowned, perking up in thought. "But we have consummated the marriage."

Draco chuckled instead of letting his mind be invaded with images of her responsive body. Of him declaring, “you’re mine” and her breathy “yes.”

Draco replied, “We technically haven’t until you get pregnant.”

She frowned again. “So, people wouldn’t declare their status until there was proof of child? That’s ridiculous.”

Draco, sensing she was about to get righteous, tried to think of a way out of this hole that he had dug. “Did you want a ring?”

Hermione waved him off. “No, what you’re saying here is that the only purpose of marriage is children and that you could feasibly claim to not be married should you be unable to conceive? That’s ludicrous!”

Draco groaned and glanced at the clock over her head. “That is the traditional and *current* goal of marriage; producing offspring. The whole point of this marriage law.”

Hermione was worked up over this. “So, to everyone I’m clearly taken, but you can do as you please until you’ve impregnated me. Women could take one look at your empty finger and assume—”

Draco rather liked this turn of events. “Are you getting territorial, Granger?” he asked in a teasing voice. “Don’t want other women putting the moves on me?”

She began babbling. “I—you’re not—well. That’s not the point here, and besides, we *are* married! So—I mean...they shouldn’t be putting the moves on you,” she mumbled the last part.

Draco smiled broadly at his jealous wife. He felt proud that she didn’t want other women thinking that he was single. She was shaping up to be just as possessive as he was. Which he should have guessed given her no mistresses rule.

“I guess I should have figured you were a jealous one when you made me promise not to be with other women for our sham marriage. Although, it should be noted that usually you would not have a ring either, the engagement ring is a muggle tradition that only a few witches have adopted.”

Hermione was rather hot-faced by this point. Draco drained the rest of his coffee.

“Buy me an engagement ring if it bothers you so much, Granger. But beware of my mother, because if she sees it as a wedding band, she’ll start planning the baby shower.” Draco rose and brought his plate to the sink where he made it clean itself. “Have a good day,” he wished cordially before heading toward the front door.

Hermione stared at him, agape.

*

That night when he strolled through the front door at 10 after 8, she was pacing in the foyer.

“You work so late!” she accused. She was still wearing her work clothes, a tight dress that was far too flattering and long dangling earrings. Her hair was in its traditional curly bun atop her head. His eyes landed on her breasts, then hips, despite himself.

“Er—hi.” Draco was finding it hard to focus beyond putting his hands on her body.

Her cat was standing off to the side, flicking its tail in agitation.

“Can I help you, Granger?” Draco asked when she merely stared at him accusingly.

“I was thinking about the rings thing, and I think that I shouldn’t wear mine.” Draco made a noise of protest, but she soldiered on. “Because we’re in a forced marriage, and I don’t plan on getting pregnant any time soon, so...”

Draco couldn’t help but feel hurt. He had spent hours picking out her engagement band, had contacted that ginger menace, Ginny Weasley, not to mention he had imbued it with many charms, of which one would make it particularly difficult to remove. Although, he doubted telling her about that charm would result in good things for him, so he would have to talk his way out of this one without revealing any facts.

Draco leaned toward her and asked darkly, “But how will the other men know that you’re mine?” Perhaps this was a dangerous game to be playing with her, to admit how much he actually wanted her. Not that she seemed to take it that way, for she scoffed indignantly at his words.

“I am not *yours*,” she emphasized.

The well-played image of him saying “you’re mine” and her whimpering “yes” was doing nothing to help calm his filthy mind. Draco took a deep breath and pushed those thoughts away quickly, a brick wall shielding his mind from the image of her moaning beneath him.

Draco leaned on their front door casually. “Of course, you are,” he murmured a smidge too darkly to be considered entirely PG. Her wand was suddenly in her hand. “Just as I am yours,” he continued calmly. That had her hesitating in hexing him. Draco stared at her flushed face, her quiet “yes” leaking through the brick walls he had built moments ago. To soften her look of confusion and perhaps distance himself from what was veering toward a rather emotional confession, Draco continued, “We’re married, Granger. Whether we like it or not, I am yours and you are mine.”

A tender look flashed over her features briefly, but it was quickly replaced by more indignation. “You can try and sound as sweet as you want, but it won’t change the fact that you’re being a sexist, possess—”

“Besides, we both know that you love that ring.”

Hermione stared at it, a slight smile tugging at her lips. He loved seeing her reaction to it. She sighed heavily and he knew he had won.

“Just buy me an engagement ring and be done with it. Then we’ll both have rings.”

Draco gently pushed past her and made his way to the kitchen, excited for dinner; he hadn't eaten in almost eight hours. He was momentarily distracted from this hunger, however, from the brief contact that he had with Hermione. Just gently pushing her shoulder so that she would move out of his way had his heart racing.

Draco walked faster, wanting to put something between him and his desire for his wife. He heard Hermione following after him. Draco took a seat at the small kitchen table and began forking spaghetti into his mouth with less elegance than normal. Hermione leaned against the counter and watched him.

"What type of ring do you want?" she asked.

Draco shrugged, wanting to see what she thought would suit him best. "Surprise me."

Hermione grumbled. "Where have you been?" she asked after a moment of silence.

"Work," Draco responded vaguely.

"Why are you working so late?"

"Want to spend more time with me?" he teased, hoping to make her flush.

She didn't. Hermione placed her hands on her hips. "Stop avoiding the question, Malfoy."

"I had work to do," he responded honestly.

Hermione frowned and bit her bottom lip. Draco's eyes stared at her mouth, remembering yet again her murmured "yes" and finding that he had no interest in fortifying the walls in his mind. The image of her biting her lip as he lathered at her with his tongue came into his mind with such force that when Hermione said, "Well...goodnight," he nearly dropped his fork. He had been so transported in the memory he wondered idly what his face had been doing and how long he had been silently staring at her lips.

Hermione trailed out of the room, deep in thought. Her orange monster followed her.

Memories of their time together overwhelmed his senses while he tried to make his way through his dinner. Somehow, he managed to clear his plate and went for a nice hot shower. Halfway through, though, all he could think of was the fact that he had left his dirty plate, fork and spoon on the kitchen table. He brushed it off, thinking that Flopsy would enjoy having some work to do. But he found himself twenty minutes later making his way to the kitchen and cleaning up after himself with a wave of his wand.

Wednesday, March 31

Draco sat at the kitchen table stirring his coffee and reading about a recent outbreak of dragon pox in Spain. Hermione tromped into the kitchen, her cat in tow. She placed him on the ground before plopping into the chair opposite Draco. His love bites had significantly faded by this point and he wondered if she had finally applied an ointment.

The cat didn't ascend to its normal spot on one of the empty chairs, but instead stalked over to Draco, meowed to get his attention, and jumped squarely onto his lap. Draco dropped the paper, affronted. He heard Hermione laugh.

"Your cat is attacking me," he declared with distaste.

The monster settled himself in Draco's lap and began snoring. Hermione laughed louder. She seemed slightly more awake that morning.

"Why have you set your cat on me?" he demanded.

"Crooks likes you," she responded simply, eating a spoonful of cereal.

Draco glared at the noisy cat. "I'm going to have to clean my clothes before work," he grumbled.

"That's why I don't get dressed until moments before leaving," Hermione shared with a smile.

Draco groaned. By the time he tried to leave, the cat put up quite the hubbub, refusing to listen to Draco's demands that it get off his person. The beast even went so far as climbing up Draco's body to rest on his shoulder when Draco simply tried to stand and leave.

"Granger. I have to go to work. Can you please deal with this?" he pointed in irritation at the heavy cat on his shoulder.

She was laughing again. She took out her muggle rectangle—her phone as she called it—and took what he had to assume was a series of photos.

Draco was fuming by this point. He was going to be late (well, late for him, which still meant 45 minutes early) and covered in cat hair.

Hermione finally stood and made her way over to him. She cooed at her cat before gently taking him into her arms and cuddling him. Her proximity made his heart speed up. "Was mean Draco threatening to leave you, Crooks?" she asked in a sappy voice.

Draco was startled by her use of his first name. She had only ever said it when she was in the throes of passion or if she was saying his full name. He shook himself and picked up his wand, attempting to remove the fur from his expensive robes. It was much harder than he expected.

"Have a good day at work, dear," Hermione trilled over her shoulder, heading toward her stupid room with her stupid cat.

*

That evening Draco got home slightly earlier than the night before. He was slowly but surely getting home at a more normal time for him, which was still what one might consider rather late.

Hermione was once again pacing in front of the apparition spot.

“My lovely wife,” he greeted sarcastically. “To what do I owe the pleasure, Granger?”

Draco pushed past her and made his way straight to the kitchen, his stomach rumbling. She followed him noisily.

“I have something for you.”

Draco flung his cloak over the chair and took a seat in front of his steaming meal. He merely raised an eyebrow in response and picked up his fork. She shifted awkwardly before summoning a black box into her hands. She placed it beside his hand. Draco’s fingers twitched at her closeness. He eyed the box and knew she had purchased him an engagement ring.

“That’s it, Granger? You got a fancy Hogwarts trip and all I get is a box and silence?” he teased her. Although, he was actually a bit disappointed in how boring she had made it; he was a man of extravagance.

Hermione frowned. “Open the box.”

Draco took another bite of food and swallowed it. He wiped his hands on his napkin and opened the box.

He should have expected something, but he was far too distracted by his meal. So, when fireworks shot out at him, he dropped the box in fright. Hermione giggled at his reaction. But he didn’t have time to be self-conscious about it because there were more than just a few fireworks. The whole room lit up with snaps, crackles, and pops for almost five minutes. There were several strange creatures within them, including multiple dragons that flew about the room. It was quite the show. The impressive and overwhelming light show reminded Draco of Weasley’s bachelor party, which made his mind wander to pinning Hermione to a tree and having his way with her. He felt his cheeks heat slightly and once again vowed to work harder on his daily meditations.

After the fireworks, floating sparkling letters spelled out: “Will you wear this ring so that other witches know that you’ve been forced to marry me against your will and as such they will not engage you sexually, as per our marriage contract?”

Draco barked out a laugh. “Yes, a thousand times, yes!” he responded with a genuine smile. Hermione smiled back, making his heart skip a beat.

The show wasn’t over yet. Once he agreed, the letters disappeared and were replaced by confetti and glitter which rained down on Draco like there was no tomorrow. He batted it away ineffectively. When the confetti and glitter finally settled down, an image made of glitter hung in the air: it was of them in front of Hogwarts, their foreheads against one another, the castle glittering in the background. Underneath read: “to the shortest marriage that we can legally have!”

Hermione snapped her fingers and two glasses of champagne appeared on the kitchen table. Draco watched the image of them fade away slowly. She held up her glass.

“How’d I do?” she asked.

Draco brushed some confetti out of his hair and actually peered into the box to look at the ring. The band was silver. At the centre sat a sharply cut onyx gemstone. Draco gingerly took it out of the box and instantly felt magic course through his fingers.

“What spells did you put on it?”

Hermione shrugged and responded evasively, “Oh, the usual.”

Despite how suspicious her response was, Draco trusted her to not hex him, so he slid the ring onto his finger. It heated as it molded to his ring size and cooled an instant later. He decided that he loved the ring, not that he would tell her that.

“Pretty good, right?” Granger asked.

Draco shrugged. “Could have done without the fireworks and confetti,” he responded and went back to eating his dinner.

“Are you going to toast me, or not?” Hermione asked indignantly. “We need to cheers this union.”

Draco smiled at her annoyance, picked up his champagne flute and clinked his glass against her own. He took a sip to appease her, but returned to his meal, far more food-motivated than she, considering she had already eaten.

Hermione sipped at her champagne casually. “Are you ready to tell me more about your job yet?” she asked.

Draco glanced up at her, mostly forgotten that she was there. “Paralegal. Department of Law.”

“I know that. I mean, what do you do in the Department of Law and why does it make you leave so early and come home so late?”

Draco’s fork paused when she said “home.” She was already used to living with him even though she had only moved in a week ago. He must have stared off into space for too long because moments later she was talking again.

“You can’t just do that thing where your face goes blank and you act like you don’t care. I’m your wife until at least this weekend, and I should know so that when I’m being harassed by the press, I’ll know what lie to tell.”

Draco quirked a brow. “Hermione Granger, lie? I never thought the day would come. Besides, you shouldn’t be saying anything to the press besides ‘no comment.’”

Hermione pursed her lips. “I think I have more experience with the press than you at this point. You may be infamous, but I helped defeat Voldemort.”

Draco flinched at the name. He built a wall in his mind quickly, so as not to be overwhelmed by memories.

He countered, “I’m more adept at avoiding bad press. Ex-Death Eater, and all you see about me is how I’m reformed and the most eligible...well formerly the most eligible bachelor in the UK.”

“Who on earth would name you the most eligible bachelor? You’re such a prat.”

Draco was affronted. “I’ll have you know that many women find me rich, smart, and, most importantly, devastatingly handsome.”

Hermione scoffed. “I’m sure.”

Draco wiggled his newly decorated ring finger at her. “You seem to think so too, given how worried you are about some random woman throwing herself at me.”

Hermione crossed her arms. “It’s about equality, not about—that’s not the point here. I was asking what you do for a living. Stop avoiding the question!”

Draco smirked and ate another forkful of food instead of responding. Then he took a long sip from his champagne and leaned back as if thinking. Then he ate another forkful of food. Hermione harrumphed. She stood, taking her glass with her.

“Fine, be that way. But I’ll have you know that I put some powerful spells on there about pissing me off. So, you might want to think twice about what you do in the future.” She stalked out of the kitchen.

Draco thought that she might be kidding, until he felt a sudden flash of burning heat from his ring. The heat went away quickly, but the burning sensation took much longer to fade. The idea of removing the ring didn’t even occur to him.

That woman is diabolical, he thought as he cleared the rest of his plate.

*

Thursday, April 1

Draco stared at his vaulted ceiling and rubbed his eyes. It was Thursday. A week ago, he had gotten married. A week ago, he remembered sleeping with his intoxicating wife. A *week* ago. He was already beyond desperate to sleep with her again. *How am I going to last two months? I can barely last 5 days.*

Draco grumbled and rolled out of bed, trudging over to have a nice cool shower to chase the images of his dreams from his mind. The shower helped with one part of his anatomy, but his brain was still playing over images of their wedding night on loop. To the point that when

Hermione walked into the kitchen with a spring in her step, Draco was immediately throwing a hungry look at her.

Hermione stumbled slightly upon seeing his heated gaze, but apart from blushing, she ignored him and sat down in front of a plate.

“Good morning,” she greeted neutrally.

Draco grunted in response and returned his gaze to the newspaper, not reading a single word.

“If you’re not going to read that, can I have it?” she asked impatiently.

Draco brought his eyes up to her dark ones. He stared at her silently for a second too long.

“Malfoy?” she insisted tersely.

He snapped out of it. “Here,” he muttered and tossed the paper her way. He left the kitchen quickly, needing to clear his mind.

Draco left for work shortly afterward, making a point of ignoring her presence lest he act upon his desires.

*

Hermione was pacing by the door, as was their established habit. Draco stared at her, immediately annoyed with her; she had been clouding his mind all day. He had needed to occlude for fifteen minutes before heading home just to be able to think straight.

“So, is this the routine that you were hoping to establish?” he asked, sarcastically.

Hermione raised an eyebrow. “I just spent all day trying to convince myself that I imagined you were angry with me. But now it’s pretty clear that I didn’t imagine it. Why are you upset?” she asked, genuinely concerned.

Draco felt bad immediately. He tried to think of a lie that he could blame it on. He didn’t want her to know that he wanted her that badly, and he was sure that she would turn this around on him making him seem like the asshole. Which he probably was...

“Work has been stressful.”

Hermione’s look of annoyance was replaced by one of concern. “Why, what’s going on?” She placed a hand on his arm comfortingly.

Draco groaned. There was never any winning.

“Okay, I lied.”

She frowned and dropped her hand.

Draco knew she was going to tear him a new one, but at least he wouldn't have to delve into something that he had no interest in discussing. Draco felt awkward, but he brushed it off and instead decided to put the moves on her; it had worked that Saturday before they found out that they were matched. Objectively, he knew he was attractive and that she had to be at least somewhat interested in his body, which was a good enough starting point for him.

He dropped his briefcase.

"Malfoy, stop avoiding the question."

Draco advanced on her until she had backed up against the wall.

"What're you...?" she asked quietly.

He placed a hand by her head and leaned toward her. Her breath hitched and her eyes landed on his lips. Draco smirked darkly.

"I'm upset because someone keeps denying their desire for my perfect body," he purred in what he considered a sexy voice. "And," he added, whispering into her ear, "it's Thursday."

Draco frowned as she began laughing. "Are you kidding me!" she finally said, "You're just horny? I guess it's going to be a difficult couple of months for you!" She pushed him away and kept laughing all the way to her room.

Her cat stared at Draco with an eyebrow raised before stalking off after her. Draco groaned in frustration and smashed his fist against the wall. *That did not go well.*

Draco slinked to his room, foregoing dinner altogether, too afraid that Hermione might appear at any moment and keep laughing at his attempts at seduction. He was the kind of person who was rarely rejected as a sexual partner, so this was a strange experience for him.

He sulked for a while before warding his door and putting his left hand to good use.

*

Friday, April 2

Hermione strolled into the kitchen mere moments after Draco settled himself. She smirked at him, taking the *Prophet* out of his hands without asking, since he clearly was in no way reading the drivel newspaper. She began devouring the front page while buttering a piece of toast absentmindedly.

Draco watched her do this for a long time. She had put on four layers of butter before she realised that her reading had distracted her. She took a bite of her toast and pulled a face, but diligently kept eating it anyway.

"Why are you eating that?" he asked, unsure why he was engaging her at all. Her laughter from the previous night still rung in his ears. "It's slathered in so much butter it's literally dripping."

Hermione glanced at him briefly before returning her eyes to page three. He watched them move across the page quickly before she finally responded. “Waste not, want not.”

Draco would never understand this woman. Despite how annoying her response was, he found himself thinking of her fondly for being frugal. Draco shook himself of that. It was really going to be a long two months.

“Are you going to stop staring anytime soon?” she asked.

Draco felt his cheeks heat. He took a sip of his coffee so as to have an excuse to not reply. He might have to start practicing occlumency for an hour before seeing her each day. *Blushing?* Talk about embarrassing.

Hermione lowered the *Prophet* a few moments later, her skimming apparently done. She stared at him.

“In regards to your sexual frustration,” she said with a blush, “If all goes well, this Monday we will no longer be married.”

Draco felt a burning in his abdomen. *No longer married...Monday? But that is so soon. To soon.* He felt himself start to spiral. Instead of dwelling on those feelings, he forced himself to say, “Have you discovered something ground-breaking?”

“Potentially.”

“Care to elaborate?”

She merely raised an eyebrow.

“Why’re you suddenly being so monosyllabic?”

Hermione laughed. “I was trying to make you see how annoying it is when you do it to me.”

Draco, being a sex-depraved fool (read: dramatic), heard her say “do it” and “me” in the same sentence and immediately his brain was flooded with images and sounds of her.

You’re mine. Yes, echoed through his brain.

“But clearly it didn’t work, since you’re now back to your silent unreadable self,” she complained.

Draco snapped out of it—mostly—and replied with feigned nonchalance, “Why will we no longer be married come Monday?”

“I discovered something about a past marriage law in one of the books from the Manor. It was why the Wizengamot passed this one so quickly; there was precedent.”

He knew he shouldn’t have offered to let her use the Manor’s library to help overturn the law. He was literally helping her end their marriage. Definitely an oversight on his part. But seeing her face as she took in the Manor’s library...it was worth it.

“When was that one?” he asked.

“Back in the mid 1300s. After the huge wave of the Black Plague, we needed to repopulate, so there was a marriage law,” Hermione explained, immediately going into lecturer mode.

“Our numbers were way down since so many of us died from the disease. So, they put forth a marriage law. Everyone had to be married and have at least three children in seven years. Of course, divorce being unheard of, they all married for life. Also, they only had the option of conceiving through intercourse, so it was definitely state-sanctioned sexual assault...Honestly, I could have that law overturned in a heartbeat. Unfortunately, our current law is slightly more morally sound. But I do mean slightly.”

“Granger, get to the point.”

She tossed him a look of annoyance, but continued on, “Once it came out that certain families were forced to marry people that they didn’t want to, and a few well-to-do families were involved causing a huge scandal, the law was overturned. However, that wasn’t until four years after it was instated so...”

Draco actually found himself enjoying her too detailed lecture. “And?”

“Right. This is helpful to us because if we can prove that the matching test is not correct, then we can overturn the law.” She smiled brightly.

Draco frowned. She really hated being married to him. He found himself replying, “Granger, I think we both can acknowledge that sexually speaking, we are definitely compatible. So, the matching test can’t be all wrong.”

Hermione flushed again, but soldiered on, buttering another piece of toast. “But what the test doesn’t take into account is our history. History cannot always be overlooked. I mean, look at us! How on earth are we supposed to forget all the horrible things that you’ve said and done?” The second she said it, she froze. Her wide eyes snapped to his.

Draco felt an icy chill overtake his body. He stood sharply. “Yeah, how are we supposed to forget that?” he demanded darkly. He flicked his wand sending his plate and cup crashing into the sink and stormed out of the room.

*

There was a hesitant knock at his office door. He thought it might be the department secretary, so he waved his door open without a second thought.

“Er—hi...”

Draco snapped his head up to see Hermione teetering over the threshold of his door. They hadn’t interacted at work since being married.

“What’re you doing here?” he demanded. *How does she know where my office is?*

“I came to...apologise. Can I come in?” she asked shyly.

Draco gave her the stink eye, but nodded. He knew he was being overly dramatic—she was right after all. He had done terrible things to her. Things he strived over and over again to forget. Things he wished he had never said or done. Things he wished he could make up to her.

She crossed into his tiny office and shut the door. She cast a silencing charm without asking. Had she asked, she would have found out that it wasn't necessary since he already had extensive wards in place. She took a seat in one of his expensive chairs across from him. Draco moved a stack of papers so that it was easier to see her.

Hermione looked around curiously before finally bringing her attention to him. "I'm sorry for what I said this morning."

"Great. Bye." It was too harsh, but he was barely keeping his walls up as it was and could not handle reliving his shitty past.

She shot him a dirty look. "I wasn't done."

Draco rolled his eyes. This woman would never stop talking. He felt a slight burn on his ring finger and realised that she must have been annoyed with him. *Nice of her to install this mood ring so that I can never avoid her wrath.*

"I know that it was incredibly insensitive to say that. Obviously, you regret those decisions, we all knew you did even back then. I mean, I even spoke for you at your trial. But it's hard to think about you as my husband, my life partner, while remembering the fact that you were a racist bully," she said candidly.

Draco felt all the air leave his lungs. "I know." Any anger he had was quickly replaced by a pity party.

She deflated, clearly expecting him to retaliate. "Oh. Good."

Draco, still upset, found himself saying, "But you're not really trying either."

"Yes, I—"

"No, you're not. We promised to try not to hate each other. I've been nothing but nice, accommodating even. Hell, we live with your cat. You on the other hand have been nothing but antagonistic and suspicious."

Hermione crossed her arms. "I disagree. I have also been nice."

"Yeah, and at every turn it's clear in your eyes, and your behaviour that you hate me."

She seemed taken aback. "I don't hate you."

He was pleased to hear her say those words. "Fine. Maybe not hate. But you don't trust that I'm trying to be nice. To be better." Draco huffed.

“I’m sorry about this morning,” she said again, this time more heartfelt. Hermione’s eyes wandered around his office. “We’re not getting a divorce.”

“What?” Draco’s brain tried to switch gears from his pity party to the status of their marriage.

She scrunched her face. “I went to Kingsley’s this morning and demanded to see the spells used to determine the compatibility and...they did consider history. There is even a section that predicts how likely we are to forgive one another and get over our history...And I demanded to see ours...and we’re really high,” she said in a quiet voice. “I think he said we’re the highest match in the program...”

Draco’s lip twitched in an almost smile. He was suddenly consumed by the need to see their test results. “How high?”

Hermione bit her lip. “98%” she admitted.

Draco look at her, intrigued. “98% likely to get over our past or 98% compatibility match?”

She sighed and pulled a scroll from her pocket. She tossed it onto his overcrowded desk. “I made a copy when Kingsley wasn’t looking,” she explained. “The results are not supposed to be available to anyone outside of his department.”

Draco read the results.

Category	Compatibility
Communication	86%
Core Values	93%
Sexual Desires	99%
Romantic Values and Desires	98%
Aspirations	95%
Partnership	98%
Family Values	96%
Political Values	92%

Social Values 93%

Category	Likelihood of Success
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Magical Offspring	99%
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Previous History	98%
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His eyes halted on sexual desires multiple times. Everything they had was within the 90s, except for communication, which honestly felt very fair.

Hermione's shoulders sagged and she continued, "I don't know, Malfoy. It seems like I actually will not be able to get them to reconsider this marriage law. They have planned to open up individual petitions in six months time, which I actually find reasonable but based off of what everyone's saying, no one wants to contest it. I mean look at Ron and Pansy. They're well on their way to being in love." She was rather dejected.

Draco felt his palms sweating, but he asked anyway, "Is it so bad that we're married?" His eyes lingered on their scores before bringing them back to her wide brown eyes.

Hermione looked into his eyes for a moment before dropping his and blushing fiercely. "I just...you must know that it's wrong to force people together and require that they have children. Fundamentally, that's wrong."

Draco conceded she was right, but could not find it in him to agree. So far, their marriage had been a far cry from terrible, at least in his opinion.

They sat in silence for a while.

Finally; "Well, we have at least five months and three weeks left together, Malfoy. I know when I'm fighting a losing battle...I'm not going to give up, but I have to think of a different way of approaching this." Draco nodded. Knowing that they had almost six months together made him want to smile. "I'm going to keep reading. You don't have to if you—"

"I'll keep researching too," he cut in quickly, looking forward to sharing his research with her, really for any excuse to start up a conversation with her.

"So, I'm sorry," she said again. "About this morning, and about not being able to get us out of this marriage." She took back the scroll of their test results.

“Granger,” he began to say, but she cut him off.

“And I was thinking...I mean, it’s Friday now.”

His eyes snapped to hers and he immediately felt his desire perk up. “Meaning?” he asked carefully.

“They did get sexual compatibility right,” she started speaking faster, “and since we will definitely be split up in six months, I don’t see much point in waiting the two months, and once a week was the agree—”

Draco was around the desk and pulling her into a fierce kiss before she could finish her sentence. She responded in kind, rising to her feet to meet his intensity. Then she was pushing him onto his desk, sending papers flying as she scrambled onto his lap. Draco’s heart raced. Their lips reconnected, his hands going down to grip her round bottom. Hermione rocked against him hungrily, making him start to harden against her. He sighed into her kiss and slid a hand into her shirt. The feeling of his hand on her chest must have spooked her because she was suddenly climbing off of him and retreating to the door, her face flushed and shirt rumpled.

Draco flexed his vow hand; the tingling desire that was there from the ceremony had returned for a moment. He saw her doing the same thing.

“We—” she cleared her throat and tried again, “We shouldn’t do this here. I—I’ll see you at home.”

She hightailed it out of there, slamming his door behind her.

Draco took a long time to collect his breath and calm himself. He wasn’t entirely sure what had just happened, but it seemed like they were definitely going to be having some fun that evening.

I knew she couldn’t resist me, he thought smugly.

Chapter End Notes

I hope the compatibility chart formatting didn't mess up. The preview made it seem readable, but I'm not sure how it will turn out on mobile format. Let me know :D

Obligations

Chapter Notes

A nice long chapter for you. As promised, things basically stay R-rated from this point out. Their emotional relationship takes a LOT longer to develop. And even then, Hermione...she is just in denial. I feel like I've said this many times at this point, but I just was to emphasize, it is a long haul.

Also, things get more into the kink realm as the chapters progress. Mind the tags.

Friday, April 2

Hermione was pacing before their front door in a flowy evening dress. Her hair was pulled slightly away from her face and she was even wearing some makeup. She was still flustered from that afternoon and her impromptu trip to Malfoy's office. She couldn't believe that she did it. Normally, six months was nothing; she had only slept with Ron and Krum and had never had a one-night stand before Malfoy. She did, however, sometimes get up to a little less than PG things with her infrequent dates...However, the idea of living with Malfoy and not touching him for six months...

Hermione groaned in frustration when she checked the clock in the hallway. *Where is he?* As if sensing her annoyance—and perhaps he was thanks to the charms that she had put on his ring—he appeared before her, his robes swishing as he landed.

“Continuing our lovely routine, then?” he asked with a smirk, but he was shirking his cloak and briefcase quickly to make his way over to her.

Hermione held up a hand. “Not yet.”

Malfoy's eyes flashed. “You come over and tease me at work, and now you're not into it?”

Hermione frowned at him. “I didn't say I don't want to. The issue is that we were invited to drinks with friends and I said that we'd go, and since you work so damn late, we're running late.”

Malfoy crossed his arms. “You said yes to drinks with your friends?”

She shrugged. “I figured you might want to see Pansy or Blaise!”

Malfoy sighed. His eyes scanned her body, causing Hermione to flush deeply again. “Do I have to change?”

Hermione eyed him. “No, you look fine. C'mon, let's go.” She held out her hand to him.

Malfoy walked over and placed his hand in hers. They both felt a spark of magic spring between them as they joined vow hands. Hermione was going to have to ask Ginny when that went away. Their eyes met briefly a nanosecond before Hermione spun them into nothingness.

*

“Tonight,” Hermione said to Ginny.

Ginny smiled broadly. “Good. Might as well enjoy while you can.”

Hermione giggled with her; she had had a few drinks. “Can you believe Ron and Pansy?”

Ginny pulled a face. “They’re worse than Ron was with Lavender, if that’s possible. How is it that you two were perfectly normal?”

Hermione shrugged. “Probably something to do with the fact that we never loved each other that way.”

Hermione and Ron had been promiscuous, but there was never the passion that she was currently witnessing between her former lover and his new wife. When she and Ron were together it was based on sexual need, not desire for the other. Therefore, they never really had any sort of PDA, since neither really felt the urge to be with the other. In fact, they slept together infrequently, only succumbing when one of their needs couldn’t be put off any longer.

“Well, watching them is nauseating—Oh, hello, Mr. Granger,” Ginny said upon seeing Malfoy approaching.

He gave her a look. “I’m still a Malfoy.”

Ginny waved him off as if it made no difference. “Sure, whatever you say, Granger. Hold the howler, what’s that on your finger?” Ginny stared obnoxiously at his engagement ring.

Malfoy stiffly held out his hand. He clearly wanted to show it off, but wanted to look manly and as if he didn’t care about it at the same time. Ginny took his hand to examine it, but quickly pulled her hand back in pain. Malfoy likewise looked like he had just been stung.

“What the hell kind of spells did you put on that, Hermione?” she demanded.

Hermione shrugged innocently. “A few.”

Ginny began laughing, but Malfoy looked concerned. This caused Ginny and Hermione to break into more laughter.

“This isn’t funny, Granger,” he complained.

Hermione just laughed harder.

“Okay, I’m off,” Ginny stated after seeing Harry falling asleep in the corner of the bar.

Hermione pulled her into a hug. “Make sure Harry gets some sleep tonight, Gin,” Hermione teased with an eyebrow raise—the poor man was over-worked, after all.

Ginny smirked. “Fine, but he’ll have to make up for it tomorrow after practice.”

Hermione chuckled and waved goodbye to her friend. She turned her attention back to Malfoy. He was still staring at his ring warily.

“What else did you put on this ring, Granger? I can’t even hold the hand of another woman?”

Hermione shrugged. “I don’t see why you would need to.”

“What about if I have to shake someone’s hand at work?”

“That’s a different situation than giving your hand to a married woman to admire,” she responded.

“You’re insane.”

Hermione tilted her head. “Is that really something you want to be saying to someone who you want to share a bed with tonight?”

Malfoy’s expressions transformed in a heartbeat and he was suddenly very close to her face. “Let’s get out of here,” he insisted, taking her arm.

“Wait!” she protested, but she was being squished into nothingness.

Hermione reappeared, breathless, a second later. Malfoy was already on her, and she had no time to complain. His mouth crashed against hers in a way that made her question whether or not she was actually bleeding. But she was too distracted to care. Malfoy pushed her into the wall, shoving his hands into her hair. Hermione groaned when he pushed her harder against the wall, showing her just how excited he was.

“We should find a surface that isn’t this wall,” she suggested when he took a break from her mouth.

Malfoy nodded, but returned to shoving his tongue into her mouth instead of moving. Not that she was upset, but given how high up her dress had crawled, she pushed him away forcefully.

“Yours or mine?” he asked.

Hermione was dying to see his room again, and wanted an excuse to escape after-sex cuddling by returning to her room, so she said, “Yours.”

Malfoy grabbed her hand and tugged her down the hallways impatiently. Once in front of his door, he waved his wand in such a complicated fashion that she thought he was just pretending by the end, but it finally swung open. He ushered her inside and slammed the door behind her, muttering something about an orange fur monster. Malfoy pushed her into the massive room and began stripping off his clothing.

Hermione was side-tracked by how expansive the room was. She tried to take in as many details as possible, but was quickly distracted by a fully naked husband—he did that fast. He turned her so that he could unzip the back of her dress. He pulled her dress off of her body, trailing kisses along her back as he went. Hermione shuddered under his touch. He wasted no time in unhooking her bra and going to tug off her underwear. Hermione stopped him and brought a hand up to cover her naked breasts.

Malfoy looked at her in confusion. “Please don’t tell me you want to stop.”

Hermione eyed his naked form and knew decidedly that she did not want to stop. She did, however, feel self-conscious.

“Maybe we can...lower the lights,” she mumbled.

Malfoy seemed surprised. “You have nothing to be self-conscious of, Granger, you’ve got a great body.” His eyes trailed a hot path over her naked flesh.

Hermione smiled when he said that, but it didn’t magically solve all of her self-esteem issues. “Thanks...But I would still prefer...” Her face was red with embarrassment.

Malfoy stared at her for a second, then located his wand on the floor and lowered the lights with a careless flick, leaving classic mood lighting instead. He approached her with his wand.

“Contraception charm?” he asked.

Hermione nodded and he cast it fluidly then placed his wand on the table beside his massive bed.

In the semi-darkness, Hermione felt more comfortable. Malfoy sat down on the bed, not a care in the world that he was stark naked and hard as rock. He gestured for her to join him.

“I can hardly see your perfect body now, Granger,” he complained. “Get over here.”

Hermione flushed when he called her perfect. She shuffled toward him awkwardly and he pulled her arms away from her chest to place her onto his lap. Malfoy kissed her again and she was quickly distracted from her self-consciousness. Hermione started rocking against him and sighing. Then he was playing with her breasts. Hermione groaned as his tongue flicked across her nipples. She definitely wasn’t thinking about what he thought about her body then.

Malfoy rolled them over and made his way down her body. He looked up at her once he reached her underwear. The absolutely feral look in his eyes did nothing to quell Hermione’s desire. Hermione lifted her butt so that he could tug off her panties and toss them over his shoulder. He spread her legs and settled himself between them. His hands ran up and down her backs of her thighs while he surveyed the sight before him.

“Gorgeous,” he mumbled and her toes curled. Then lowered his head to her core.

She moaned loudly as he began licking at her folds leisurely, paying particular attention to her clit. His fingers slid into her, matching the calm pace of his tongue, the frenzy of a few

minutes ago long forgotten. Malfoy glanced up at her a few times and his arched eyebrow made her throw her head back in desire and spasm around him in an almost mini-orgasm.

He diligently kept licking at her clit, caressing it so sensually that she felt ruined. He brought his spare hand to her hips and held her against the bed because she had started to buck against his face.

Draco removed his fingers and laved his tongue up and down the length of her again, thrusting into her with surprising depth. He inhaled deeply, then pulled his tongue from inside of her and kissed her clit. Hermione trembled and writhed.

“You taste phenomenal,” he growled before latching directly onto her clit again. His fingers entered her brusquely and he suckled on her with determination.

“Fuck! *Draco!*” Hermione cried.

“That’s my girl,” he coaxed before latching onto her again.

She was shrieking again without realising, her hand curled around his 1000 thread count sheets, the other in his soft hair, holding him in place. She felt the tension snap in her lower abdomen and she was jerking about wildly, crying out “Draco!”

Malfoy had to hold her down so that she didn’t break his face. But he didn’t move from between her legs, milking out her orgasm for as long as it would go.

When Hermione finally let go of the sheets and his hair, her fingers hurt from clenching for so long. Malfoy crawled up her body to lay beside her as she recovered.

“You liked that, didn’t you?” he murmured into her ear.

Hermione felt a flash of heat to her core as he spoke to her in that tone. Hermione nodded, incapable of speech. He slowly licked his fingers clean while Hermione watched, unable to look away.

“You want more?” he asked in that same tone. Hermione actually squeezed her legs together in desire. “I’ll take that as a yes,” he chuckled and went to kiss her.

“Urgh, clean your mouth first,” she complained.

Malfoy stared at her. “You didn’t care last time.”

“Last time, I was drunk.”

“Found your voice again, I see,” he teased in that dark voice of his.

Hermione smiled. “We’re not kissing again until you’ve scourgified your mouth.”

Malfoy shrugged. “No matter.”

He, instead, brought her nipple into his mouth until she let out a groan. Hermione's hands lazily wandered over his shoulders and back while he latched at her breasts. Draco suddenly picked her up and put her on all fours. She panted as her core throbbed in anticipation. He lined himself up and slid into her without further ado. Hermione groaned in pleasure, her vow hand heating up again. He gripped her hips tightly and began pounding into her. His first stroke so hard she moved forward half a foot on the bed. Hermione placed a hand against his headboard and pushed back into him, gasping in pleasure.

"So perfect," he muttered, hips snapping loudly against her own.

She cried out when his hand wrapped around her and landed on her overstimulated clit. She reasoned that he must be near the edge because he was insistently pressing on her clit as his hips pumped into her sporadically.

"C'mon," Malfoy muttered.

On instinct, Hermione reached back with her vow hand and he took it without hesitation. Seconds after their hands were connected, they were both coming loudly. Malfoy's orgasm was over before hers was, and he pulled out of her so that he could roll her over and watch her continue to come undone. He held tightly onto her hand, even kissing it a few times.

When Hermione had finally released his soft sheets, she felt slightly embarrassed by how long she had been coming for, not to mention the fact that he was watching her with a hungry expression. Malfoy moved in to kiss her.

"Hey! Clean your mouth," she protested weakly.

Malfoy rolled his eyes, but didn't kiss her. Instead, he kissed her vow hand again, then laid on his back and stared at his ceiling.

Hermione wished she knew where her wand was. She wanted to put some clothes on now that they weren't feverishly fucking. Malfoy was shuffling closer to her. She had to get out of there before he assumed she was spending the night.

"Same time next week?" Hermione asked awkwardly.

She felt Malfoy stiffen slightly. "If you can make it a week, Granger," he replied, but there was something off with his voice.

She shook it off and pried her hand from his; it seemed neither of them wanted to let go. Hermione climbed out of his house of a bed. She found her wand with her bra, near the door. She quickly shimmied into her dress and did up the zipper with a flick. Hermione made her way to the door. She glanced back to see Malfoy laying in the same position as before, his pale body nearly glowing in the moonlight.

"Night."

She closed the door behind her with a click and shuffled down the hall to her room. She had a quick shower, her eyes drooping in exhaustion. Hermione slept through the entire night for

the first time since moving in.

Saturday, April 3

Malfoy was already in the kitchen by the time she stumbled in, but it appeared that he hadn't been there for long, since he was adding cream to his coffee. Hermione blushed upon seeing him, unable to stop images from the night before from crowding her mind.

"Morning," she squeaked, then blushed harder, since she was unable to control her voice.

He glanced at her as if nothing had happened the night before. "Morning," he replied smoothly before returning his attention to the *Prophet* and his coffee.

Normally by the time she arrived, he had read most of the paper, but this time, she actually had to wait on him and she was unsurprisingly impatient. Hermione didn't realise she was tapping her nails on the table until he spoke.

"We might have to get another subscription to the *Prophet* if you're going to be like this every morning, Granger."

Hermione stopped tapping her nails and took another bite out of her toast. "Sorry," she apologised. "Usually, you're done by the time I get here."

"You've been getting up earlier." He looked up at her. "Sleeping better?"

Hermione tore her eyes away from his and forced the blush off of her face. "Yeah. I'm getting used to being here."

Malfoy tossed the paper at her and rose. "I'll get another subscription for you, so you don't have to wait." He left the kitchen smoothly.

Hermione dropped her head into her hands in embarrassment. *That man should not be allowed to be so sexy.*

Hermione busied herself with work all morning, no longer obsessed to finding a way out of the marriage law (she still planned to spend at least one day a week working on it), she suddenly had a lot of time to catch up on her actual job. Technically she was caught up, but her version of being caught up was being two weeks ahead.

Flopsy scared her by popping into her room at lunch time.

"Would Mrs. Malfoy like to take lunch with Mr. Draco?" Flopsy asked cordially.

"Miss Hermione," she corrected gently.

"Flopsy is sorry, Mrs. Hermione. Flopsy will remember next time."

Hermione smiled kindly. “Don’t worry, Flopsy. I would love to have lunch. Is he in the dining room or in the kitchen?” Hermione asked.

“Dining room, Mrs. Hermione.”

“Thank you, Flopsy,” she responded and headed that way.

Malfoy was seated beside the head of the table, clearly waiting for her and looking bored. He rose and crossed the room to her as she approached the table. “There you are, Granger.” He pulled out her chair and Hermione stared at him. “Are you going to sit or not?” he asked impatiently.

Hermione frowned but allowed him to tuck her into the table. Malfoy crossed back to his side of the table and sat. He watched her slowly take her fork before picking up his own impatiently and spearing his broccoli.

“Sorry to keep you waiting,” Hermione said after a moment of him eating his food quickly. Even though he was clearly starving, he still had an elegance to him while he ate rapidly.

Malfoy didn’t respond and didn’t seem to care that she was there anymore. Hermione sighed and began eating in the tense silence. It would seem that this was going to be the norm between them. When she had almost finished clearing her plate and he was again waiting on her impatiently—his pureblood upbringing not allowing him to leave until his wife had finished eating.

“I was thinking tomorrow we could compare notes on the marriage law books? I know it’s very unlikely to actually help with the law, but I would prefer to have as much knowledge as possible. We won’t need to work quite as hard, though, since it is unlikely we’ll find a solution before our six month mark is up.”

He nodded. “Yes, Sundays we can compare notes. That works for me.”

Hermione nodded. “Excellent.” She finished her plate of food. She glanced at him and brought up something that she had been thinking about since she had first moved in. “I would like to get you a phone.”

“One of your muggle rectangles,” he clarified.

“The very same. It would make it easier to communicate with one another. Then I can know when in the hell you’ll be home,” she mumbled the last part.

Malfoy quirked an eyebrow and steepled his fingers. Her eyes landed on his rings. “Why do you want to know when I’m home so badly, Granger?”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Sorry for wanting to eat dinner with someone!” she huffed, her anger making her feel less vulnerable. “This is an enormous flat, if you haven’t noticed, and a bit lonely at times. But—whatever.” She pushed away from her plate and stormed off to her room.

Hermione looked around for her beaded bag so that she could apparate over to the local mall (she had wanted to visit a few other stores) when she heard a knock on her open door. Malfoy was standing there.

“What?” she demanded.

“We’re not doing so well at the attempting to be friends thing, are we?” he said, walking into her room casually.

Hermione glanced around at the scattered books and clothing and immediately wished she had locked her door. He didn’t seem to notice them though, and walked right up to her.

“Sorry.”

Hermione stared at him. It was very strange to hear him apologise so easily.

“I said sorry,” he restated.

Hermione frowned. “Okay...?”

“Okay...Aren’t we going shopping?”

Hermione smiled despite herself. “You’ll get a phone?”

Malfoy shrugged. “I like to shop. We’ll see what happens.”

Hermione smiled broadly. “Okay, let’s go to the front and I’ll apparate us there.”

Malfoy followed her silently. She took his hand in the foyer and turned on the spot, transporting them into a permanently out of service accessible bathroom stall.

“The toilets?” he questioned with distaste.

Hermione shrugged. “No one sees us this way. Although, this is the women’s so you might get yelled at.” She shrugged again and led him out into the crowded mall without incident.

Within seconds he was moving away from her and toward a diamond store.

“Malfoy, we’re going to the electronics store.”

He waved her off. “I thought your birthday was soon.”

“Not ‘til September. You’re before me.”

“I didn’t know you knew when my birthday was. Been reading up on me, wife?”

Hermione stopped herself from flushing. “It was on the compatibility tests.”

Malfoy ignored her and entered the shop anyway. He stopped in front of the row of diamonds that weren’t set into rings yet. He was eyeing an unpolished one.

“You already have a ring, Malfoy. Besides, you like the one I got you.”

“I never said I like it.”

“Your face did.”

He didn't reply and instead pointed at the diamond that he liked. An attendant materialized from nowhere and within seconds Malfoy was handling the diamond with a small smile on his face.

“What do you want that for?”

He shrugged. “They're cheaper at muggle stores.”

“I'm not buying you a ridiculously large diamond for your birthday,” Hermione stated, impatient to look at phones.

He shrugged again. “We'll see.” To the attendant he said, “Please put this aside under Malfoy. I'll be back next week once my pay's in.”

Hermione scoffed. “As if you don't have enough—”

Malfoy cut her off. “Now, darling, let's go to that women's clothing shop, you absolutely need new undergarments.”

Hermione crossed her arms and got ready to argue with him, but he cut her off by grabbing onto her hand and pulling her into a lingerie shop.

“Have at her, Granger. I'll meet you here in twenty minutes, since I assume you're a sensible shopper.”

Hermione frowned at his retreating figure. She didn't like being told that she needed new underwear. As a result, she found herself buying the most granny-type undies in the store along with unflattering bras, just to show him. She may or may not have also bought a negligée or two in addition to one or two frilly scraps of fabric, but the jury's out on that one. True to his word, Malfoy was back within twenty minutes. He met her at the cash and intercepted her using her regular muggle card with his own black one.

“Malfoy,” she grumbled as he tapped his card efficiently.

He threw her a wink in response. Instead of getting into another public domestic over money, she snatched up her bags and walked from the store in a huff. He followed her.

“Can you tuck this into your tiny purse for me?” he asked. “I don't want to carry it.” He was holding a bag from a designer clothing store a few doors down.

Hermione frowned at him—she did that a lot around him. “No, we're in public. Carry your own things.”

He tried peering into her bags, but she moved them away from him. “You’ll just have to wait and see,” she said teasingly.

He grinned and she smirked back, excited to wear her unflattering undergarments in front of him.

“What did you get?” she asked as they exited the shop and headed toward the electronics store.

Malfoy eyed her. “If you won’t show me, I’m not showing you.”

Hermione huffed at him.

“Okay, Malfoy, you don’t need anything fancy,” she was telling him as his eyes roamed over the latest smartphones. “So, be practical with your purchases.” He definitely wasn’t listening as his eyes zeroed in on the most expensive phone in the entire store.

“You definitely don’t need that one,” she said.

Malfoy waved her off. “Go browse, I’m going to talk to this attendant.” Malfoy got the woman’s attention and she began rattling off details to him.

Hermione narrowed her eyes and felt a spark of jealousy while Malfoy listened to the woman raptly. Hermione saw him flinch, look at his ring, then look at her briefly. She smiled smugly, at least he knew that she was displeased.

Malfoy purchased not one, but two of the most expensive phones on earth.

“Why two?”

“Because I’m not coming back here anytime soon when the first one breaks.”

Hermione frowned at his extravagance, but let it go. He could waste his money if he wanted to.

She was not looking forward to teaching him how to use his new technology. And she was right; an hour later and they were still shouting at each other about where on the screen to press in order to add contacts.

“I told you not to get a fancy phone!” she shouted.

Malfoy smirked. “Just imagine, if I got a normal phone, we would never have spent all this time yelling at one another.”

“Mr and Mrs.,” Flopsy greeted with a crack. “Dinner is served.”

“Saved by the house elf,” Hermione muttered and left the office to head toward the dining room.

Malfoy followed behind her, walking into a wall occasionally as he got used to his new phone. They ate dinner in their usual silence, except this time Malfoy was also playing with his phone the whole time.

“Do you have to do that while we eat?” Hermione complained.

“Would you rather I be bored as well as sit in complete silence?”

Hermione huffed and went back to eating. She was beyond annoyed with him. Before the wedding and during the honeymoon he had seemed to be warming up to her and her to him, now they were back in where they started—at each other’s throats.

“Fine,” Malfoy said and put his phone down. Comically, seconds later a loud notification sound went off.

“Who on earth is sending you messages?” Hermione asked.

Malfoy shrugged and she immediately felt a wave of unprovoked jealousy. He gasped and shot his eyes up to meet hers.

“This whole burning me with my engagement ring thing is getting old fast, Granger.”

Hermione flushed, but held her head high. “Stop being a prat, then.”

“Blaise,” he responded to her question.

“Oh.” Hermione’s raging jealousy calmed.

Malfoy glanced at his ring. “Thank Merlin for that.”

“What’s Blaise saying?” she asked.

“Asking if you’ve driven me mental yet.”

Hermione glared at him. “I’m going to my room. Good night.”

She heard him cast a spell to send their dishes to clean themselves and she couldn’t help but feel proud of him.

Back in her room, Hermione warded her door and tried on her purchases. She hadn’t had the opportunity given the short timeline that he had given her. She decided that she quite liked her new sexy lingerie and wore it around her room with her silk robe. She curled up with a book in her reading nook in front of her window overlooking London. The cup of tea that Flopsy had brought her had cooled when she heard a knock at her door.

Hermione secured her robe snugly and wished that it was longer. She opened her door to see Malfoy standing there in only pyjama bottoms. She stared at his chest while restraining her desire to drool. She hadn’t really seen his chest naked, far too distracted or drunk the few times he had been disrobed around her. His chest was rather firm and chiseled, mostly hairless, and lined in white scars from Harry’s sectumsempra. Her eyes landed on his Dark

Mark that was covered in colourful flowers. She decided she quite liked the addition and would have to ask him about it one day.

“Yes?” she asked finally.

He didn't say anything, merely stepped forward and lowered his head to hers. They were kissing deeply before Hermione was able to form a coherent thought. His hands settled on her silky robe and pulled her closer to him bodily. She sighed into his heated kiss. Malfoy pulled apart first and she followed him before she realised he was stopping the kiss.

“What do you say?” he asked with a raised eyebrow.

Hermione knew that they were entering into dangerous territory here; they were only supposed to sleep with each other once a week. It had barely been 24 hours and here they both were. Despite this, she nodded slowly.

“Excellent.” Malfoy offered his hand to her and pulled her to his room.

He closed the door just as quickly as last time, perhaps he was afraid she would change her mind, more likely, he didn't want Crookshanks to wander inside.

He descended on her, pushing her toward the bed clumsily while untying her robe.

“Holy, Granger. I didn't think you'd actually buy sexy clothes,” he muttered, his eyes roving over her body.

Hermione flushed happily. “You weren't supposed to see these ones,” she responded.

His hands traced her frame slowly, his eyes molten. “I'll consider myself lucky, then.”

He pushed her robe to the floor and pulled her toward the bed. Hermione shrieked when he pushed her onto the bed without warning. Malfoy smirked before climbing up her body and reattaching their mouths. He pressed into her insistently making her groan. Malfoy's mouth nipped at her neck, likely leaving bruises.

Hermione rolled them over, Malfoy willingly giving her control. Hermione tugged her sexy lingerie off impatiently. She wasted no time in impaling herself on him, moaning in delight as she sunk to the hilt. Malfoy's hands came to her hips as he bit his lip. Hermione began to ride him with conviction.

“Fuck, Granger,” he groaned as she bounced on him.

Hermione groaned in delight at the delicious feeling of fullness with each pass of her hips.

His molten eyes kept flickering from hers to her breasts and their connected bodies and back again. The more he looked at her, the more self-conscious she got of how misshapen her breasts were, that she had a weirdly shaped clit, that she smelled bad because her deodorant had worn off. Hermione slowed her movements to a near standstill and his eyes snapped up to hers again.

“What?” he asked, his breath coming out in huffs.

“Nothing, just...maybe we could do you on top.”

Malfoy shrugged as if it didn't affect him either way. He rolled them over and began kissing her again as he started up a rhythm with his hips. Hermione ran her hands up and down his muscled back and wrapped her legs around his hips. She writhed beneath him with each snap of his determined hips, her climax approaching.

He dropped his head beside her ear, unable to keep up their kiss as he neared the edge.

“So hot,” he mumbled in her ear as he thrust faster. Hermione groaned in response.

His hips began to jerk erratically as he approached his end. Hermione felt herself close, but could tell that he was going to get there long before she did. Just as she was thinking this, however, he grasped her wrist and gently kissed it. Hermione saw stars and came with him. She may have shouted out his first name in pleasure, but she would deny it to the grave.

He rolled off of her and stared at his ceiling while they both caught their breath. Their hands stayed connected for a long time. Malfoy disconnected them first this time.

“Same time next week?” he asked.

Hermione smiled and looked over at the smug expression on his face. “If you can last that long,” she parroted back to him.

*

Sunday, April 4

The following day Hermione got her period. It was a relief because she realised that the night before they had foolishly forgotten to cast the spell. So, after downing a pain potion, she went to the apothecary to pick up a contraception potion. The man behind the counter gave her a curious look, since everyone was going off their contraception at the moment, as per the Ministry decree.

She downed the potion as soon as she got home, despite having her period. Then, she went to confront Malfoy about being an idiot and not casting the charm.

She banged on his door loudly. It was odd that he hadn't woken yet. It took him almost a full minute to answer.

Malfoy answered the door, eyes half closed, hair askew, wearing only briefs. “S wrong?” he muttered, trying to flatten his hair.

Hermione glared at him. “What's wrong, you idiot, is that you didn't cast the contraception spell last night.”

Malfoy's eyes widened. “Fuck.” His sleepiness disappeared in a heartbeat.

“Yeah. That’s the correct response.”

“Shit. Well.” He thought for a moment. “It’s fine. I can brew you a potion right now. We’ll be fine.” He looked harried and turned around, glancing about his room absentmindedly.

“I already took care of it. Don’t be such an idiot in the future,” she scolded. “And last night was a mistake. Once a week was the agreement. Which brings us to next Saturday now.”

Draco looked horrified by this assertion. “But…”

Hermione crossed her arms. “And why are you still asleep, it’s nearing lunchtime.” She turned on her heel and left.

Hermione felt slightly guilty for being so short with him, but she didn’t care that much. She spent the rest of the day in bed watching *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and resolutely ignoring Malfoy.

Flopsy asked her if she was coming to dinner, but Hermione let her know that she was going to be skipping it. Moments later, Malfoy was banging on her door. Hermione rolled her eyes, and opened the door with a lazy flick of her wand. She peered over her laptop from her bed and looked at him. He looked worse for wear.

“You alright?” she asked.

Malfoy ruffled his hair and walked inside the room slowly, as if waiting for her to kick him out. Hermione held her uterus as a particularly painful cramp hit her. Malfoy’s eyes traced her hand and widened.

“Oh, calm down, I’m not pregnant. I’m on my period.”

Malfoy let out a breath. “Why’re you avoiding me?” he asked awkwardly from the middle of the room.

Hermione frowned. “I’m not.”

“Well…you’re not coming to dinner.”

“Yeah, because I have cramps and want to lay in bed alone.”

Malfoy blinked rapidly. “Oh.”

“Besides, I’m never hungry the first day, I just feel nauseous.”

Malfoy scratched at the back of his head uncomfortably. “Okay.” They descended into silence. Then, “What’s that?” He was pointing at her laptop.

“My laptop.” He looked confused. “It’s a small computer.” He still looked confused. “It’s more muggle magic.” He looked more confused. Hermione sighed. She sat up slightly. “Come, look.”

Malfoy hesitantly made his way to her bed and sat primly beside her. His awkwardness made her feel even more awkward. They could shag each other's brains out no problem, but the second they weren't, apparently, they could barely even maintain eye contact.

Hermione pressed play on Fresh Prince and watched as Malfoy jumped back in shock. "It's like a little TV?"

"Kind of."

He reached for the keyboard and pressed a button hesitantly. He jumped back when the show paused. "So, what's this show that you're watching, then?" he asked, pressing the button again and starting it up.

"The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."

Malfoy raised an eyebrow. "What?"

Hermione laughed. "It's funny, trust me." She adjusted herself on the bed so that he could lean against the headboard beside her. "Just watch."

Malfoy climbed over her legs and sat beside her, snagging some of her throw blanket. Hermione was hyper aware of him at her side, his heat warming her. He was immediately enraptured, and even laughed a few times, but most of the jokes were too muggle or Black and went over his head. They watched a surprising amount of the show together, and when Malfoy's stomach growled, they both descended to the ground and magicked their dinner to them; Hermione didn't like food in bed. She ate a few small bites. After eating, they migrated back to the bed, continuing the Will Smith marathon.

*

Hermione had fallen asleep on his shoulder. She was snoring adorably, but would occasionally stop breathing and screw up her face in pain, then grab at her lower stomach. He would never understand how strong women had to be in order to deal with this on a monthly basis. Draco couldn't bring himself to leave her bed, so under the pretense of watching the oddly amusing show, he stayed. She eventually snuggled up to him entirely, her head on his chest, a leg thrown over his waist. Draco realised that he ought to vacate her bed before he too fell asleep—and thus had to deal with her wrath in the morning. He gently placed the laptop on her side table, but didn't know how to turn it off, so he left it as it was. Then he went to sidle out from under her, but she was awake.

"Hey," she mumbled tiredly.

"Is it always this bad?" he asked.

Hermione shrugged, but clutched at her stomach. "I could take more pain potion, but I don't like to rely on potions. Besides, it's usually only the first day that sucks this hard."

Draco nodded as if he understood, but she was clearly insane for not taking medicine that would literally put her out of her pain. He had a crazy idea then. Even though he had spent

the better part of three hours as her pillow, he wanted nothing more than to keep touching her.

Before he could back out of it, he said, "I could give you a back massage."

Hermione tilted her head up to look at him. "That would be lovely."

Draco couldn't believe his luck. She was rolling over and pulling up her shirt to reveal her smooth dark skin. He thanked her fatigue for working in his favour. Draco gingerly straddled her legs, rubbed together his hands to warm them up, and got to work.

Hermione sighed contentedly as his hands traversed her back. He started at her lower back, but didn't limit himself to it, he explored everywhere, pushing her shirt up over her shoulders. Hermione didn't protest or attempt to stop him. In fact, he was pretty sure that she had fallen asleep. He admired the curve of her breast that was visible and even slowed down, dangerously close to touching it. Instead, he brought his hands back to her lower back and gently removed them from her. He tugged down her shirt, waking her up.

"Thanks," she mumbled almost incoherently. Her breathing slowed down and he knew that she had fallen asleep again.

Draco climbed off of her, pulled the covers over her and left the room. He went straight into his shower and imagined that massage ending in a different way, there were a lot less clothes involved. When he was towelling off later, he realised that they were making progress as friends; they had spent the entire evening together. He knew he hadn't been much of a help on the becoming friends front, but something about being around her either made him say the wrong thing or silenced him for fear of saying the wrong thing.

Draco's heart warmed thinking of how easily she had spooned him and he wished she would do the same after they made love.

He shook his head at that thought. They weren't making love, they were *fucking*, as per their contractual obligation. He couldn't wait until they were once again obligated. Saturday was so fucking far away.

*

Friday, April 9

Draco saw Hermione sitting in the cafeteria and decided to say hello. They hadn't spent much time together after that Sunday night massage. Her pain had made her nicer toward him and once the first day of hell was over, she was back to being simply tolerant of his presence. Draco didn't know what to do about this, because when he upped his charm, she didn't flirt back. Instead, she had given him a strange look before disappearing to the Ministry, claiming the need to get in early to prepare for a meeting.

It was currently Friday, meaning that 24 hours separated him from having mind-blowing sex. He had been looking forward to it literally all week, to the point that he was masturbating thrice daily. Living with her and not being able to touch her was proving to be challenging.

To make matters worse, she was working later than him all week, and locked in her room once she got home.

“Granger,” he greeted as he sat across from her. “I thought you ate lunch in your office.”

Hermione shrugged. “I forgot to pack lunch this morning and didn’t feel like apparating home.”

Draco found this odd, as apparition was very convenient. He filed this under something to think about later. “Any plans tonight?” he asked.

Hermione shrugged. “Ron and Pansy invited us over, but I said no.”

Draco frowned. “Why?”

“Because I assumed that you didn’t want to spend the evening with Ron, nor watch him exchange DNA with Pansy.” She made a face causing Draco to smile briefly.

“I wouldn’t mind hanging out with Pansy,” he countered.

Hermione eyed him briefly and he felt a spark in his ring. It was the first time it had been active all week, apart from a faint heat that wouldn’t go away (he thought that he was imagining the heat for a long time until he got Blaise to feel it. He confirmed that it was in fact emitting heat). Draco smirked; she was a very jealous witch. She clearly didn’t find Pansy all that threatening though, because the spark came and went quickly.

“Fine. I’ll text Ron now.”

Draco pulled out his own phone before she could fumble around in her purse. “I got it, keep eating. I haven’t seen you eat all week and I am not convinced that you have been.” Draco tried to keep his face even, only realising too late how him being concerned about her diet might betray his feelings—not that he had feelings per se...

Hermione tilted her head curiously. “Sorry I’ve missed dinner. I finally finished the Auror mobile phone project and I’m now wrapped up in how to implement computers in the Ministry...”

It took Draco a moment to remember that computers were just mini TVs. “Why do you want people to watch TV at work?” he wondered. He tapped out a message to Pansy while he talked, he had gotten rather adept at texting over the past week. He texted Blaise, Pansy and Theo frequently in their group chat, The Snakes. Once both Blaise and Draco had a phone it was easy to convince the others of their utility.

“They do more than play videos,” Hermione responded. “You can type instead of writing things by hand, just like with your smart phone.”

“Smart phone?”

“The thing in your hands. Honestly, you own and use muggle technology daily and you don’t even know what it’s called.”

Draco felt like an idiot, not because he didn't know what it was called—who cared about that—but because he forgot that he could have been texting her all this time. He didn't even know her number. He could have been charming her and had been wasting good time. He only had five and half months to get her on board with this marriage, and knowing Hermione, that was not a lot of time.

“Anyway, figuring out a spell that makes them work in the Ministry is a headache.”

“Huh?” he asked, reading Pansy's reply.

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Can you look at me? You're worse than teenagers.”

Draco narrowed his eyes, not liking being compared to a teenager. “Sorry, what did you say?”

Hermione grabbed her garbage and stood. “It's fine. Just text me the time we're heading over there. I'll be here late again.”

Draco stood and gently grabbed her wrist. “Wait.” He noticed a few people eyeing them.

“Malfoy, I don't have time for this. I'm working on a very complicated spell right now and ___”

“Let me help.”

Hermione looked taken aback. He wished she would stop looking so surprised whenever he showed common decency. Had he not proven himself to be a gentleman? His mind flashed to him pounding into her and wondering idly if that would be considered gentlemanly.

“I guess a second pair of eyes wouldn't hurt.”

Draco followed her to her office. Hermione closed the door behind him, not paying attention to him at all. He hadn't been to her office in a few weeks. He noticed that she had a new frame on her desk. It was them at their wedding, dancing. He smiled, surprised.

“The problem,” she began, pacing the small area, “Is that there is too much magic here. The spell that I came up with for phones was relatively easy because they're so small. But computers are much bigger and when I've tried to extend the spell size—it just fizzles. The spell I have for TVs won't quite work either because they don't require a complex spell like phones and computers do. Since TVs only have one function—which is why I developed the smart phone spell in the first place, but again, it is very complicated and requires...”

Draco just looked at her in confusion, so she launched into lecture mode and explained how every device had to have a spell on it that created a shield from magic, otherwise the devices could stop working at any moment. That explained why she had charmed his phone last weekend.

Hermione walked him through her notes thus far and showed a few of the spells that she had tried. Draco suggested that she cast an undetectable extension charm, but given their complexity, it didn't make sense.

“A protego won’t work?” he asked in frustration nearly an hour later.

“Seriously, Malfoy? I’ve been at this for a week and you think that I didn’t even try the most basic spell in the book?” Hermione huffed and plopped into her chair in defeat. “It’s been a week of dead ends. I’m going to go back to the library.”

She stood and left her office, muttering to herself. Draco was slow to follow her, still seated by the time she was out the door. The second she was outside of her door, Draco was magically thrown from the room. Hermione looked back at him at his groan of pain. She rushed back to his side.

“Sorry! I totally forgot I installed that ward... I’m just so tired and wrapped up in this stupid spell. Are you okay?”

She helped him to his feet, making their vow hands touch for the first time in a week. Not that he was counting the days. Draco frowned as he felt the faint heat in his ring grow ever so slightly.

Her hand left his as soon as he was back on his feet. “I’ll walk you to the lifts,” Hermione said, clearly not as affected as he was by their contact. She ignored him for the rest of their short trip together, instead opting to mutter under her breath about possible spells.

“You could always try the Manor again,” he suggested as they rode the lift in silence.

She looked at him. “Is there much work about muggles in the Manor?”

He scratched his neck. “Fair point. I would maybe actually avoid the Manor for that topic.” Draco coughed awkwardly.

He got off on his floor and she continued on to the Ministry library.

*

Draco was pacing in their front foyer. He almost felt like laughing at the role reversal. He had told her seven, but it was now ten past, and he was worried that she might have died somewhere because she was usually so punctual. Just as he was about to turn on the spot to find her in the Ministry, she appeared in front of him looking harried.

“Sorry!” she greeted. “Just give me a minute to clean up.”

“Clean up? We’re just going to see the ginger git and Pansy.” Hermione put her hands on her hips and his ring sparked at him. “I meant to say ‘Ron and Pansy,’” Draco corrected, wincing at the pain radiating from his ring finger.

“Better,” she stated, before hurrying off to her room.

Draco pulled out his phone and texted Pansy that they were on their way, since he assumed that they were trying to fit in a quickie before they got there and he wanted them to be finished before they arrived. The last thing that he wanted to see was the Weasel shagging his best mate.

Hermione appeared by his side a moment later, her hair pulled into a tight bun, a small amount of makeup on her face, and a simple dress hanging from her frame. Draco immediately wanted to push her up against the wall and tear her clothing off. Instead, he clenched his jaw.

Hermione misread his reaction. “Oh, is it...is it too much?” she asked.

Draco shook his head ‘no.’ “You look beautiful,” he said honestly. Although, he found her beautiful in most things, so this actually wasn’t saying much. Not that she knew that.

Hermione blushed and cleared her throat. “Well, let’s get going. They should be done shagging by now.”

Draco chuckled. “I thought the same thing.”

He held out his hand and she grasped it, reuniting their vow hands. Draco turned on the spot, transporting them to Pansy’s home. Given that Ron had lived in a small flat, the couple had opted to live in Pansy’s expansive home in Diagon Alley. They landed on her front steps. Hermione removed her hand from his and shivered slightly in the night air. Draco noticed her goosebumps before he realised he was staring at her exposed chest.

“I guess I’ll knock,” Hermione said when he did nothing.

Pansy appeared after a prolonged moment, her hair slightly unkempt. Ron was standing behind her, his hand on her waist. He moved to pull Hermione into a tight hug.

“Hermione!”

“Hey, Ron,” she greeted, hugging him back. Draco didn’t like this one bit, but couldn’t say much to stop it; Ron was her best friend.

Draco one-arm hugged Pansy briefly, walking into the house after her. Ron was immediately prattling on to Hermione about something that Percy had said, causing them both to break out in loud laughter.

Pansy led Draco into the kitchen and handed him a glass of alcohol. She straightened her hair finally. The other two could be heard in the living room laughing again.

“How’s it going, Drake?” Pansy asked cheekily.

Draco noticed dark love bites on her neck. He looked away. “Fine.”

“Uh-oh, I know that tone. Someone’s pent up.”

Draco sighed. He did want to complain to Pansy about this, it was why he had insisted that they come. But he also wanted to get plastered, which he was sure Pansy was definitely down for.

“I told you about the once-a-week rule.”

Pansy nodded. "And how you immediately turned it into a twice-a-week rule," she smirked.

Draco sighed and played with his engagement ring. He liked the feeling of the subtle heat on his fingers. It reminded him of Hermione. "Well, we're back to once a week. And I'm at my wit's end, Pansy." He lowered his voice. "Plus, she's been spending all day and night at work. I hardly even get to see her," he whined.

Pansy chuckled. "How is she so blind?"

"Huh?"

"You're clearly in love with her."

Draco went deathly pale and immediately looked at the door to make sure that she wasn't standing there. But the sound of her laughing at some weird locker-room story of Ron's was reassuringly far away.

"Can you lower your voice?" he hissed.

Pansy looked shocked. "I was just joking. But you actually are!"

"No, I'm not. Don't be—" but he was blushing and she was laughing at him.

"With Granger?" Then she shrugged. "I guess I'm with Ron though...Let me tell you, he is *so*—"

"Stop there, Pansy."

Pansy laughed. "I just like to make you blush," she teased. "Anyway, you'll want to know what I know. Ron's told me all about his and Hermione's time together. I can tell you what she likes," Pansy winked.

Draco pulled a face. "I don't need you to tell me what she likes."

Pansy shrugged. "You are a decent lover."

"I've improved since our days. Besides, with Granger and I it's like..." there was an odd silence coming from the living room. Draco looked over his shoulder. She was standing in the doorway. *How long has she been standing there?*

Draco was rather pink in the face. He wished his skin wasn't so damn light. He attempted to build his walls with some success, the blush slowing fading.

"Hermione!" Pansy greeted warmly. "I'm so glad we're getting to spend more time together. We barely even talked at the bachelorette party!"

Hermione eyed her and looked at Draco as if to see if Pansy was for real. Draco shrugged.

"I figure you and Ron are friends, which means we'll be friends by association. So, might as well try and get a jump on it. Want some wine?" Pansy asked. "Draco, same goes to you. Go

talk to my sexy husband.”

Draco pulled a face. “Please don’t make me.”

Pansy shot him a look, as did Hermione. Draco’s ring also started to burn. “Okay, I’ll go. Honestly, Granger, calm down.”

Draco left the kitchen hesitantly though, afraid of what Pansy was going to say to Hermione about him.

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Pansy seemed to genuinely want to know more about Hermione and kept asking her about her job and life in general. Hermione answered all her questions concisely.

Hermione stood in the kitchen awkwardly sipping her wine. “So, what do you do again, Pansy?”

Pansy leaned against her counter and sipped her wine. “I work at my family’s potion company. I’m in charge of advertising.”

“I—er—really enjoyed your wedding, it was very pretty.”

Pansy stared off into space. “It was rather nice, wasn’t it? Plus, the handfasting was a treat. We could barely make it into the closet,” she laughed to herself. “I can’t believe how long you and Draco lasted.”

Hermione flushed deeply and her vow hand twinged. “We—er—weren’t expecting the pull to be so strong...” Hermione was annoyed that Malfoy had told Pansy anything about their sex life, but she assumed that it was fair of him since she had spoken to Ginny.

“Neither were we, but why on earth did you continue to resist it?” she wondered.

Hermione shrugged. “Well, in my defense, I didn’t realise what a handfasting entailed.”

Pansy’s eyes widened. “Really?”

Hermione flushed.

Pansy frowned. “That must have been a shock for you,” she said carefully.

“Yeah...”

“But you wanted to sleep with him, right?” Pansy asked cautiously.

Hermione was quick to respond, “Yes! I mean—yeah. He actually asked in the garden if we were going to...” Hermione cleared her throat. She wondered briefly what Malfoy would have done if she told him that they would not consummate their marriage. She truly believed he wouldn’t have if she said so. “It just wasn’t—I mean, I didn’t plan on sleeping—”
Hermione thought on her choice of undergarments under her wedding dress. She knew she

was lying to herself if she tried to claim she hadn't wanted to sleep with Malfoy on their wedding night. She had just simply thought that it would have been the alcohol that let her inhibitions loose, not the vow. Hermione found herself admitting, "It wasn't unwanted...or even entirely unexpected that we would end up," she cleared her throat, "sharing a bed on our wedding night."

"Well, we all know what your compatibility scores are."

Hermione choked on her wine. "He told you?" She was annoyed by that.

Pansy leaned toward her on the kitchen island. "I wish. Draco's all, 'that's private, Pans,'" she imitated his deeper voice. "Anyway, I'm sorry no one told you the whole story about the handfasting...Draco's an ass for not making sure you knew the whole process. Don't worry, I'll hex him for you."

"I mean...it didn't change much anyway. Like I said, we would've ended up..." Hermione could not believe she was telling Pansy this. She had to stop drinking.

Instead, she drank more.

"I almost wish Ron and I waited, just to draw it out and be in an actual bed." Pansy laughed, her mind clearly reliving their closet time at their wedding. "Anyway, why are you denying how much you want Draco now?" Pansy asked, her unnerving gaze levelled on Hermione. "Once a week? That is a ridiculous rule."

Hermione scratched her arm awkwardly, her face aflame. "Uh..."

"Well, you won't last much longer anyway. Trust, that man can please a woman."

Hermione felt a swell of jealousy combined with self-consciousness. She knew that Pansy and Malfoy had shagged before, but how on earth could she compete with the woman in front of her?

"Just enjoy the sex while you can. Once you get pregnant, it's going to be a lot more difficult. You should try out all the adventurous positions now."

Hermione was flushing again. She was intensely uncomfortable with how candidly Pansy spoke. Luckily, Malfoy walked briskly into the kitchen. He went right to her and took her vow hand.

Ignoring Pansy completely he said, "Are you okay?"

Hermione felt her heart flutter. "Er... yeah."

"My ring..." he explained faintly, his eyes searching hers deeply. "Ow!" Malfoy shouted.

Pansy was lowering her wand. "That's for not telling her about the handfasting."

Malfoy looked between the two of them in disbelief. "How was I supposed to know she didn't know?"

Pansy hexed him again.

“Ow! Pans. What the fuck.”

Hermione held back a laugh.

“You’re the one always going on about pureblood duty and taking care of your wife and *blah blah blah*,” Pansy continued. “You should have made sure she knew.”

Hermione was actually touched by Pansy’s defense.

“Both of her best mates were handfasted—why would I assume she didn’t know? It’s in all the wedding guides. My mother even had a room booked for us on site at the wedding—” Hermione *had* wondered why there was a suite, but she had assumed, when reading through the wedding plans, that it was a back up room to get ready in. Now that she thought about it, how on earth did she *not* know?

Pansy hexed him once more. “Just apologize,” she advised. “I’ll bring this bottle of wine out to Ron and give you some privacy.” Pansy left the room, her glare icy.

Malfoy’s steely gaze swung to Hermione. “I’m sorry. I thought you knew,” he said, much like he had on their wedding night.

“It’s okay—”

“No. Pansy is right. I should have made sure that you knew.”

Hermione took his hand again and looked at him intently. “Thank you. But it wasn’t like you were forcing me or anything.”

Malfoy searched her eyes.

Hermione found herself admitting again, “I wanted to sleep with you on our wedding night.” Malfoy’s eyes heated. “That’s why I was wearing that lingerie...”

He squeezed her hand. “Next time, I’ll make sure you know everything in advance.”

Hermione chuckled. “Next time? I don’t really see us getting handfasted twice.”

He returned her smile briefly, but the concern fell back over his features.

“Stop looking at me like that. I wanted to sleep with you. Okay? I’d be lying if I said I thought we wouldn’t end up warming each other’s bed on our wedding night. And no, I didn’t know what the handfasting involved—but it was...it was everything.” She flushed, not sure if she was getting her point across. “I don’t regret it.”

“Neither do I.” Malfoy held onto her hand for a second longer before letting it drop, the concern still etched onto his face.

“How was it?” Hermione asked gesturing toward the living room, trying to change the topic. She didn’t want his concern—she hadn’t been lying. She had greatly enjoyed her wedding night, in spite of her trepidation.

Malfoy shrugged. “Stunted. We mostly talked Quidditch.”

Hermione smiled. “I knew you two would talk about Quidditch.”

“Are you two shagging?” Pansy called loudly. “Get in here!”

Hermione flushed deeply again. Malfoy took her hand once more and looked into her eyes.

“I’m sorry, about the handfasting—” He cut off her rebuttal, “And also, stop getting jealous of Pansy. We shagged each other years ago. We’re just friends.”

Hermione felt a burning heat in her stomach; she was embarrassed that he read her so easily. “Sorry.”

Malfoy rolled his eyes and dropped her hand. “Don’t apologize, just stop getting jealousy-rage, because my fucking ring finger is killing me.” He laughed at the end. “C’mon.”

The evening went alright overall. What helped was that Hermione got piss-drunk, and Pansy’s comments no longer made her blush. Also, Ron was adamant that they not discuss their sex life, so whenever Pansy tried, he would loudly change the subject or separately engage Hermione in a conversation. By the end of the night, though, Pansy was seated on Ron, eagerly sucking his face.

Hermione would have been more disgusted, but she was likewise perched in Draco’s lap. However, they were not joined anywhere but at their vow hands. Draco thumbed her ring.

“Mine’s been warm all week. Not sure what that’s about,” he said.

Hermione flushed, not that you could tell on top of her drunk flush. She knew why. She had been turned on all week. Especially whenever he entered a room she was in, or touched her.

“Like now, it’s slightly warmer. At least I think it is. I’m going crazy,” he muttered.

Hermione looked down at his soft lips and wondered what time it was. If it was technically Saturday, they could shag.

“Maybe we should go,” Hermione suggested.

She watched his eyes pool with desire which immediately caused a pang between her legs. Draco leaned forward as if to capture her lips, but a loud groan interrupted them. Pansy was now straddling Ron and vigorously gyrating her hips.

The other couple looked on, disgusted.

“Yeah, we should,” Draco commented. He pushed her to her feet and helped steady her drunken balance. “Besides, we have some contractual duties to attend to; it’s 12:02.”

Hermione felt heat pooling in her core. She let him take her by the hand into the Floo, and spin them home.

Saturday, April 10

When they got home, they forced their faces together and barely made it to the living room before Hermione was horizontal on the sofa, dress pushed down to her stomach, bra tossed to the floor. Draco sucked on her nipples contentedly, like he had been waiting forever to do so, and not a week. Hermione's head spun with drunkenness and pleasure as his hand made its way between her legs, landing on her panties.

"Fuck me, Draco," she whispered so quietly, she thought he hadn't heard.

But he froze, which was the opposite effect that she was hoping to have. Hermione immediately felt like an idiot. He must think that she was such a slut, begging to be fucked. She wanted nothing more than to bury her head under her covers and never look at him again.

He brought his mouth to her ear and asked huskily, "What did you say?"

Hermione didn't respond, she just kept her eyes closed and tried to calm her breathing. Draco shuddered and pressed his body more fully against hers. He began grinding his hips against hers.

He muttered into her ear. "All I've wanted to do all week is fuck you, Hermione. Every morning I wake up ready for you, at lunch I imagine taking you in your office, or in the storage cupboard on my floor, or on the Minister's desk while he's out at a meeting..." Hermione shuddered in desire. "I can smell you on my sheets. All I can think about is your hot little mouth on me, you tight pussy clenching around me." Draco thrust against her pointedly. "All I want to do is fuck you," he said again. But then he backed off, getting up off her and instead looking at her bare and heaving chest. "I've been thinking about it all week," he repeated. "So, I'm not going to throw away my once-a-week shag when you're too drunk to remember in the morning."

Hermione stared at him in shock. He stood and offered a hand to help her to her feet. She pulled her dress back over her breasts and wouldn't make eye contact with him. He handed her her bra which she took with shaky hands.

Draco put a finger under her chin to bring her eyes back to his. "So, I'll see you tomorrow morning," he explained. "Wear your sexy lingerie."

Hermione watched him retreat to his room in shock. Her whole body was shaking with desire. At least her feelings of rejection were pushed away after the revelation that he just wanted to have sex with her sober. He had an admirable level of self-control. She went to her room, locked the door and located her new dildo. There was no way that she would be able to sleep given the state that he had left her in. So, she pleased herself and cried out his name when she came.

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Hermione awoke around noon the next day to Flopsy smiling at her.

“Mrs. Hermione needs a hangover potion,” Flopsy said happily and handed one to her. “Mr. Draco will come by in ten minutes, Mrs. Hermione,” Flopsy informed her with a smile. She disappeared with a crack.

Hermione flushed deeply. Contrary to Malfoy’s opinion that she wouldn’t have remembered the night before, she definitely would have, considering she remembered him promising to have sex with her that morning. She downed the potion, even though she hardly had a hangover and jumped to her feet. She brushed her teeth quickly and rooted through her drawers until she located her ugly underwear that she bought just for this occasion. She didn’t know if she ought to lay down on the bed or wait by the door. Caught in her indecision she was halfway to her bed when he knocked.

Hermione’s felt a heat flood between her legs. She advanced to the door and opened it fluidly. He leaned against the frame, freshly showered and topless.

“You should tell me your wards so that I can shag you more easily,” he greeted. Hermione went to protest, but he cut her off. “Where’s the orange monster?” he asked.

Crookshanks meowed shrilly at that and stalked out of the room. Malfoy stepped inside and slammed her door with a smile. “Excellent,” he stated, then brought their lips together.

Hermione sighed into his kiss. It was gentle, more exploratory than most of their kisses. He even broke away before pulling her to the bed instead of stumbling blindly. He sat down first and pulled her onto him. Hermione reattached their lips and rocked against him gently. She wasn’t entirely used to being on top, and only did it a few times. As a result, when they weren’t in the heat of the moment, she got too stuck in her head about how she was performing. Like now, all she could think about was whether or not his passion was dying since he was kissing her so softly. But the presence of his erection against her thigh reassured her.

Malfoy pulled away from her kiss and untied her robe. He started laughing when he saw what she was wearing beneath.

“There are the ‘sexy’ panties I was supposed to see last time, right?”

Hermione nodded. She had liked the idea of tricking him, but now she felt frumpy and unattractive. Malfoy noticed her frown and frowned too.

“If you hate them so much, why’d you buy them?”

Hermione shrugged and brought their mouths back together, not much fancying all this talking. She tried to push him to ignite their usual fire, but he kept pulling back and slowing her down. She almost let loose a frustrated groan, but refrained. Malfoy seemed to sense yet again that something was wrong.

“We have all morning, Granger,” he mumbled to her between soft kisses. “And I intend to fuck you for as long as possible.”

The heat in her belly tripled at those words. So, she let him kiss her leisurely and she moved her hips against his waist painstakingly slowly, creating a low-burning fire in both of them. Malfoy slowly removed her robe, then a few minutes later her awful bra. The second her breasts were free, he pulled back to look at them in the daylight. Hermione flushed at his appraisal. Draco brought a nipple in his mouth and flicked his tongue across it over and over again. Hermione rested her hands on his shoulders and sighed in pleasure. Malfoy gently pushed her onto her back, playing with her breasts to the point that she was on the edge of orgasm. Hermione had never been this close from just breast stimulation before. He grabbed her wrist and she cried out in pleasure as her body convulsed. She unfortunately saw the smirk of pride on his face.

He watched her until she was entirely spent and no longer moving. “Number one,” he stated calmly, then reattached their lips and cupped her sensitive nipples comfortingly.

Hermione pulled away. “What do you mean by that?”

“I’m seeing how many we can do before I ravage you.”

Hermione felt heat flood between her legs again and a blush cover her face.

“I have a feeling it won’t be that hard,” he teased, eyeing her squirming legs.

Malfoy brought his hand to her lower stomach and kept it there while they snogged deeply. Hermione felt a fluttering in her chest from this kissing. It was the kind that made you never want to leave someone’s arms. The kind that made time feel like it didn’t exist and all that mattered was where their bodies were touching, teasing, tasting.

His hand moved to her inner thigh. He massaged her lightly there. Hermione didn’t understand it, but the gentle movements had her nearing her end dangerously fast. He hadn’t even touched her, and she wanted to come.

“How’re you doing this?” she panted.

Again, he just smirked. Then he took a nipple into his mouth and finally touched her, over her still in place granny panties. The few firm swipes of his fingers had her crying out in pleasure and her hips jerking happily. Malfoy just smirked, his hard length pressed up against her thigh.

“Two,” he declared smugly.

Hermione tried to touch him, but he quickly moved away. “I won’t be able to last past one round,” he explained. “And besides, twice is nothing. We need at least three before you even consider touching me. Remember, you want *me* to fuck *you*,” he whispered into her ear.

Hermione clenched her legs together at his tone alone.

He chuckled darkly. “It’s almost too easy.”

She wanted to smack him in annoyance, but he was tugging her underwear off finally, so she helped him do that instead. He stared at her for too long once she was fully naked.

“Less staring, more touching,” she half-joked so that he would stop making her feel so self-conscious. But he kept on staring.

“I never get to see you in the light,” he breathed. Hermione felt the urge to cover her entire body. “You’re beautiful.”

She flushed happily. Before she could respond, he was on her, licking away at her folds insistently. The change in pace caught her off guard. She clutched at his soft hair and fisted her sheets as her body writhed beneath his tongue. In what felt like less than a minute (but was much longer), she was coming, his lips wrapped around her clit. Hermione screamed his name as her world exploded in pleasure for the third time.

When she finally stopped jerking, she was exhausted. Three times was insane.

“Number three,” he stated proudly and went to kiss her.

“Clean your mouth.”

“No,” he countered.

“Fine,” she permitted. Draco connected their lips.

Hermione couldn’t help it, she wanted to keep kissing him, so she did. It was weird to know that she was tasting herself on his tongue, but he quickly distracted her by sliding into her. She wasn’t even sure when he had taken off his bottoms. He lowered his chest to hers and wrapped an arm under her shoulder.

“Is this what you wanted last night?” he asked her then licked her ear.

Hermione wrapped her legs around his waist and ran her hands up and down his back.

“Harder,” she croaked in embarrassment.

He obliged and sped up his pace as well as deepened his thrust. “You like getting fucked, don’t you?”

Hermione groaned in response, seeing stars for a second. His hips sped up even more. “Yes!” she sighed. “Yes.”

Draco pumped into her even faster, their flesh filling the silence of the room. “Who would have guessed that Hermione Granger is a sex fiend? My wife, a little slut.”

Hermione wasn’t used to being called names in bed, so it surprised her when she clenched around him in pleasure when he called her a slut. She would not have thought that this would turn her on, but apparently, she was very into it. And he noticed.

“Oh, the slut likes it when I call her that, doesn’t she?”

Hermione nodded as he slammed into her. Her body tightened like a coil, poised to break any moment.

“Say it.”

“Yes,” she groaned.

“Yes what?” he slowed his pace.

Hermione haltingly responded, “I like—when you. C-call me a *slut*,” she said weakly, embarrassed by her desire and breathless from his thrusts.

Malfoy began pumping into her sporadically. “So hot,” he muttered.

Hermione kept repeating “fuck me” under her breath without realizing as he thrust into her. She reached out for his vow hand, knowing they were both close. Without fail, within seconds of touching their hands together, they were both coming. She shouted his given name again, not a care in the whole world in that one unending moment of pleasure. She heard him say hers which only increased her orgasm.

When they finally stopped jerking and moaning, they were both covered in sweat and exhausted. Malfoy rolled onto his back and stared at her ceiling. Hermione panted.

“That was...”

“I’ll try for five next week,” he said in response.

“Five?” Hermione asked weakly, her overstimulated clit twitching at the idea.

He squeezed her hand. “We always have to challenge ourselves, don’t we, Granger?”

Hermione smiled dreamily. “Five is too much, I might die. But why don’t *you* try for two.” Her mind began racing again and she pulled a sheet over her body. “We could start with you, then you can move on to me, then we’ll finish together.” She blushed fiercely once she realised what she had just said. She continued to stare at the ceiling, but she could feel his gaze on her.

“We do have to challenge ourselves,” he commented. Finally, he let go of her hand and made his way to her door, butt naked.

“Er—you’re forgetting your pants.”

He shrugged. “Keep ‘em, and try not to ogle me too much, Granger.”

Hermione scoffed, but followed his exit with great interest, wondering when he worked out given how godly his ass was.

Getting Along

Chapter Notes

This chapter develops their relationship a bit more...no smut, sorry! But I'll be posting a few special chapters in honour of valentine's day :D

Tuesday, April 12

She and Malfoy finally settled into one another. Now that he was sure that she would be putting out (or so she secretly thought), he was a lot more amenable in general, or maybe because they had shagged two weeks in a row and had every intention of doing so the following week, he might have just been in a better mood.

As usual, they spent their mornings together discussing the *Prophet* and eating Flopsy's delicious breakfast. Malfoy always left before her, which Hermione was fine with. He had started wearing his pyjamas to breakfast because—"your insufferable cat won't leave me alone!"—Crookshanks had taken a liking to him. Hermione liked seeing him in his unkempt state, but she also liked seeing him dressed up. She shook that thought out of her head; she *definitely* didn't find her husband attractive or cute, because that would totally and completely complicate things.

They had taken to calling each other pet names sarcastically when one of them left the room.

"Bye, darling," Malfoy declared pompously as he exited to get dressed.

"Yes, dear, I shall see you this evening," Hermione threw back snobbishly, returning her attention to the *Prophet* and scoffing at the drivel before her.

Hermione went to get dressed moments later, teasing Crookshanks for how much he liked Malfoy. The cat shot her a look that Hermione could swear said, 'you're one to talk.' As Hermione looked down a hallway that she had never gone down, she vowed to herself to not work as many late nights that week, and instead come back home so that she knew exactly what the layout of her new home was. She was frankly shocked she hadn't done so yet, but everything had been too emotionally exhausting and work was another thing altogether.

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"I'm not sure, Miranda," Hermione was complaining. "Everything I've researched has no answers so far. I was here last week until 8 every night! Plus, I've been researching before I fall asleep."

Miranda shrugged. "Maybe it's time to take a break? These things tend to solve themselves over time...If you're focussing too closely on it, you might be overlooking some other

obvious solution.”

“I’d take this wise woman’s advice, Granger, you need a break. Come have lunch with me.”

Hermione looked at the man who had just joined them to see her husband. He looked excellent as usual. She did miss seeing him fully dressed in the mornings...

“Oh, Malfoy. Hi.”

“Mr. Granger,” Miranda greeted neutrally.

He frowned and pushed back his white-blond hair. “I didn’t take her last name.”

“Oh.” Now Miranda frowned. “But, Mrs. Potter told me that you had.”

“Mrs. Potter...” it took Malfoy a minute to realise this was Ginny Weasley. “That red-headed —”

“Be careful, Malfoy, she’s one of my best friends,” Hermione interrupted.

It took him a moment, but he schooled his features and turned back to Hermione, instead of Miranda. “So, lunch?”

Hermione looked at the clock above the department door, then at Miranda who shrugged.

“Okay, fine. Let me just get my purse. Thanks for listening to me rant, Miranda,” she said, before turning around and heading back toward her office.

Malfoy kept pace with her, knowing exactly where her office was. “I thought we could go out instead of consume the cafeteria’s grisly food.”

Hermione let him into her office and went on the search for her purse. It was usually hanging on the back of her chair, but it wasn’t there currently. When she got preoccupied with a problem (i.e. instituting muggle technology), she became more scatter-brained. She located her purse under her desk and bent over to get it. As she stood, she felt Malfoy behind her, his body pressed directly against hers.

Malfoy trailed a hand down her side. “This skirt looks amazing on you, Granger,” he murmured darkly.

Hermione flushed deeply and felt her heart start racing. She looked up at her open door and briefly considered closing it with a wand flick and shagging her husband. But she thought better of it. It was important that they maintain their strict once a week shag-fest because otherwise, she might find herself catching feelings for the idiot.

Hermione tried to step away, but he was now holding her in place with a hand on her hip. He lowered his mouth to her ear and purred, “Most people say ‘thank you’ after they’re complimented.”

Hermione's breath caught in her throat. He had to know what his tone of voice was doing to her, the ring must be burning with desire.

Hermione cleared her throat. "Thank you," she responded shakily, then pushed out of his embrace. She slung her purse over her shoulder and retied her ponytail to give herself something to do with her hands. "Where are we going to lunch, then, husband?"

He smirked slowly, watching her hands at work. "I know a place."

Hermione rolled her eyes at his elusiveness. "You're not some master of mystery, you know."

Malfoy chuckled. "We're just going to a different café down the way. Nothing fancy, just edible in comparison to the Ministry cafeteria."

"Lead the way." It was slightly nicer than the café where they had done their marriage contract.

Lunch was a pleasant affair. Fairly quiet, but Hermione realised that she liked spending time with her husband, even if they weren't talking much. At the end of the meal, he surprised her by saying, "By the way, Granger, can I see your phone?"

She frowned, but handed it over with little hesitation, doubting that he could wreak too much havoc with Muggle technology (and not knowing that he had been undertaking a fair amount of research into smart phones and knew how to work them as well as she did now).

He fiddled around with it for a moment, then said, "Just as I suspected. It's garbage."

"Excuse me!"

"Yes, my dear wife, your phone is a subpar brand. I cannot abide by it."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Stop being posh."

"Impossible."

She smiled despite herself. However, her smile fell as he pulled out the second phone that he had purchased when they were at the mall together. He handed it to her casually.

"Here. Take this one instead."

"What?"

"You deserve a better phone."

"Malfoy, this phone is like 600 pounds."

"Yes, I know. I purchased it."

"It's yours."

"What's mine is yours," he responded cheekily.

Hermione harrumphed. “I don’t need this phone, I already have a phone.”

Malfoy stared at her and picked up both her current phone and his spare. He pressed some buttons on both of them, then placed them on top of one another. He turned his attention back to her.

“Why is it that you don’t like having nice things?” he asked rudely.

Hermione shot him a look. “It’s unnecessary extravagance, my phone works perfectly fine. Why would I need a new one? Besides, these phones are just expensive to be expensive; they’re not even that good! You just spend your money on stuff that doesn’t even matter!”

He raised an eyebrow. “Why do you think you don’t matter?”

Hermione flushed, suddenly uncomfortable with how perceptive he was being. “I didn’t say that.”

“You implied it. I purchased this phone for you.”

She cleared her throat. “No, you bought it as a back up for you.”

Malfoy rolled his eyes. “As if I wouldn’t upgrade to the newest model once mine breaks. C’mon, Granger, it’s like you don’t even know me. Obviously, I purchased this for you. I was just waiting for the right moment to give it to you. Waiting for you to be a bit more receptive...It appears that I was a bit pre-mature on this, though.”

“I don’t need a new phone.”

“No matter,” he shrugged, not listening to her.

He handed back her phone and kept his spare. He began typing something into the spare phone before he too handed that to her. He picked up his own phone and typed some more. His silence was driving Hermione crazy.

Hermione jumped when his spare phone’s notification went off. She looked down at it curiously and saw a text from ‘My Dearest Husband’ that said ‘take the phone, it’s yours now’.

“But I already have a phone,” she repeated, impressed by his ability to work the technology before him.

“I just transferred all of your data to this phone,” he explained calmly, “I also added my phone number, since you’ve been remiss to ask me for it. Rather rude, I might add,” he sniffed.

Hermione scoffed. “As if you’d want to text me.”

Malfoy actually looked offended. “Obviously I want to text you; it’s another way that I can bother you and distract myself from the daily drivel of the DoL. Moreover,” he continued,

“what if there is an emergency? This can also eliminate the pacing by the door that we both end up doing.”

Hermione found it hard to believe that he would want to text her at all, but shrugged in response, re-reading the text from him. “Why did you program yourself to be ‘my dearest husband?’”

“What else would my contact name be?” he asked.

“Draco Malfoy,” Hermione deadpanned.

“Don’t be ridiculous. Everyone knows that you name your contacts what you actually call them, not their real names and you call me ‘my dearest husband’ at least once a day.”

Hermione couldn’t refute that, but it was a fairly new development since they started with the snobbish nicknames.

“What’s my name is your phone?” she asked, leaning forward to try to take his phone from him.

He pulled away from her, pocketing it. “My darling wife,” he responded.

She was suspicious of him, since he hadn’t shown her his phone, but decided that it didn’t really matter. Hermione circled back to the issue at hand. “Well, this is very nice of you, Malfoy, but like I said, I don’t need a new phone.”

“Yes, you do,” he insisted.

Hermione picked up her phone to show him how perfectly fine it was, only to see that the screen would not turn on. She fiddled with it for a several moments. “What did you do?!” she accused.

He shrugged and smirked. “I gave you a new phone.”

“Malfoy, I swear to Merlin I’m going to chop your balls off!” she hissed, pulling out her wand.

He looked far too relaxed for how angry she was. “Listen, wife, you have to breathe. Everything is totally fine. Your old phone was garbage. I got you a new one. I even transferred all the information before your old one died.”

“You have *no right* to break my stuff!” she hissed jabbing her wand in his direction.

“I feel inclined to remind you that we’re in a muggle café,” he responded calmly.

Hermione’s eye twitched. She shoved her wand away hastily and grabbed both of her phones. *Two phones, how ridiculous!* She stuffed them into her beaded purse and turned on her heel with a huff. She was on the street before he caught up with her. Draco caught her wrist gently and she wrenched it away from him. Hermione continued to storm away.

“Can you just be mature for a second?” he called after her.

She felt a flash of anger overtake her. She turned around. “Be *mature*? *ME!*?” Malfoy finally looked a little concerned as she advanced on him. “You’re the one that intentionally broke my phone just to get your way! It’s an insane invasion of my boundaries!”

He held up his hands. “Okay, okay. Fine. Sorry. I shouldn’t have broken your old phone. But you wouldn’t accept the new one if I didn’t. And yours hasn’t even been charging properly for a week.”

Hermione let loose a heavy breath. He did have a point. Slightly less angry, she explained, “You can’t just do that without consulting me first. We’re finally working toward a place of trust and you do something like that...it’s just...it’s not okay, Malfoy.”

He looked pleased for a moment. “You trust me?”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “I said that we’re getting there. This certainly didn’t help.”

He seemed unperturbed. “Like I said, I’m sorry for how I went about it, but you do need a new phone. Please just use this one. Besides, now we’ll match.”

Hermione shot him a look. “I’ll think about it.” She turned back toward the Ministry.

“I’ll walk you back to your office,” he stated calmly, keeping stride with her.

The walk back was silent. Hermione’s anger dissipated by the time they were back in her office. She did need a new phone, but she was too stubborn to buy herself one. She was also impressed that he had figured out how to transfer all of her information to the new phone. He was really adept with muggle technology.

“Okay, fine. Thank you for the gift. Just do a better job of giving it next time,” she muttered as he went to return to his office.

He smirked in response. “No problem, my darling wife. And seriously, that skirt...” his eyes wandered her frame again suggestively. “I’ll see you for dinner tonight?”

“Yes,” she responded, body aflush from his appraisal.

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That evening, Hermione made a point of being home by 7, since Malfoy spent most of their lunch, pre-phone drama, dramatically complaining about how boring it was to be home alone. She had to admit, though, it was nice having dinner together.

Hermione learned that Malfoy liked to complain about everything. It should have been no surprise; he was a whiner back in school too. However, she now found this more interesting and funnier than before because she now realised that he was joking most of the time.

After dinner, Hermione stated, “Well, I’m going to explore this flat. Since I apparently didn’t know about the second living room...”

She had been subconsciously pushing off exploring the flat because she had hoped to find a way out the marriage. Hermione was finally truly accepting that the earliest she would not be married was September.

“*Our* flat, darling wife,” he responded snobbishly.

“Oh, yes, of course, my heavens!” Hermione replied in an over-the-top accent.

“Would you prefer a full tour? I know a guy,” Malfoy joked, a smile on his lips.

Hermione chuckled. “Sure.”

“Great. I’ll even point out the hidden rooms.”

“Hidden rooms! We’ve lived together for nearly three weeks and you’re just *now* telling me about hidden rooms? What’s the history of this place? Has it always been magical?” Now, Hermione was very interested in learning more.

Malfoy smirked. “All shall be revealed on the tour. Now, pay up.”

Hermione raised her eyebrows in confusion. “Pay up?”

Malfoy approached her slowly, pulled her from her seat and wrapped her in his arms. Hermione was instantly flustered. He descended upon her fluidly, his lips hovering millimetres from hers. “Payment is a kiss.”

Technically there was nothing in their contract about kissing or any sexual activity other than actual intercourse. “A ki—I—okay.”

He closed the distance between them instantly. It was a very soft and innocent kiss—not at all what she was used to from him. Even the previous Saturday when he had taken things slower, there was a certain fire. Now, it was just a gentle pressing of lips to one another. For some reason, Hermione’s heart began beating furiously at the exchange, even after he had moved away from her and dropped his hands. She tried to calm herself but found her eyes kept migrating to his lips. He looked far too smug.

All business, and apparently calm, Malfoy stated, “Okay, payment received.” He bent down and to her surprise, picked up Crooks. He handed him to her. “The cat wants the tour too, he kept bothering me all last week about it,” Malfoy joked.

Hermione let out a horribly odd sounding laugh that was far too loud. She was still off-kilter from that kiss. Although she was sure that he noticed how weird she was being, he said nothing, for which she was grateful.

Malfoy began the tour in the dining room, where they currently were. “This is the dining room,” he stated helpfully. “It’s where we eat dinner sometimes, and where we’ll host dinner, should the need ever arise.”

Hermione smiled at his pompous tone. She found she very much enjoyed when he was snobbish as a joke, but hated it when he was serious.

“If the lady and her cat will follow me to the next room.”

He took her through all the rooms she already knew first: dining room, kitchen, guest bathrooms, his room, her room, then the living room.

“There are of course, several amenities in the living room to choose from,” he continued in his ridiculous voice, “the Floo fireplace big enough for a Weasley family to walk through all at once,” he pointed and Hermione let out a loud laugh—he wasn’t wrong. “The large sofa, good for shagging, the coffee table, also good for shagging; it can support a lot of weight...”

Hermione was once again laughing, though she was also flustered.

“These bookcases, great handholds for when one is being shagged from behind...” He flashed her a heady look. Hermione was overheating from all the sex talk. “And, let us not forget this awful Malfoy crest tapestry. Perfect for reminding oneself of how much they have disappointed their parents.”

Hermione chuckled, then frowned, unsure if he was joking. “Malfoy—”

“But let us not dilly-dally on past failures, my dear woman, but let us look what is *behind* the tapestry that you have previously neglected to notice.” He pulled back the tapestry and low and behold, there was a small door, about hobbit-sized. He opened it and down the dark hallway a torch sprang to life.

Hermione huddled close to him by the entrance of the door, peering into darkness. Crookshanks meowed in her arms. The hallway itself was about 7 feet tall, despite the rather short door.

Malfoy turned to look at her. His face was surprisingly close to hers. “This exploration will have to wait, as it’s at least another entire evening in and of itself. But, know that it is here.” He smiled. “Next!” he exclaimed brightly, pulling the door closed and letting the tapestry fall back in place, “we shall see the unexplored corridor.”

Hermione readjusted Crooks in her arms, who did appear to be enjoying the tour; he was raptly paying attention to every detail that Malfoy pointed out.

Malfoy brought them down the hallway that she had never explored. It was after his bedroom on the left. This hallway had one other hallway attached to it. Malfoy told her hilarious stories about the various paintings adorning the walls. They were all Malfoy heirlooms, but none showed any members of his family. She was desperate to ask if this was intentional, but he distracted her far too easily, telling tales of castles long ago and cows that used to produce gold milk.

Once they had walked the two hallways and reached the end, which was a door, he knocked on it.

“This, my dear woman, is Flopsy’s room.”

The door opened a moment later and the house elf bowed deeply. “Mr., Mrs., welcome to my room. May I help you two in any way?”

“No thank you, Flopsy. Just giving the Mrs. a better tour and I knew she would want to know where you reside.”

Hermione nodded and eagerly approached the door. “May I?”

“Of course, Mrs. Hermione,” Flopsy bowed again and let her into the room.

It was small, as Hermione imagined it would be, but still large, especially for a creature that had basically no worldly possessions. The room was as tall as the rest of the apartment, but it was cut in half by a second floor, almost like a balcony within the room. On this balcony was a very soft looking satin pink bed with two overstuffed pillows. On the walls hung photos of other house elves, presumably who had belonged to the Malfoys or the Blacks. In one corner on the ‘first floor’ of the room was a small rocking chair and a myriad of rolls of wool and knitting needles. In another corner was a tiny kitchenette with an adorable table and chair set. There was a small door that Hermione assumed led to a bathroom. In a corner sat a tiny dresser beside an ironing board—where the elf likely ironed her uniform every morning. On both ‘floors’ there was a small and cozy fireplace crackling away (even though it was not cold out).

“Wow!” Hermione exclaimed. “It’s lovely in here. I’ve never had the pleasure of seeing a house elf’s room. It’s like your own apartment here.”

Flopsy bowed and let loose a squeak of excitement. “Why thank you, Mrs.,” she gushed, “Mr. Draco has insisted that Flopsy has a big room, yes. Mr. Draco is very kind, he helped design Flopsy’s room. Without his help, Flopsy would only have a bed in here.”

Hermione turned to him and felt something welling up in her chest. She tried to push it away, but it lingered. He didn’t meet her eye, clearly embarrassed by the gushing elf before him.

He returned to his over-the-top voice, “Thank you, dear Flopsy, but we must continue the tour, so much to see and so little time.”

“Yes, of course! Thank you, Mrs., thank you, Mr. It is very nice of you to visit Flopsy. Please let Flopsy know if you need anything.” The elf bowed again.

“Oh, thank you again for dinner, Flopsy. It was delicious!” Hermione exclaimed before the elf had closed the door.

Flopsy grinned widely. “Flopsy is so happy you like it, Mrs. Mr. Draco says that you don’t like house elves—”

Hermione glared at Malfoy. “You what?”

Flopsy clapped a hand over her mouth and squeaked in fright.

“No, Granger. It wasn’t—I just meant. Because...” He let loose a frustrated sigh.

“I love house elves, Flopsy,” Hermione stated firmly. “I just want to make sure that they are treated properly and not enslaved. I had a very good friend who was a house elf, actually, Dobby.”

Flopsy’s giant eyes widened. “Mrs. knows Dobby?”

Hermione nodded.

Flopsy bowed again, then hugged her leg tightly, then let out a squeak at her improper behaviour, then bowed again. “Flopsy should be leaving you to your tour now. Goodnight, Mrs. and Mr.” She closed the door softly and they could hear her chattering to herself (or maybe her portraits) about how Hermione knew Dobby and how she must be a very nice woman indeed.

Hermione smiled fondly before rounding on Malfoy. “Why on earth would you tell a house elf that I don’t like house elves!?” she whisper-shouted.

“Well...you don’t,” he responded.

“Did you not just hear what I said?”

“You don’t like being waited on,” he responded again, flatly. “You wouldn’t like if we had a human servant either.”

Hermione felt her temper peter out. “I guess you’re right. But don’t tell a house elf that I don’t like house elves. Think of how upsetting that must be for her.”

He sighed. “Fine. Sorry.” They heard Flopsy squeak in delight again, then the sound of clanging—she was probably making tea. Malfoy cleared his throat and resumed the tour. “Now, the next room is also a delight.” He pulled open the door to a linen closet. Hermione threw her head back and laughed. He smiled back. The tense moment dissipated. “This is only one of two; this is the overflow linen closet.”

“‘Overflow linens’—I cannot believe how rich you are.”

“How rich *we* are, my darling,” he corrected.

Hermione shuddered at that thought. She reminded herself to contact their accountant or whoever so she could start donating his unneeded funds to much needed charities.

They continued onward and he revealed an office space, a gym (confirming her suspicions that he worked out), another bathroom (there were already two by the dining room and kitchen), a potions workspace with a few bubbling cauldrons and stores upon stores of ingredients and supplies (turns out that Malfoy loved potion-making still) and the second living room.

“...and this is the infamous TV,” he gestured wildly at the huge flatscreen. It took up almost the entire wall. Granted, the second living room was much smaller than the first one, however, the TV was still unnecessarily massive. “The second living room is not for

entertaining others, but for entertaining oneself. Do note, however, like the first living room, this sofa is more than adequate to shag on.”

Hermione chuckled. “And the TV actually works? You figured out the charm?”

“Of course not, darling wife, I’ve been waiting months for you to publish the charm publicly so that I can get it working.”

Hermione smirked. She let Crooks wander the room and approached the TV with her wand. She waved it a few times and the TV glowed blue for a moment.

“Where’s the remote?” she asked.

Malfoy shrugged. “Don’t know. I’ve never used it.”

Hermione heaved a sigh, but began digging through the TV stand drawers until she found it. She checked for batteries and let out another sigh. “You need batteries for the remote, Malfoy.”

“Oh.”

“We’ll get some this weekend or something. I’m too busy to watch TV now anyway...On with the tour?”

“As the lady wishes.”

Hermione scooped up Crookshanks who was already settling into a nap on the sofa. Next, he brought her to a solarium. It was gorgeous. The roof and walls were entirely glass and it was overflowing with beautiful and lush plants. Hermione stared at it in awe.

“Why on earth have you not told me about this?” she muttered. “It’s so beautiful.”

He shrugged. “We’ve just started getting along, Granger.”

She conceded that he had a point. It took longer than she’d admit, but he finally got her to continue on the tour.

“This is the tea room, it actually attaches to the solarium through the balcony. This is where we shall host our monthly tea gatherings.”

Hermione laughed, then looked at him in concern, “You *are* joking, right?”

He smiled. “Mostly. My mother does usually come for tea about once a month and dinner on a different day once a month. But I’ve requested some space while we get settled.”

Hermione gulped. Tea with Narcissa Malfoy...she wasn’t sure if she could handle it.

“Don’t worry, she won’t be back until you’re comfortable. Or when you’re not home. Hell, the flat’s big enough that you could hide in it and she’d never even know.” Malfoy continued the tour. “Here, we have two guest bedrooms.”

Hermione investigated both. They were large with king size beds and comfortable looking pillows. They reminded her of a fancy hotel, especially because they both had en suite bathrooms.

“Seriously, Malfoy, why on earth are there so many rooms?”

He just smirked. “Last, but not least, what I think shall be the lady’s favourite room—” he opened two double doors with a flourish and Hermione gazed upon a surprisingly large library. It was two stories—magic was definitely involved there—and lined entirely in shelves. The second floor was accessible by two staircases on opposite sides of the room. In the middle of the room towered stacks made of the richest wood she had ever seen with gold plates delineating sections. The only wall devoid of books, was a full of windows. Pushed up against the windows were benches covered in soft cushions and pillows. There were also armchairs facing the wall of windows. A small study table with two chairs sat off to the side of a fireplace.

As the evening sun streamed into this little slice of heaven, Hermione nearly fainted in delight. She let Crooks jump to the ground to explore on his own and took several steps into the room without saying anything at all. She turned around and stared at him blankly.

“Why have I not seen this until today?” she exclaimed, half angry, half happy beyond reason.

He just shrugged and remained elusive. Hermione didn’t pay him much mind and instead began perusing the stacks. There was a Muggle literature section and it was full of her favourites. She turned back to him, he was leaning on the door frame casually.

“Muggle books? In a Malfoy house?”

He just shrugged again. Hermione narrowed her eyes now, less distracted by the books and more distracted by this mystery.

“But why?”

“It’s a library, Granger,” came his response.

“A beautiful library,” she corrected. “It’s perfect,” she mumbled under her breath and went to sit by the windows to take in the setting sun. She turned back to him as he approached the windows as well. “So, how is it that you came to possess this ridiculously large flat and how on earth is there so much magic in a muggle neighbourhood without it affecting anyone? I mean, it has to be magically extended, look at this room alone.”

He sat in the armchair to the left of her so he was facing the sunset. Hermione liked the way his hair reflected the light.

“It’s a fun story, actually.”

“Tell me!” she ordered.

“So bossy,” he purred and stared at her heatedly for a moment before shaking off his obvious desire. “It’s from the Black family,” he began, “My mother’s great-great-great grandmother

was obsessed with muggles and muggle culture. So, she bought a flat in muggle London and modified it over the years. Her name was Isla Black and she married a muggle, Bob Hitchens.”

“Wait, she wasn’t a blood purist?”

Malfoy shrugged. “I don’t know if it was that black and white...she definitely wasn’t horrible since she married a muggle, but given the time period and the fact that she kept this flat so magical, I have to believe that she still thought herself superior to Bob.”

Hermione nodded. “Could have been a fetish.” Malfoy shot her a look and Hermione had the decency to blush. “Never mind, go on.”

He seemed reluctant to not address her comment, but he continued his story: “Isla was disowned once she eloped with Bob, but she was clever and had stolen some money from the family vaults before she left. And by ‘some’, I do mean *a lot* of money. I honestly think that’s the real reason she was disowned—muggle hatred is only trumped by money in pureblood families...”

Hermione rolled her eyes.

“Isla bought this flat for her and Bob’s family. She modified the flat over the years, which is why it’s so big and why the enchantments work so well; it’s old magic. I’m not entirely sure what she used, but it’s kind of like Hogwarts...the magic’s so old now you can feel it in the structure of the building. Actually, there are rumours that this building is haunted...but the muggles are just feeling the side affects of the magic. And also, maybe Isla’s ghost does haunt it from time to time...I swear I saw a woman one night, but she disappeared quickly and I had just woken up from a dream...”

Hermione frowned at this. She didn’t much like the idea of a ghost haunting her home.

“I think she’s gone now. That was a couple years ago and I haven’t seen her since.”

“Good.”

“Isla and Bob had one child, a squib, and that’s where our family knowledge kind of...disappears. The only reason that I know that they had a child is because the Blacks wanted to show how bad marrying a muggle would be; you would get a non-magical child.”

“That’s—”

“Idiotic? Yeah.”

Hermione searched his grey eyes. He really had changed. “So, you really wouldn’t care if we had a squib?”

“We?”

Hermione’s cheeks heated. “I mean. Whoever you end up having kids with...since we’ll be divorcing in five months...”

He stared at her briefly before looking away. Hermione stared at his perfect hair reflecting the setting sun. “I would be a bit sad, probably, not being able to share parts of my life with my child. But I could learn new ways of life.”

Hermione felt her heart melt and had to look away. “How did you end up with this flat, then?”

“Right, well, that’s the fun part. My whole childhood was spent memorizing my bloodline on both sides of my family. I constantly asked my mother about Isla, fascinated that anyone would dare marry a muggle—which is a bit ironic now considering...” he chuckled and shook his head. “When she finally told me Bob’s last name, I started researching the family. I was still young, though, and found nothing. But after the war, it consumed me. All I wanted was to know what had happened. Did their child have more kids? Did I have a distant cousin who was a muggle? I had to know.”

Hermione had never seen Malfoy so impassioned—except for maybe when they were having sex...It was a turn on. She cleared her throat.

“So, I hired a private investigator. I had no idea how to find someone in the muggle world but Dirk Gently was great. He found the family in a few months. Unfortunately, it was not good news. The last of the line was nearing 80 years old and had no children of her own. She was very pleased to meet me and readily accepted my half-fudged story about being a very distant cousin from the side of the family that her great-great-great-grandmother was kicked out of.

“She didn’t know anything about magic, but she did have an enchanted piece of parchment. It was a family heirloom that was framed on the wall of her nursing home. She handed it to me and the moment I touched the frame, it glowed. I remember her making some comment about the sun reflecting off of it—muggles will make up any excuse to not believe what’s right in front of them.”

Hermione chuckled at that thinking of all the accidental magic her parents had witnessed and written off. “What’d the parchment say?”

“It was the last will and testament of Isla Hitchens, née Black.”

“And...?” Hermione was enraptured by this point.

“Basically, it outlined that the money went to her muggle family, but that the house would go to...what was the wording...here—” he took out his wand and summoned the picture frame in question. It came whizzing from down an aisle in the library and into his waiting hands. He handed it to her.

Hermione skimmed past the money and leapt right to the assets section.

She read aloud: “I leave my residence within London, England not to my Hitchens family, but to my Black family. This residence is located in muggle London and will only be available to a member of the Black family who seeks out its knowledge and who, like myself, has seen the error of our most Noble and Ancient house. Should such an heir be found, upon reading this parchment, the deed will transfer to them and the residence will accept them

willingly. They may never hang or glorify members of the House of Black within its walls. The house may only transfer to any offspring or fellow family members upon the death of the qualifying Black or the transfer to an equally qualifying Black. This residence shall be used to destroy the 'pure' lineage of the House of Black. Please enjoy it. I am sad that I will not live to see its transfer to a willing family member, but I am hopeful that one will find it, one day."

Hermione looked up at him once she had finished reading. She was overwhelmed with information and emotions, and *questions*. Finally, "When did you move in here?"

"Well, Dirk found Isabella about two years after the final battle. I moved in as soon as I could after that."

"And that's why there's no family portraits?"

"Partly. I could hang Malfoy ones since it's not expressly forbidden in the will, but I feel as if it goes against her wishes anyway, so I decided not to. I have a small photo of myself and my mother in my room, though, since it felt rude to her to have nothing. Also, it hardly glorifies the Black family, it's from when I convinced her to eat in muggle London and she is wearing muggle clothing."

"When is that from?"

"Hmm? Oh, just before I moved in here. I had to show her that I would be fine amongst the muggles..."

Hermione just stared at him. "So, this shows that you really don't care about blood purity, of pureblood social status at all, then." She recalled their score of 92% for political and 93% social values with a confused frown.

Malfoy looked angry. "Seriously?"

"Sorry! Sorry. I know. It's just...it's different thinking you don't and *knowing* that without a doubt you don't because otherwise you wouldn't live here..."

He didn't look very appeased.

"Sorry. I'll stop questioning it, I promise." Hermione looked for something to change the topic to. "You know, I bet Isla would *love it* if we got a portrait of us and hung it up. Speaking of, why isn't there one of her and Bob and their child?"

Malfoy shrugged. "I've looked everywhere and so has Flopsy. I just assume that the Hitchens' took it and it got lost over the years. But us getting a portrait done..." he reflected for a moment. "Then I'll have two Granger's in the house to nag me."

Hermione chuckled. "Actually, you already have two Granger's; if you recall, *Mr.* Granger." She wiggled her brows.

He rolled his eyes. "I swear Weasley is going to get it the next time that I see her. Who on earth has she been telling that I took your name?"

Hermione laughed deeply at his anger. She turned her attention back to the red and orange sky and the setting sun. “Gods, I’m glad I did this tour, our flat is amazing. Thanks, Isla,” she murmured. She turned to him suddenly, making him jump, “We should have breakfast in the solarium. It’s too beautiful to *not* use it,” she gushed.

“Uh, sure. If you want.”

Hermione smiled. “Yes. I do.”

“Okay, I’ll tell Flopsy tomorrow morning.”

“So, wait,” Hermione began again.

He appeared to be fighting a smile at her endless questions. “Yes?”

“Was there always a second huge bedroom like mine with the en suite and personal Floo?”

He scratched at his neck. “Oh. No...I—er—made it for you.”

“Made it for me? How? The magic in this place...it’s fascinating.”

“It is,” he responded wryly, remembering something, “It responds to the house owner completely and makes what you want for you. Not the furnishings, but it does for the actual layout and hardware.”

“What? That’s so cool!”

“Yeah...so I just...kind of told it that you were moving in and what your room should look like. And it did it. It’s a bit like the room of requirement.”

“Wow! I really want to do some research now...” Hermione was itching to explore the house and read the books within it, but she let loose a yawn and glanced out at the now dark sky.

Crookshanks jumped onto her lap and purred loudly.

“That’s his, ‘it’s bedtime’ purr. And I couldn’t agree more.” Hermione stood with her cat in her arms. “Thank you for the tour, good sir,” she mocked.

He followed her out of the room. “It was my pleasure, my lady.”

Hermione giggled.

They were back at their rooms in no time, considering the library was just around the corner in the newly explored hallway.

“Well...thanks, again, Malfoy. And thanks for the story. It was really cool.”

“Anytime.”

“And tomorrow, you’ll have to show me the hidden passageways!” Hermione perked up again thinking of what else she could learn about.

“Sounds like a da—plan,” he agreed.

“Okay, ‘night. Say, ‘goodnight,’ Crookshanks.”

The cat purred loudly, then hopped from her arms and into her bedroom.

Malfoy wished her a goodnight quietly before crossing the hallway to his room.

Wednesday, April 13

Wednesday evening found Hermione and Malfoy staring down the torchlight passageway in the living room behind the Malfoy tapestry.

“What was covering this passageway before you moved in?” she asked. “And why do you even have this one in the first place? I thought you didn’t want to glorify the Malfoy family.”

“It was a gift from my mother...It felt like the least that I could do.”

“Hm.” Hermione got the impression that Malfoy would go along with almost anything his mother suggested. “And before?”

“It was the tapestry beside the potions lab; the black and white one with the lady leading the child through the dangers of the dark forest.”

“Oh.”

“Okay, before we head in for the tour, you’re forgetting something,” he said seriously.

Hermione would be lying if she said she wasn’t looking forward to kissing him again. She let out a sigh anyway to pretend as if she was being inconvenienced and leaned into him. He smirked and kissed her back gently, again nothing more than a chaste pressing of lips together (that had her heart fluttering). Malfoy pulled back first with a smirk.

“I was going to say that you’ll want your wand...” he said.

Hermione blushed deeply. “Oh.” She had left her wand on the dining room table. “Oh. Sorry!” She was beyond embarrassed now, assuming that he wanted to kiss her.

Malfoy’s smug look didn’t help things. “But thanks for the kiss, Granger.”

Hermione excused herself and awkwardly tripped on her way to the dining room. She stuffed her wand into her bun and returned to the living room. “Okay, on with the tour.” She tried to forget her obvious blunder.

Malfoy stepped into the passageway first and instructed her to close the door behind her.

“The connecting passageways don’t appear unless the door is closed. It seems to be some sort of security feature that I don’t fully understand.”

In the dark flickering passageway, Hermione realised how close she was to him suddenly and how oddly romantic the lighting was. He either didn't notice or ignored it.

"So, there are only a few rooms that connect to this, and somehow this passageway goes in a straight line, even though logically it should snake through the house." He started walking and as he moved, the lights sprung up as he neared them. About ten seconds in, he stopped beside a door that she hadn't noticed. "This is the first room that has access."

He opened the door and ducked through into the library. Hermione followed happily; she loved the library. The door was actually a large portrait of a castle on hinges that swung open. He showed her how it opened and closed from the library side with a small button hidden on the side of the frame. Malfoy led her back into the dark passageway. They moved a few more steps down and came across another door, this time on the right. He opened it easily and stepped into his bedroom. Hermione followed him and eyed it yet again; she still felt as if she hadn't fully soaked in what his living space was like. The door was one of his bookshelves that had swung open.

"This is cool," Hermione said, breaking the irreverent silence that had descended upon them once he had started the tour.

He smiled in response. "I know. I remember when I first discovered them, I was so fascinated."

He went back into the dark corridor and Hermione pulled the bookcase shut behind them. At the next door he hesitated.

"This is new."

"What's new?" Hermione asked in confusion.

"This door."

"What?"

"Yeah."

"How new?"

He shrugged. "Last time I used these passages was about two months ago...they're creepy to be in when you're alone," he admitted.

Hermione opened the door when it became clear that Malfoy was just going to stare at it blankly. She gasped upon walking into her closet. She pulled him into the closet so that she could close the door and see where the doorknob appeared.

Malfoy glanced around. "Is this your closet?" he asked, running his hands over her clothes. He opened the closet door to see the rest of her room and nodded to himself. "Weird."

Hermione, meanwhile, was running her fingers over the spot in the wall where the door had appeared which was now entirely smooth and blank. "Well how on earth am I supposed to get

back in?" she wondered.

Malfoy leaned on the shelf above where the door was to get a better look. Hermione's heart fluttered as his chest grazed her back. He was very close to her. He smelled good.

The door suddenly appeared. They both jumped back in shock, then laughed at their reactions.

"What did you press?" she asked.

Malfoy looked at the shelf and found it, a small button on the underside of the shelf that when depressed, made the door appear. He clicked it again and the door disappeared.

"That's so cool!" Hermione squealed feeling like a spy. She pressed the button next and the door reappeared. It was just the outline of the wall with an ornate handle. She opened the door and pulled Malfoy back into the secret tunnel. "Where next?" she asked eagerly.

He brought her farther down the hallway and pointed to a door with a large 'F' on it. "This is Flopsy's apartment. We shouldn't barge in on her, though."

"Does she use the hallway a lot?" Hermione wondered. It seemed like an easy way for an elf to get around given the fact that it was a significant short cut from her room to the living room.

Malfoy shrugged. "I've never asked. I know she knows about it."

Malfoy moved down the hallway that ended in a small door. He pushed open the door and stepped through the small opening into the hallway across from the second living room. Hermione followed suit. This portrait was the one of the cow with supposed gold milk. Hermione closed the portrait and admired the cow briefly.

"Well, that was pretty cool," she said finally.

Malfoy nodded. "In theory, but you'll basically never use it...at least I know I don't."

"Still. It reminds me of Hogwarts, which is always a nice feeling." They began walking down the hallway toward their rooms. "You definitely could have fit this in yesterday's tour," Hermione said.

He shrugged.

"What about the new door that leads to my room, what's that about?" she wondered.

He shrugged again. "Probably has something to do with being the head of the house."

"Head of the house?" Hermione repeated.

"Yes."

"Me?"

“Yes.”

“But...”

“We’re both heads of the house,” he explained further.

“Oh.”

“Because we’re married.”

“Right.”

“So, this house belongs to you as well...”

“I see.”

“Wait a minute,” they had arrived at her room. “Are handfasting ceremonies breakable?”

“What do you mean?”

“How can we get a divorce if we’re promised to each other for life?” Hermione began to panic.

“Uh...”

“How could I not notice this? What were our exact vows? Oh, my Merlin. Are we married for *life*? Holy Jesus.”

Malfoy grabbed her by the shoulders. “Granger! Get a grip.”

“Get a grip? Get a grip! *You* get a grip! We clearly stated that we were only getting married as required by the Ministry and that we would be getting a divorce as soon as possible! How can we do that if we’re *bound for life*!?”

He shrugged, apparently in no way concerned.

“You’re useless! I need to call Ron. He’ll know.”

Hermione unwarded her room and slammed the door behind her. She summoned her phone and phoned Arthur Weasley first, recognizing that he would know the most about their binding since he was the one to do it. He had quickly reassured her that he was careful in the binding ceremony to leave out anything about being together forever. Hermione hung up the phone a half hour later, after having caught up with him about life—he had purchased roller skates and sprained his ankle.

She checked her phone to see a text from her husband.

‘Any news?’

‘Yes. Mr. Weasley says that we’re not bound for life. He merely created a union between us. The vows only talk about loving our children until we die, not each other. So, we’re in the

clear.’

He took a few moments to respond. ‘Gotcha.’

Hermione found his response odd, but moved on. ‘Thanks for the tours these past two nights.’

‘Anything for my darling wife.’

Hermione chuckled to herself and pet Crookshanks lovingly. ‘Night,’ she sent him before starting her night time routine. When she returned to her bed, he had sent her another message.

‘Goodnight, beautiful.’

Hermione flushed deeply. He certainly had a way of making her heart race. She sighed at her whirlwind of feelings. She plugged in her phone and turned away from it, unable to deal with his compliments at that moment in time.

Thursday, April 14

Hermione and Draco were seated in their library, reading through different tomes that they had taken from Malfoy Manor the Sunday previous. After having seen their library, Hermione preferred spending her time studying there, especially since there were no potentially traumatic memories from her new home. Crookshanks snoozed on a bench overlooking the London skyline.

Hermione was surprised to discover she greatly enjoyed working with Malfoy. They had a very good workflow together, giving each other silence when needed, speaking up and tossing back and forth ideas when relevant, and he took exceptionally meticulous notes. Hermione had set up a research binder to store all of their notes and he hadn’t even laughed or groaned at her—instead, he had excitedly added his pages of notes to the correct tabulated sections.

Hermione knew Malfoy was a bit of a nerd; he did well in school. However, seeing him in action was entirely different. She was often distracted by him. He would twirl his pen just so when he was thinking through an idea and Hermione could not take her eyes away from his fingers, rings glinting in the lights. His hair would fall into his eyes from time to time and he would absentmindedly brush it back, making Hermione stare at his platinum locks. Even when he sat a certain way, leaning back in his armchair, one leg crossed at a right angle over the other—it was all very *distracting*.

So far, despite having actually completed a copious amount of research, they had gotten nowhere helpful.

“Perhaps we need to think beyond the human rights angle,” Malfoy said suddenly, breaking Hermione from her reading about a marriage law imposed in Colombia.

“Huh?”

“The Wizengamot do not care that they are violating our rights as humans. So, we need to think about something that would actually impact them.”

Hermione tapped her chin in thought. “That’s a good point. But why would human rights not matter to them?”

Malfoy shot her a look. “You’re such an idealist.”

She crossed her arms. “Sorry for wanting to believe the best in people.”

Malfoy leaned back in his chair, his book resting in his lap. He scrubbed at his face. “How about I look through old cases that have to do with human rights issues more broadly—successful cases, and we can see what arguments they used.”

“And what will I do?”

“Keep researching the marriage laws. It might still be useful. Once you’ve exhausted that, then you can join me.”

Hermione reflected. “Okay. That’s a good plan. I’ll have to add a new section to the binder.”

Malfoy smirked in response. “I’ll finish this book first before I move to case records, just in case I’ve missed anything important. But I’m knackered. I think I’m going to call it for tonight. Don’t stay up too late, wife.”

Malfoy closed his book and placed it on their marriage law study table. Hermione stopped him from leaving. “I was actually wondering…”

“Yes?” he asked. He leaned back on the table.

“I think I’d like to donate some money to the Society for Improved Magical-Muggle Relations.”

The corner of Malfoy’s lips lifted. “Finally decided on a charity to drop 500K on?”

Hermione clarified, “Well, I would like to spread it out a bit. I think other charities could benefit from it as well. But I truly do love the work that they do—so much advocacy and education! And they’re muggleborn integration program is truly flawless, and…Sorry, I’m rambling.”

Malfoy was grinning at her. “Donate away, wife. It’s your money.”

“I was thinking…maybe 120 000? Is that…do you think that’s a good donation? I’ve never donated a sum so large. What happens when you do it?”

Malfoy’s eyes were glittering in the lamplights. “Donate as much as you want. But if you’re asking me as a rich person what a large donation is like, 120 000 is a good chunk, but true large donations are in the millions.”

Hermione's eyes bugged out. "Millions?"

Malfoy shrugged. "Don't be deterred, I'm sure your society will put any funds you give to good use."

"I should have asked for more in the contract," she muttered, half joking.

"We can renegotiate," he replied easily.

"No—no, 500 000 is a lot, I'm just...not used to being rich, I guess."

Malfoy chuckled. "As for the second part, generally with large donations they expect stipulations or strings attached. So, you could give them an outline of what the funds must or should be used for." Hermione frowned. "But you can also just tell them to take it and do with it as they deem fit. They also usually give you something in thanks or name a hospital ward after you—something along those lines."

"I don't want them to give me anything or name something after me. The whole point is that 100% of the funds will be used to improve magical-muggle relations!"

"Then say that."

"Okay...and how do I—I mean, do I just owl them a cheque?"

Malfoy laughed. "Have you not met Jerome yet? Sorry, what an oversight. I'll set up a meeting for you two. He handles all the money transfer business. He can do all the donations for you if you want. But knowing you, I get the impression you would like to talk to your charity and not just have 120K appear in their bank account overnight?"

Hermione shrugged. "That does feel oddly impersonal."

"So, owl them or set up a meeting. Have a chat. Then talk to Jerome—he'll transfer the money. Simple."

Hermione blinked at him. "Just like that?"

"Just like that. Improved magical-muggle relations."

"This feels very bizarre."

Malfoy chuckled. "By the by, if you have other charities that you would prefer the estate donate to, please inform Jerome when you meet with him."

"What do you mean?"

"The estate has annual donations that we make. I think we do about 10 million a year? Yes, that sounds about right." Hermione's jaw dropped. "Mother has largely chosen the charities, but since you're technically the female head of the estate, you are welcome to update those donations. I know her chosen charities are ones that you probably would not choose."

“Who does she donate to?”

“Who do *we* donate to,” he corrected without reflection. “Well, of course, St. Mungo’s, Hogwarts, the *Daily Prophet*—”

“That’s not a charity.”

“Yes, but having the press in your back pocket is always a good thing.”

“So you could’ve pulled some of those stories that Lavender wrote about us then?” Hermione huffed.

Malfoy annoyingly grinned. “Mother liked the photos.”

“Your mother confuses me,” Hermione admitted. “Where else?” she asked, bringing the conversation back on topic.

“Orphans, I’m sure. Mother’s always going on about needing to attend some ball or other to support the orphans. I know there’s some flower societies, debutante societies—that’s for the pureblood upper class, as if they need more money—political campaigns during election years, you know, run of the mill stuff.”

“And I can just change who we donate to?”

“Yeah. I would inform my mother before you do, so she can make her excuses to her pureblood societies, but yes. It is your right as head of the estate.”

“Won’t your mother be mad?”

Malfoy shrugged, uncaring. “She expects it. She understands what happens when her child marries. The estate moves to you. Besides, think of everything you could do with 10 million galleons a year, Granger.” He winked at her.

Hermione nodded; her mind was buzzing. She would evidently be making a *much* larger donation to the Society for Improved Magical-Muggle Relations. Her own funds of 500 000 now seemed meagre in comparison to the 10 million at her disposal. She thought idly that she might instead use some of her personal Malfoy funds to instead enrich her friends—maybe help fix up the Burrow, go on a trip, renovate Grimmauld Place, expand Weasley Wizard Wheezes...

“When can I meet with Jerome?” she responded at last.

Malfoy smiled. “I think you’re warming up to being rich quite well.”

Defending Mr. Granger

Friday, April 15

Hermione laughed along with Harry and Ron as she sat on Ron's desk in the Auror department. The trio had lunch together and were just wrapping up. They usually ate lunch on Wednesdays, but it had been moved because of a meeting Harry had that couldn't be rescheduled. Hermione checked her phone as Harry talked to Ron about some case or another.

She had an unread message from her 'dearest husband.'

'Where are you?' it read. It was from almost an hour ago. She felt her heart drop; what if he had wanted to have lunch with her and she missed his message?

'Just finishing lunch with Harry and Ron,' she responded.

"Who's that you're texting, Hermione?" Ron inquired. It was normal for him to be curious considering Hermione basically only texted him, Harry, or Ginny, and the latter was currently in practice.

"Oh...just—"

"My dearest husband," Harry read over her shoulder.

Hermione hid her phone with a blush.

"Wait, is that a new phone?" Harry noticed. "I can't believe you would get this model, it's so expensive..."

Hermione cleared her throat and looked at the clock that hung above the department door, "I didn't buy it...Malfoy gave it to me."

"Don't you mean your 'dearest husband?'" Ron teased.

Hermione sighed. "He programmed it to say that," she tried to defend herself. "I just wanted it to say, 'Draco Malfoy.'"

"So, how is Mr. Granger these days?" Ron asked.

Hermione was a bit dumbfounded that Ron was asking her a question about Malfoy. While they did have a few evenings where they semi-got along, Hermione assumed that they would never want to actually talk to or know anything about one another unless their wives were forcing the interaction.

"Ginny has everyone calling him Mr. Granger now?" Hermione chuckled, still gathering her thoughts.

“Yeah,” Harry responded. “I love it. Every time I see him, I say, ‘Oi, Granger!’ At first, he didn’t respond, but now he turns around. I think he might actually like it...”

“Oh no, he hates it. He kept complaining about Ginny being evil the other night. Me keeping my last name was a major issue for him.”

“Whatever, having the last name Granger is nothing but good press for him,” Ron added in. “That’s why Pansy took my last name...I mean, I think she just hates her family anyway, but she did tell me that she gets less random hatred from people when she introduces herself as Pansy Weasley.”

“Still sounds weird, though,” Harry said.

“You never answered the question, Hermione,” Ron insisted. He was like a dog with a bone; once he had a question, it was hard to distract him. It was why he turned out to be a decent Auror.

“He’s...uhm—” her phone went off. She read his message.

‘How’s the computer charm going? Need help? I’m so bored. Evans is driving me up the wall.’

“What’s he saying?” Harry asked, trying to read over her shoulder again.

Hermione stuffed her phone into her pocket. “Stop reading my private messages!”

“Why’re you hiding it, Hermione?” Ron queried, genuinely intrigued by her evasiveness.

“I have to get back to work,” Hermione responded. “Thanks for lunch, boys.”

She hightailed it out of there.

“Say hi to Mr. Granger for us,” Ron called after her, making Harry burst into laughter.

Once safely back in her office, Hermione let out a sigh. She wasn’t sure why she was avoiding their questions, but she had the suspicion that it had something to do with not wanting anyone to pick up on the fact that she might be starting to *like* her husband.

She typed out a response to the man, ‘sure, but if you suggest a protego, I’m going to lose it.’

Malfoy was knocking at her door mere moments later.

“You were just going to show up here whether I answered you or not, weren’t you,” she stated as he walked into her office and shut the door behind him.

He raised an eyebrow. “How’s the computer charm going?”

Hermione sighed. “My idea is to combine a few charms based on the ones that already exist.”

“That seems like a good idea,” he agreed, leaning back in her visitor’s chair. He seemed surprisingly at ease.

“I just need to look up some things on experimental magic, and I have a meeting with Gerard in the Department of Mysteries Monday at one. I assume I’ll be able to develop the charm very quickly after that.”

“Why aren’t you an Unspeakable?” Malfoy asked out of left field.

Hermione was taken aback. “Why would I be?”

“Because you’re brilliant.”

Her chest heated at the compliment. “Thank you.”

“Just stating facts. You’d be great there. Probably revolutionize magic as we know it. Besides, imagine what their library looks like...” he wiggled his eyebrows.

Hermione did allow herself to picture their dark and mysterious library full of secrets. “I bet it’s somehow ten storeys high...”

“It definitely is.”

She sighed. “I’m needed in the Muggle Liaison office, I can’t transfer, there’s too much to do.”

“Granger, literally every department needs you. You can’t think like that. You need to be a little self-centred every once in a while.”

Hermione bristled. She didn’t want to be self-centred. Why would she be? People needed help, so she would help them. But she did allow herself to reflect for a moment on the fact that she did give everything that she had to this department and they gave her almost nothing back in return; a tiny office, a mediocre salary, basically no vacation time...

“I can see I’ve made you think, something that I will consider a success.”

“And what about you? You’ve never really told me what you do in the DoL, which is ridiculous, we’ve been married three weeks yesterday and I still don’t really know what on earth it is that you do here.”

Malfoy avoided her gaze. “My job is boring. Yours is far more interesting.”

“*You* think muggle affairs are interesting?”

He shrugged. “You’re interesting.”

Hermione flushed at his statement, but saw it for what it was, a diversion tactic. “What is your job, Malfoy? Tell me, or I’ll go down to your boss and tell him that you’re skiving off work to chat up your wife.”

That seemed to annoy him. “See, I take time out of my busy day just to see my wife and help her out, and she threatens to blackmail me.”

Hermione stood decisively, “Your avoidance tactics won’t work on me anymore...I’m going to your boss.”

“Oh, sit, woman.”

“You must know I hate it when you call me ‘woman.’”

“Sit, *wife*,” he repeated with a smirk.

For some reason it did not bother her whatsoever when he called her ‘wife.’ In fact, she felt a thrill course through her at the title. Hermione crossed her arms. “So, your job?”

Malfoy cleared his throat and picked up one of her picture frames. He stared at her, Harry, and Ron as he started talking. “I work in the Department of Law, also known as the DoL you’ve been to my office, so you must know that I work in the international division. In fact, you had to have read my name plate when you visited me, but my official title is Paralegal as I don’t have my law degree. I review international laws and how they will affect us and suggest changes. I work with lawyers, but I do not have the same standing as them.”

“Let me go out on a limb here and say that they don’t respect you, which is why you hate working there. They probably over-work you and undervalue your talents,” Hermione commented.

Malfoy was still staring at the picture in his hands. “There is an attitude about who is more of an asset, a lawyer or a paralegal...”

Hermione huffed. “Why do people always try to find ways to show how they’re better than others? No one’s better than anyone! We’re all the same! We’re all of equal value!”

“Admittedly, you’re more valuable than I am,” Malfoy muttered.

Hermione took the frame from his hands and he finally looked at her. “No. I am worth as much as you are because we’re all *human*,” she stated emphatically, then modified her statement, “we’re all living creatures with thoughts, feelings, and emotions and we deserve basic respect!” Her eyes were alight after her tirade.

“Well, that’s nice to hear, Granger, but try telling that to my boss or any of the lawyers in the Department of Law.”

She stood. “I will!”

He stood as well and blocked her path. “No, you won’t.”

“Why, yes, I will. It is absolutely ridiculous. You work *so* hard. And you’re incredibly smart and they don’t value you at all? That, I cannot abide.”

She pushed past him forcefully. He tried to grab at her to stop her, but Hermione was on the war path. She made it to the lifts before him and he watched in concern as the doors slid closed on her determined face. Hermione brushed off his concern and squared her shoulders. To hell with Evans if he thought he could push around *her* husband.

Not on Hermione's watch.

*

Draco stared at Hermione's determined face as the lift grills slid shut and cursed loudly. A glance over his shoulder and he cursed again, this time more quietly; Potter and Weasley were approaching. He turned back to the lifts and viciously pressed the button, willing one of them to appear quickly; the more time Hermione had the worse it would be for him. Draco swore the lift was taking *minutes* to arrive.

"Hey, Granger," Potter stated casually, leaning on one side of the lifts. Weasley leaned on the other.

Draco's eye twitched at the salutation. "What?" he snapped.

"What's gotten you into such a bad mood?" Potter asked, hands fiddling with his wand.

"We noticed Hermione storming out of her office. You didn't do something stupid that would make us have to hex you, now would you?" Weasley asked, clearly hoping that they would be able to hex him.

Draco jabbed the lift button again and felt his panic mounting. "Sod off." He was failing at building his walls.

"I don't think we will, *Granger*," Potter responded leisurely.

"Just answer the question, Granger," Weasley said leaning slightly toward Draco.

Draco clenched his fists, but refused to reach for his wand, Granger would never forgive him if he got into a fight with her best mates. "Granger's off to talk to my boss."

"Granger? Granger who?" Weasley asked, looking delighted. "You're right in front of us."

Draco jabbed the button again. *Where the fuck is this lift?*

"Hermione Granger."

"Ah, Hermione. What did you do to make her go talk to your boss?" Potter asked.

The lift finally dinged open and Draco threw himself into it, jabbing the button for the fifth floor. To his dismay, Potter and Weasley easily slid onto the lift before the doors shut—painstakingly slowly. After another brief pause, the lift shuddered to life and began its whirlwind trip to the fifth floor.

Draco fidgeted with his engagement ring, his mind racing. So what if his boss overworked him and underpaid him? So what if his colleagues had no respect for him and often made snide remarks under their breath? So what if almost no one spoke to him in the office? At least he was employed—and at the Ministry no less. As a former Death Eater, that was something worth safeguarding.

“What’d you do?” Potter repeated.

“Don’t you two have jobs to do?” Draco protested hoping to avoid answering all together.

Potter responded in what Draco had to assume was his Auror voice, “Answer the question, Granger.”

“Ugh! My name is Malfoy! And my *darling wife* is off to tell off my boss for ‘not appreciating me’ which means I’m moments from getting fired from my job and the Ministry will never re-hire me!” Draco finally snapped, his anxiety overriding his need to keep this information to himself.

Potter seemed taken aback. Weasley frowned.

“Wait. You’re telling me that Hermione is going to speak *in your defense*?” Potter asked.

“That’s what I said, oh, Chosen One.”

“Wow.”

“Wow,” Weasley agreed.

The doors to the lift slid open and Draco propelled himself down the corridors toward his division. The two Aurors flanked him, both interested in hearing what Hermione had to say.

Draco wasn’t sure if he was happy or upset that he couldn’t hear her shouting up and down the hallways. When he reached his boss’ office, the door swung open and out walked his wife. She looked triumphant. His boss, Julius Evans was seated at his desk looking intimidated. Draco wanted to scream. He was definitely going to get fired.

“Oh, speak of the devil,” Hermione greeted. She pulled Draco into Evans’ office (leaving the door wide open) and said, “Now’s a good a time as any.”

Draco looked between the two of them, confused. Finally, after a very tense moment of silence, Evans’ cleared his throat and scratched at his short beard.

“I believe, Mr. Granger, that an apology for my behaviour is needed.” He paused and glanced at Hermione who was staring daggers at him. “And, I would be remiss to not grant you additional vacation days and a raise for all the important and essential work that you have put in over the past three years in this department. It has also been brought to my attention that you work most nights until 6:30 or 7:00 in the evening, which means that we have given you too much work. This will be corrected so that you may leave at the regular time of 5 pm and enjoy your evenings and weekends with your wife.”

Hermione nodded in satisfaction, then looked at Draco. “Well?” she said pointedly.

“Oh. Er—thank you sir, but that won’t be necessary. I am very happy—” she cut him off.

“Don’t undersell yourself after all the work I just put in,” she muttered to him harshly.

“Thank him and move on!”

“Er—thank you, Mr. Evans.”

“Of course, Granger. My apologies again.” The man before him looked ill at having to say such words, or perhaps ill based on the fact that Hermione was still standing there with her hands on her hips.

She nodded, all business. “Thank you, Mr. Evans. It can never be easy admitting our mistakes,” she said acidly. Hermione pulled Draco from the office and slammed the door shut.

His whole office had heard the apology, along with Potter and Weasley. Draco was mortified, but did his best to put his mask in place, quickly building his internal walls. Potter and Weasley let out a laugh and told Hermione that she ‘still got it’ before departing.

“See ya later, Mr. Granger,” Weasley called before disappearing down the hallway.

Hermione walked over to his office and stared at the door. “Are you going to let me in or what?” she asked.

Draco sighed and tried to ignore the stares of his colleagues. He unwarded his door and ushered her inside. She took a seat with a triumphant smile.

“I’m waiting for my ‘thank you.’”

Draco scowled back at her. “Why would I thank you? You just ruined my career,” he accused.

“Pardon me? I just got you a raise *and* more vacation days *and* less work load!”

“My boss is going to hate me even more now after you humiliated him like that.”

“Wouldn’t he hate *me*, not you?”

“How could anyone hate you? You’re Hermione Granger, saviour of the magical world, brightest witch of our age.”

She hesitated, but soldiered on, angry, “Because I’m the one that embarrassed him, not you!”

“You’re my wife!” he shouted back.

“We’re different people. He should be able to separate our behaviours! Besides, if he treats you unfairly, you should report him! I can’t believe you haven’t already. The workload alone...I asked the other paralegal, Meghan Markle, and she said that she barely has enough work to make it to 4 pm most days. How on earth is that fair?”

“When did you have time to talk to Meghan?”

“*Meghan*, eh? So, you’re on a first name basis with Meghan, then?” Hermione accused.

Draco rolled his eyes as his ring finger spiked with pain. “Can you not? We’re colleagues and she’s actually decent to me, of course we’re on a first name basis.”

Though Draco recognised that they were married and they were not on a first name basis—even if he now thought of her as Hermione, she remained ‘Granger’ when he addressed her.

“Why are you so angry?” she threw back. “I’m just helping you.”

“Well, it doesn’t seem like help when there will be repercussions.”

“If there are any, let me know, I’ll take care of them.”

Draco clenched his jaw. “I can solve my own problems.”

“No, you can’t, Malfoy, or you wouldn’t be in this position in the first place.”

He huffed. She was right, of course. “Whatever. Just let me handle it next time.”

“You know what this reminds me of?”

“What?” he asked tersely.

“When you ‘handled’ my phone when I didn’t see a need to fix it.” She was calmer now. “I admit it now. I needed a new phone, but I was just used to living life like that, even if it was an inconvenience to me. Now I’m pointing out the problem in your life and *helping you*, like you did for me.”

He stared at her in silence. She made a great comparison. *Stupid smart Granger*.

“Why did he call me Mr. Granger?” Draco finally responded.

She stared at him, then broke out into laughter, the tension in the office finally dissipating. “I don’t know. I didn’t tell him to. When I said I wanted to talk about my husband, he said,” she made her voice go deep, ““Oh, Mr. Granger?””

“Has Weasley sent out a news bulletin that I’m unaware of?” Draco whined. “It’s hardly fair. Normally women take men’s last names anyways. No one is calling you Mrs. Malfoy!”

Hermione smirked. “They probably assumed my last name was cooler than yours.”

Draco scowled.

“Now, will you please thank me for all of my generosity?” she said again.

“Fine,” he said begrudgingly, “thank you. But, much like you with your phone, I would prefer if you didn’t just go ahead with it before consulting me—and against my express wishes.”

“Fine. That’s fair.”

They stared at one another across the table for a moment.

“You should go all ape shit on your boss as well. Your office is far too small for how much work you put into that department.”

Hermione shrugged. “Maybe.” She stood. “Well, we have that get together tonight, don’t forget. I’ll see you at home for dinner.”

She left the office and closed the door behind her.

Draco stared off into space for a long time. He wasn’t used to people standing up for him anymore. Not since the war. Say what you will about his father, but (at least pre-sixth year) that man would stand up for Draco all day, every day. It was strange to experience it again and it made his heart warm. He’d have to get her something nice. His mind wandered to gifts he could pick up for her after work.

*

Hermione jumped as Draco landed in the lobby before her eyes. She had just settled into the sofa, arriving home some minutes ago herself.

“Evening,” he greeted cordially, pulling something from his briefcase.

Hermione watched as he approached her with a book. She stared at it. “What’s that?”

“Granger, you’re supposed to greet someone when they enter a room,” he tsked.

She rolled her eyes. “Hi.” She took the book that he was offering her. “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. I love this series. Why’re you handing it to me?” she asked.

“It’s yours.”

“Huh?” Her copy was in her room on her bookshelf.

“I mean...I got it for you.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah...”

“Oh! Thank you! But this—this is a first edition, Malfoy.” Her eyes went wide as she took in the intricate details on the hardcover.

He shrugged.

“My word, and it’s signed!” She looked up at him. “Why on earth are you giving this to me?”

“It’s a thank you present,” he explained. “I thought you might like it.”

Hermione felt butterflies float through her stomach. She stood and pulled him into a tight hug. “Thank you! Thank you so much! I’ll have to read it right away,” she muttered to herself. “And cast protection spells of course...”

“Not so fast, Granger. We’re going out tonight, remember? Plus, there’s dinner. I don’t want to lose you to literature for the rest of the evening.”

She sighed, her fingers running delicately over the hard cover.

“Fine. But you better distract me, or I’ll just be thinking about the book anyway, which is more or less the same thing...”

*

Draco sipped on his firewhiskey slowly. He was contentedly squished into a booth between Hermione and Ginny. He didn’t expect going into the evening that he would want to be anywhere near the Weasley/Potter in question, given how much grief she had given him, but he had to admit that she was witty. It was also better to be beside Ginny than her husband or Ron. George, Potter, and Angelina were crammed into the booth opposite them. His Slytherin friends, featuring Ron, had decided to abandon him in favour of playing a rowdy game of drunken exploding snap in a different corner of the pub.

As per usual, Draco didn’t say much, but he was still riding high from his gift to Hermione. She was clearly in love with it. The hug she had given him had made his heart race. He realised then that he should have been showering her with rare books as gifts for weeks. *Idiot*. One sure-fire way to Hermione’s heart was books. He would buy her a whole library if it meant she would stay married to him.

“I can’t wait for your match Sunday,” Potter declared loudly to his wife. “You’re going to kill it, babe!”

Ginny grinned widely. “I suspect we will destroy the Falcons, yes. But they have improved this year, it might not be as in the bag as it was last year.”

“The Falcons got nothing on us, Ass Cap!” Angelina declared. Draco knew that Angelina was Captain of the Harpies, but unsure why she would call Ginny ‘Ass Cap’ and why Ginny didn’t react negatively.

“If I called you an ass, Granger’d have my head,” Draco muttered.

Ginny heard and chuckled. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“It’s short for assistant captain,” Hermione explained. Draco should have made that rather obvious connection—his intoxication was showing.

“No, it’s because she’s the captain of asses!” George declared, causing the table to break out into laughter, even Draco joined in.

“Takes one to know one,” Ginny finally said.

“I bet the Falcons will almost win, but you’ll catch the snitch. Your team has an excellent seeker,” Draco commented without reflection.

Ginny and Potter turned to look at him. He realised he should not have said anything.

“Been keeping up on the Harpies, then, Granger?” Ginny asked mockingly. “I think you might be developing a soft spot for me, because if I recall, two weeks ago you went on a rant about how an all women team was preposterous.”

Draco restrained himself from flushing. “I didn’t mean it like that,” he defended himself, sensing his wife’s rage at that statement. “I just meant—co-ed allows for the best of the best instead of looking only at gender.”

“Don’t you want women to have a place of comradery away from gits like you?” Potter asked.

“No, that’s not—” Draco turned to Hermione, “That’s not what I meant. They’re twisting my words.” His drunkenness was not helping him articulate what he wanted to say, nor mask his need for his wife to understand how much her opinion mattered to him.

“Seriously, Malfoy, what is wrong with you?” Hermione responded, but she smiled at the end. “Okay guys, let’s cut him some slack, he doesn’t get that we’re joking.” She patted him on the shoulder condescendingly. “It’s just a joke, my dearest husband. It’s what you do when you want to laugh, something I know you’re not familiar with.”

Draco grinned at her while the table chuckled good naturedly.

“Do you really think we’ll win thanks to Turner and not my superior chaser skills? That’s rude to say to the assistant captain,” Ginny continued needling him.

“Ass Cap!” Angelina and George butted in loudly, sloshing their drinks over the table.

“Of course not, Red, you’re better than they are, but they’re more desperate, and besides your keeper is not the best...she’s decent, but not excellent.”

“Red?” George asked.

“Well, there’s too many Weasleys in this bar to call her Weasley.”

“You could just call her Ginny, Draco,” Angelina suggested. Draco shuddered slightly, not used to being called his first name.

“But then I might think that he is developing a soft spot for me,” Ginny added in, elbowing him.

“I feel the need to point out that all us Weasleys have red hair, Granger,” George chimed in again, “So, calling her ‘Red’ isn’t a great distinction.”

“Well, Granger makes me call Weasley—I mean Ron, Ron. So, there’s Red, Ron, and...you.”

“What’s my cute nickname?” George asked, planting his head in his hands and gazing at Draco lovingly. Draco held back a smile. He could see why most people liked this solo twin; he was very silly to the point that it always won you over. His wife was giggling at his behaviour.

Draco shrugged in response. “It’ll take some time to develop. For now, you’re Weasley.”

“Aye-aye, Captain Granger!”

The group at the table followed George’s suit and raised their glasses to cheers exuberantly. Draco took a sip, but looked around and saw that everyone was draining their drinks. George held his eye until Draco followed suit and drained the rest of his drink...it was almost full when he started.

George let out a loud belch as he finished his beer and Angelina smacked him upside the head, then pulled him in for a kiss. George pulled away and stood, dragging his wife with him. “We’ll get the next round,” he declared, marching off with Angelina like they were in the military.

Draco couldn’t stop himself from smiling.

Ginny slid out from beside Draco and sat beside Potter, linking their hands. “So, you’ll be there cheering us on then?” Ginny asked.

Draco looked around until he realised Ginny was indeed talking to him. Purchasing a ticket wasn’t an issue at all, but Draco thought it would be weird to be at the game separately from all of his wife’s friends. What if they ran into one another by accident?

“Oh, right. I forgot to tell him,” Hermione said. “Ginny gets us all a booth. You’re coming with me.”

“You go to the games?” Draco asked, surprised.

“Obviously. My best friend is playing.”

Ginny glowed in response. “And we’re finally back in the UK, so travel is easy.”

“But you hate Quidditch,” Draco continued, still dumbfounded.

Hermione shrugged. “It’s not all bad when everyone’s there making it fun. I would never go to a match alone. Besides, every once in a while, I find it entertaining. Particularly when Ginny’s playing.”

“Well, er—thanks for the invitation, Red,” Draco finally said awkwardly. He was trying to think of a way to turn it down without seeming rude; he had no desire to spend more time with the Weasleys. He did, however, desire spending more time with his wife.

He took too long to respond, and Ginny was talking again. “...gonna be awesome. We have this new formation we’re going to test out. You better bring a big sign that I can read from my broom, Granger,” Ginny was saying.

“Oh, by the way, can we cut it with this ‘Granger’ business. I didn’t take her last name,” Draco complained. “How many people have you told about this? My boss has stopped calling me Malfoy!”

Ginny smirked. “I haven’t spoken to anyone about it.”

“That must be a lie, how else would people know?” he queried.

She shrugged and smirked in triumph. “But, I for one, will never stop calling you Granger, Granger.”

Hermione giggled. She was very drunk. Draco eyed her in concern for a moment, so he was distracted when Pansy shoved into the booth beside them and Ron into the side opposite. Pansy and Ron both had soot covering their hands and faces.

“We lost at exploding snap,” Ron explained.

“Rather spectacularly,” Pansy added in. “What’re you all chatting about here?”

“How much Granger likes being called by his new last name,” Potter remarked.

Draco let loose a groan as the table chuckled. George and Angelina arrived at the table to see their seats had been snagged. Instead of finding other chairs or realizing they ought to go to a different booth, they forcibly shoved the booth’s occupants over to take a seat. They doled out the drinks and apologized to Pansy and Ron for not bringing them anything.

The table descended into a cacophony of noise as several overlapping drunken conversations collided with others. Draco found himself pulled into a conversation about Quidditch with Potter without realising.

At some point, George had pulled Angelina out of the booth and began twirling her around the empty spaces in the bar to the music that was playing. Draco watched as other couples joined in, dancing ridiculously to the slow and solemn love ballad. It was eventually just him and Hermione left in the booth. She looked on longingly at the other couples. Some were dancing in pairs, others were in a large mob and jumping around crazily, a stark juxtaposition to the music itself.

“Did you want to—er—join?” Draco asked awkwardly, chugging more of his firewhiskey. Draco was comfortable dancing ballroom dances when he had a clear head, not dancing like a fool in front of others.

Hermione looked at him. “Did you want to?”

Draco shrugged. “If you do.”

“I don’t want to drag you—” Draco pulled her out of the booth and onto the makeshift dance floor. He spun her in a circle, then pulled back and began shifting his weight inexpertly, trying to mimic George’s carefree ‘dance’ (if you could call it that) while maintaining his grip on her hands.

Hermione smiled and began dancing ridiculously. She took the lead, making him throw his hands about and shake his hips like a fool. Draco felt a blush on his face, but looking around, all he saw were happy drunk people. The other patrons faded into the back of his mind as Draco let himself embrace the silly. He even let go of Hermione's hands so he could dance more crazily. When the long love ballad finally came to a close, the group cheered loudly and broke apart.

Hermione approached him again and took his hand. "It was fun to see you let go," she stated happily, a flush present on her darker skin.

Draco pulled her closer. "You see me let go at least once a week," he murmured darkly.

Hermione flushed more as her eyes widened. She glanced around to make sure no one had heard and smacked his chest. "Be appropriate," she scolded. Hermione glanced around again and saw that most couples were now engaged in an intimate conversation or had already slunk off for the night. Draco watched her check her watch and notice how late it was. "I think I want to head home."

"As you wish, my darling dearest wife," Draco responded. "Did you want to say goodbye?"

"I don't want to interrupt people..." she responded awkwardly, her eyes landing on Ginny and Potter vigorously snogging.

Draco chuckled. "Fair enough."

Hermione reached out her hand and he took it without hesitation. She led him to the fireplace and spun them home.

Saturday, April 16

It was contract day, which is what Hermione had dubbed it in her mind. She was still groggy and hung over from the previous night's shenanigans, but as she had done the previous week, Flopsy gave her some hangover potion and she popped into the loo to freshen up. Instead of going frumpy, she pulled on one of her negligées and matching panties, excited to see the look in Draco's eyes when he saw her standing in next to nothing.

She hastily brushed her teeth, then pulled her curtains closed so that it wasn't so blindingly bright when they had sex. She wished it were even darker, but alas, it's impossible to win at everything.

He knocked on her door raptly and Hermione told Crookshanks that it was her 'private time.' The cat tilted his head, but hopped from her bed and stalked to the door. When the door was opened, he circled Draco's feet once before heading down the hallway toward the solarium (Hermione found him there a lot, it was his favourite room).

Draco stood still as a statue in the door, staring at her sexy undergarments. She smirked in delight. He pulled her to him and began kissing her deeply. Hermione sighed into his mouth

and brought him even closer to her. He pulled back from the kiss and took a deep breath.

“I like this, Granger,” he huffed.

She smiled in response. Hermione pulled him into the room and led him to her bed. He shut the door with his foot.

Once on the bed, Draco slid between her legs and lay atop her. Hermione loved the feeling of his weight pressing her down. His hand trailed over her breasts, then up her neck and into her hair. He pulled her into another languid kiss. It was much like the week before, slow, but passionate. He was clearly here to take his time.

Hermione moved against his waist, perhaps a little too vigorously considering how gently he was kissing her, but she couldn't help it. He unleashed something in her. Draco grabbed her hip to hold her in place and slow her down. She groaned both in frustration and desire.

Draco pulled away from the kiss and stared down at her. “The goal is five,” he stated calmly in his silky voice, “And two for me...” Hermione tried to reach for his pants, but he easily caught her hand. “We'll do you, then me, then you for a while, then both of us.”

Hermione nodded quickly, just wanting him to return to touching her.

Draco brought his mouth to her neck and began trailing kisses down to her collarbone. He sucked on it wetly for a moment and she worried that she had received yet another hickey that she would forget to glamour. She had had a hell of a time remembering to cover up the ones from their honeymoon. He distracted her from this thought by trailing his tongue over the swell of her breasts. He massaged her nipples through the negligée, making her heat flood her core.

“How're you so good at this?” she muttered, despite herself.

He chuckled darkly, but didn't respond. Hermione's abdomen clenched as he pulled her top down. He met some resistance, but then pulled harder and the delicate straps broke.

“Oops, sorry,” he stated, not sounding sorry at all.

Hermione's panties were drenched. She had never made someone want to rip off her clothes; it was a turn on.

Draco noticed her squirming, but said nothing. He brought his lips to her nipple and began sucking on it gently. Hermione thrust her chest into his face. He pushed her back to the bed easily and she groaned in frustration. He chuckled again, then ghosted his tongue across her nipples, massaging the breast that wasn't currently in his mouth.

“So...perfect,” he muttered.

Hermione moaned, near laughing at how ridiculous it was that she was moments from orgasming. He fiddled with her breasts some more, massaging them, pinching them, laving them wetly with his tongue, sucking on them and leaving bruises in his wake. Hermione tried to rub against him as much as she could, but he wouldn't have it. He kept holding her still.

He finally let go when she was keening loudly and Hermione sighed at her ability to get some friction between them. After only a few thrusts against his thigh, Draco gently took her vow hand and she was done.

Hermione groaned to the ceiling.

He brought her in for a kiss once she finally stopped babbling and jerking her hips against his thigh. Draco rolled to the side of her after a few moments.

“So, wife, I believe it’s my turn.”

“But how’re you so good at this?” she muttered, a deep flush permanently painting her face.

He just shrugged. “Lots of practice...? I assume it has something to do with our magical cores being in line.”

Him mentioning a lot of practice made her stomach swoop. She did not have ‘a lot’ of practice. She had a fair amount, but...She bit her lip, now suddenly nervous and anxious about her performance.

“What’s wrong?” he asked softly, stroking her hair.

Hermione refused to answer. She didn’t want to ruin their contract day by talking about her own insecurities. What she wanted was to continue having fantastic orgasms. So, she pushed away her thoughts as best she could and rolled onto him. She brought him in for a searing kiss, which he returned in kind. She found that she was more brazen if things were a little wilder than when they were slower.

Hermione grinded against his waist insistently as their mouths got reacquainted. She pulled back suddenly and sat up. Without giving herself time to hesitate or second guess, she put her hand into his pants and shoved them down, but not all the way, too focussed on freeing him from his pyjamas. She gripped his length and was impressed at the heft. She knew he had a large penis; they had sex several times now, but feeling it in her hand was a different experience altogether.

Hermione ran her hand up and down his length then dared to look at his face. He was staring at her intently, his eyes moving from her exposed breasts to her hand. Hermione felt a heat between her legs. His facial expression was definitely setting a fire in her loins.

Hermione shimmied back farther and leaned forward, taking him into her mouth with no hesitation. He seemed surprised because he sat up slightly and choked on his own spit.

“Fu—ck!” Draco exclaimed.

Hermione wanted to smirk, but she was busy. She bobbed her head up and down his length, pressing her tongue against him. He was gripping the sheets tightly, a plaintive moan falling from his lips.

“Gods, yes, Hermione, *fuck*—” Draco muttered.

Her heart raced as she continued to suck on him, adding a hand at the base for where she couldn't reach. She glanced up at him to see his eyes screwed shut. Quite suddenly his hips were snapping upward and her mouth was being filled.

Hermione swallowed.

Draco was breathing deeply, his chest rising and falling dramatically while he stared at the ceiling, barely blinking.

"Fuck me," he muttered.

Hermione chuckled. "That's the goal," she responded.

"Fuck, woman. You deserve way more than five just based on that performance alone."

Hermione glowed with pleasure at the praise. "Five is more than enough. Hell. One is enough."

He frowned at her. "One is most definitely not enough."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "One is enough."

He was suddenly on her, kissing her deeply. He pulled back, "You deserve at least five."

Draco kissed her again deeply, making her heart race and her mind blank. His hand descended between her legs and began rubbing at her, just avoiding her clit with every stroke to drive her mental. She pushed against him, demanding more, but he would just retreat, deepening the kiss instead of moving his hand where she wanted it.

Hermione was just about to let loose a frustrated sigh, when his finger ghosted over her clit and caused her to groan loudly instead. Her eyes were closed at this point, but she knew that he was smirking. Draco recaptured her lips and deepened their kiss, barely moving his fingers at all. Hermione was desperately trying to grind against him, much to her chagrin, but as usual, he easily held her in place. She had still to determine when exactly it was that he worked out.

Hermione's heart was racing as he pulled back from the kiss and stared at her intently. Then he dropped his head to her neck and began nipping and kissing it. His fingers were suddenly in her, contrasting his lazy pace on her neck. He liked to trick her like this, she realized.

Draco bit her ear lobe and Hermione gasped and bucked upward. "Do you like that, Granger?" he muttered in her ear before licking her neck. His fingers pumped in and out of her, making her squirm.

Hermione nodded repeatedly through her moans. His fingers did not slow their pace.

"My sweet innocent wife...just loves getting fucked..."

She was so close to the edge, practically sobbing for him to bring her there. "*Please-please—OH gods!*"

Draco's breath came out in huffs across her neck. "Come for me, my sweet," he encouraged between lazy kisses along her neck, his thumb pressing on her clit insistently.

Hermione was all too pleased to oblige, her heart stopping momentarily and her hips slamming into his hand unattractively as she let out a plaintive moan. Her shuddering breath was the only sound in the room for a long time as she came down. Draco was lazily playing with her hair.

"Did you want to take a break?" he asked.

Hermione glanced at him, but had to look away, her heart was still pounding from his earlier actions and whenever she looked at him naked it made her stomach burn.

"A break?" She reached down tentatively and landed on his erection. "But it's your turn..."

He closed his eyes and breathed deeply for a moment before gently pushing her hand away. "Technically, it's still your turn. But I thought you might want some food first. I'm starving."

Hermione considered this. They never extended their contract day throughout the day itself. He would show up, fuck her senseless, and they would more or less pretend that it had never happened. It was always one session as soon as they woke up and nothing more. She was worried what extending it throughout the day would mean.

Yet, she said, "I could eat."

Draco sat up and smiled. "Excellent. Flopsy!" he called.

Hermione shrieked and pulled the covers up and over herself just as Flopsy cracked into the room. Hermione smacked Draco's chest. He didn't seem to care that Flopsy could likely see his naked body. Hermione, however, felt very differently.

"Could we take breakfast in here?"

"Yes, Mr. Draco," she bowed and disappeared again.

"Warn me next time, Malfoy!" Hermione exclaimed. "Jesus! I don't fancy our house elf seeing me in the nude!"

Draco shrugged. "She changed my nappies."

"Ugh!" Hermione pulled the covers more tightly around herself, expecting Flopsy's return shortly.

"You said *'our* house elf.'"

Hermione stared at him blankly. "I suppose I did..."

Draco seemed to like that she had said that whilst Hermione was wondering if she was fundamentally changing as a person, thinking of Flopsy as *'hers.'*

Flopsy returned a moment later, interrupting their thoughts and brought the food over to the reading nook. She seemed to know that Hermione prohibited food in bed.

“Thank you, Flopsy,” Hermione called.

“Yes, thank you!”

The elf bowed and disappeared.

Draco unashamedly walked over to the reading nook, stark naked and pulled the curtains open. Hermione wished he hadn't. She found her wand and summoned her robe to wrap around herself. She threw the sheet at Draco.

“Cover yourself, it's very distracting.”

Draco leered. “Can't resist?”

Hermione rolled her eyes, but he wasn't wrong. She settled into the nook and began slicing into her French toast. They ate in silence, but it wasn't uncomfortable. In fact, it was very comfortable. The sun was shining through the windows and warming her skin, making the moment even nicer. Hermione glanced over at his bare chest and giggled.

He looked at her. “What?”

She giggled again. “Sorry, it's just that...I think you might actually be *reflecting* the light.”

Draco sighed. “The Malfoy curse of pale skin. I might burn, actually.” He examined his chest briefly.

Hermione scoffed. “It's been ten minutes.”

“Granger, you highly overestimate how often my chest sees the light of day. In fact, it's probably five hours total for the whole year...”

“That's ridiculous. You don't like sunbathing? Or swimming?”

“I burn too easily to sunbathe. Besides, you're dark already, why do you like sunbathing?”

“I love the warmth on my skin.” Hermione sighed and leaned more toward the window. “It's just...delightful.”

“Well, you have gorgeous skin.”

“Oh—thanks.” Hermione blushed.

They descended back into comfortable silence, finishing their meals. Hermione was unsure of what to do now. Draco had promised her five, she was currently at two and he was at one. Plus, she didn't much fancy fucking right after eating, since she was certain to get gassy and possibly nauseous, depending on Draco's vigour, but she also didn't really want to say that to him...

Luckily, he spoke up, “Want to watch some of the Prince show?” he asked, smoothing back his hair casually. Hermione followed his hands and saw the tension in his neck; he was less relaxed than he was trying to show. He cared about her answer.

“Oh. Yeah. Yeah. Sure. I’d—like that. Some time to digest before...erm...you know.”

Draco chuckled, summoned his wand, and banished their dishes to the sink. “You know, for someone who is a sex fiend, you’re awfully shy about it, Granger.”

Hermione flushed deep red. “I am not a *sex fiend*!” she was scandalized. “You’re—you’re the one that keeps insisting on more and more orgasms.”

“And you’re the one that keeps insisting that I fuck you,” he threw back good heartedly.

“Are we watching Fresh Prince or not?” she asked, trying to change the topic.

Draco let it slide, probably because he realized through his ring that she was far too embarrassed for her own good. They made their way back to her bed and Hermione set up the show. Draco yawned and leaned into her, snuggling into her side as the show began. Hermione was tense at first, unsure of how to proceed with this romantic moment, never mind that she *was* still thinking about sex and the fact that he was cuddling her *naked*.

Several episodes later, both Hermione and Draco were snoring softly as they cuddled one another. The laptop set to the side, forgotten.

Hermione awoke to Draco’s face close to hers.

“Good afternoon, wife,” he murmured.

She had been having the most delicious dream in which Draco was putting his fingers to good use. “Huh?” she responded intelligently.

He kissed her on the lips as she woke fully. Then, without further ado, his fingers were sliding into her. Hermione groaned, her eyes rolling shut again as she shifted against his hand. Hermione could feel him pressed against her, his heat throbbing against her leg.

“Good *Gods*!” she whimpered.

“Can you believe it,” he murmured, his lips trailing over her jaw. “I woke up and you, you little minx, were running your hand up and down my poor, sleeping body.”

Hermione felt heat flood her face. “I—”

“Shh,” he coaxed. “I loved it. But then, I realized that my wife was having a very inappropriate dream and that was why she was running her hands all over my innocent body.” He curled his fingers inside her and she let out a noise she didn’t know she had in her. “Oh, have I found it, then?” He curled his fingers again. Hermione keened as she saw black. “I’ll wait until you’re done to tell you the rest of the story.”

His fingers kept stroking her g-spot, almost lovingly, making her first scream, then sob in pleasure. Hermione came hard and unexpectedly. She was hit with such a force of pleasure her back cracked when her orgasm hit. Her body vibrated beside his and she reached out for him haphazardly, muttering his name as well as a myriad of gibberish.

Draco made a big show of licking his drenched fingers clean.

As she finally caught her breath, too afraid to look into his smug face, he continued his story. "So, there I am, being accosted by my lovely wife, and I thought to myself. This sex fiend is so horny she couldn't even wait until she was awake." Hermione choked on her spit. "So, I figure, might as well wake her up before she starts something she can't stop..."

"That's not...that didn't happen."

He stroked her sweaty hair softly. "Don't worry, darling, there's nothing to be embarrassed of. You're more than welcome to wake me up any day by touching me. In fact, I would love if I woke up *every day* like that..."

She smacked him, but so weakly it barely did anything at all. He kissed her hand and Hermione's stomach flipped in response to his tender gesture.

Her stomach grumbled audibly. "What time is it?"

Draco shrugged. Hermione reached out for her wand and it flew into her waiting hand. She waved it and saw that it was now 6 pm.

"Holy Merlin, we slept through the whole day!"

Draco seemed unconcerned. "Shall we have dinner?"

Hermione blinked up at him. How was it that they had somehow stretched their morning routine into a full day? She did feel, at the very least, that she ought to return the favour before they ate anything, given that it would be the second time in a row he got her off and he got nothing.

So, Hermione nodded. "But first," and she reached down for his hard length and stroked it slowly. He grinned. She pushed him back onto his back and slid onto him with a groan. Draco hadn't been expecting this, apparently because he swore loudly.

"Just a little thank you, for earlier, then dinner," Hermione clarified.

Draco moaned as she began riding him. As usual, she needed things to be fast and passionate if she was going to be in charge, otherwise, she'd lose her nerve. So, she set a swift pace and occasionally lowered her head to litter his neck with kisses and bites, since he seemed to like doing it to her so much. He definitely liked it, moaning deeply.

She took him deep and fast, sliding up and down his cock with conviction. The feel of him beneath her, within her—it was perfection. They fit so well together.

The tension in Hermione's core was moments from snapping as she rolled her hips against his, looking down at his hungry silver eyes. Hermione brought their foreheads together as they called out each other's name desperately, coming undone.

Hermione took longer to recover, as usual, and rolled off of him with a sigh.

"So, dinner?" she asked.

Draco nodded, but instead of summoning Flopsy, he rolled her onto her back and began kissing his way down her body. Hermione squirmed against his attentions.

"I would say it's about dinner time," he murmured darkly. "I'm absolutely ravenous."

Hermione gasped as he laid a kiss on her clit. His tongue lapped through her folds languidly, seeming to cherish every moment. Draco thrust his tongue into her, making her walls quiver and her back arch. Then, he moved up to her clit and trailed circles across it with his tongue. Draco slid two fingers into her and curled them up against her g-spot again. Hermione groaned, shoving a hand into his hair to keep him in place. Her hips jerked against his face, seeking her pleasure.

"That's my girl," he rumbled against her clit as she whimpered.

Draco stroked her clit over and over with his strong tongue, his fingers relentless inside her, making her clench and coil tighter and tighter. He determinedly held her to the bed, her hips doing their best to ride his face.

"So delicious," he murmured against her heated flesh.

"*Fuck*," she keened.

Hermione's world exploded in pleasure with a final curl of his fingers and she clamped down, gushing onto his fingers and chin. She spasmed against him for several long moments. Hermione stared down at his molten eyes as he continued to feast on her and she threw back her head to the ceiling as another orgasm ripped through her, making her legs shake and toes curl.

"Draco!" she moaned to her ceiling, unable to think beyond where he was touching her. He stayed there, extending her pleasure with his tongue.

Hermione kept her eyes shut for a long time, breathing heavily. She finally unclenched her hand from his head and propped herself on an elbow to look down at him. Draco smirked. He licked clean his fingers that were literally dripping and wiped his chin with a haughty smirk.

"If I'm not wrong, you came twice?"

Hermione would have blushed if her face was not already red with exertion. She collapsed back onto the bed with a feeble moan. Draco chuckled. He brought his body up to lay beside hers and stroked her hair comfortingly while Hermione tried to reconnect with the world around her.

He helped her back into her robe a few minutes later.

Once again, they ate in her room, snuggled up in the reading nook. Flopsy gave them a wide smile, but didn't comment. After the meal, Draco suggested more Fresh Prince, to which Hermione happily agreed, needing to digest still.

Around ten that evening, Draco suddenly (and mid-episode) closed her laptop lid and pushed it onto her side table. He pulled her in for a slow, deliberate kiss. Hermione sighed and rolled toward him. He was really good at kissing.

As he captured her lips, he fluidly pulled her out of her robe and laid between her thighs. Hermione immediately began moving her hips against his, trying to get him to pay attention to where she wanted him to, but he didn't respond, focussed on her mouth. They laid tangled together snogging for so long, Hermione thought they might not even have sex. As if hearing her thought, he began moving against her gently.

Hermione sighed in delight. His hand fiddled with her clit a bit before sliding down to stretch her open. He pulled out his fingers after only a few strokes, apparently satisfied with how drenched she was. Draco pushed into her slowly and stared down into her eyes. Hermione pulled him back into a kiss as he rocked against her gently, just relishing in their connection. They were like this for an impossibly long time, exchanging languid kisses with his hips tilting ever so slightly.

Finally, when Hermione whispered, "*Draco*," he began speeding up. But even then, it was so gradual and the pace he set was such a stark contrast to earlier that it made Hermione's heart flutter.

Draco took her vow hand and brought their lips back together before they both came undone, breathy and euphoric.

He stayed on top of her for a long time, kissing her deeply, trailing his lips across her jaw, muttering unintelligibly to himself.

When he pulled away, Hermione shivered. She felt cold and alone as he located his pyjamas near the door and pulled them on in the darkness.

"Night, beautiful," was all he said before slipping out of her room.

Hermione's heart was still pounding.

Boundaries

Chapter Notes

Happy Valentine's Day!

This chapter and the next one were originally one chapter that was 19K long and it just felt too long, so I broke it up into two halves...Second half is coming up as soon as I edit it one last time.

Sunday, April 17

The Quidditch match was as rambunctious as ever. The players' family and friends' booth was jam-packed. Hermione never loved these outings, but she didn't hate them by any means. What she disliked the most was feeling left out by her friends who were all Quidditch obsessed and she hated being awkwardly shoved up against strangers; the booth really wasn't large enough for how many friends and family attended the matches.

This time was a better experience, though, because Draco was there as a literal buffer. She hadn't realised how comfortable she felt in his presence until then. Just being beside him, instead of some stranger, made her instantly relax and be able to enjoy the game more. Not to mention, he kept engaging her directly in conversation about the match, instead of just the others present. He did talk to them a lot, but he had a way of conversing that didn't ignore Hermione's presence, which was something her friends had not quite mastered.

Hermione was surprised by how much time Draco had spent talking with Harry and Ron. They were more than tolerating one another's presence. It seemed like they were actually getting along.

The booth erupted in cheers as the Harpies' seeker caught the snitch, securing the win for the team. Draco waved about the ridiculous sign he had brought that read: Ass Cap Potter!

Hermione joined in with the cheers, hyped up by the crowd around her. It was a strange and oddly entertaining experience to see Draco with so much emotion on his face. Sign abandoned, Draco was smiling wildly and jumping up and down with the other fans in the booth. He turned to her and pulled her into a brief kiss, before pulling back and joining in on the chant "Harp-ies! Harp-ies!"

Hermione giggled, a smile on her face. She joined the chant as well, screaming in her friends' faces as they jumped around like fools. Her heart felt whole. It was nice to have this moment with them.

"After party at the *Leaky*?" Harry said when the booth had finally calmed down a bit.

Hermione shrugged and looked to Draco who had ended up beside Pansy and was talking animatedly with her. "I suppose. I don't want to get drunk, though, it's a weeknight."

Harry rolled his eyes. "C'mon, Hermione, live a little! Besides, we have to celebrate; this means they're in the playoffs!"

"Playoffs!" Someone shouted from behind Harry, starting up another chant in the booth.

"Besides," Ron continued for Harry once the chanting died down again, "Everyone's going to be getting pregnant soon and we won't be able to drink like this again for nine months."

Hermione rolled her eyes, but conceded that he did have a point. The men would be able to drink, but the women would be in for a long run of sobriety.

"Okay, fine. We'll meet you there."

It took her until she was done her first drink to realise that she had thought of herself as one of those women who would be pregnant soon. Hermione shook herself and cast a glance in Draco's direction. He had been pulled into a game of exploding snap with the men of their friend group. The women were seated around a large round table talking jovially with one another.

Hermione worried that she was starting to have *feelings* for her husband. How could she imagine herself being pregnant with his child? It was...strange, disconcerting...upsetting? No, the upsetting part was that it wasn't upsetting. Her mind wandered back to their contract day the night before and to their...*lovemaking*. It had been so intense that she was lost in emotion for nearly two hours after he had left her room. The bath was the only thing that calmed her down.

"Hermione?" Ginny asked. "Earth to Hermione!"

"Huh? Oh, sorry. I was...just thinking."

"Think less, drink more!" Pansy declared.

"How're the Harpies going to keep playing games if you all get pregnant?" Hermione asked, despite herself.

Ginny eyed her. "Well, we've asked for an extension; we'll have two years to get pregnant instead of one year. Coach wants us to stagger our pregnancies strategically so that we can all return at different times, after we recover."

"Have you already been given your date?" Hermione asked.

Ginny sighed. "Yes. Unfortunately, I have an early date, right at the end of the season. But it's because coach wants me to return first so that I can replace Angelina as captain while she's pregnant."

"Why didn't you tell me this earlier?" Hermione was offended.

Ginny shrugged. “You’re all ‘woe is me, I married Malfoy’” Ginny said in what Hermione considered to be a rather poor impersonation. “I figured I’d get around to it eventually, I still have three months until we start trying. Although, given my genetics, I think we’ll definitely get pregnant immediately...”

Pansy looked pensive. “Did you guys even want kids?” she asked.

Ginny nodded. “Definitely. I just wanted to do Quidditch for a couple more years first. It will wreck my body. But Harry’s ecstatic. All he wants is the family he never had. I just told him we have a firm limit of two because there’s no way I’m having seven children like my mother...she’s crazy.”

“Ron and I are going to start trying after Memorial Day. I’m pissed that I’m going to have to stop drinking...why can’t he be the one to carry the baby?” Pansy complained.

“Preach!” Angelina declared from across the table.

“When are you and Draco planning to start trying?” Pansy asked a little too casually.

Hermione stiffened and glanced at him. His face was covered in soot and he was shouting about how the game was rigged. George was agreeing, likewise covered in soot.

“Oh—I’m not...I think...We had planned to—er...” Hermione felt heat on her cheeks as she tried to explain that they would be taking the divorce option after six months. “...maybe...not try...and—you know...”

“Wait, you’re getting a divorce?” Pansy asked a little too loudly.

Hermione shushed her quickly and glanced at Draco, concerned for some reason that he would hear her. “That’s what we agreed on when we got married,” Hermione responded quietly.

“Why’re you whispering?” Pansy asked again, loudly.

“Because—” she shushed her, “I don’t want Draco to hear.” It felt odd to say his first name to someone else, let alone beyond the confines of the bedroom.

“Why?” Ginny asked, then her eyes widened. “You don’t want a divorce?” she stated more than asked.

Hermione shoved her head into her hands. “I don’t know. I don’t know what I want,” she admitted quietly.

There was silence and Hermione cautiously looked up at Pansy and Ginny, they seemed to be having a silent conversation. They stopped once they noticed Hermione was once again paying attention to the world around her.

“Well, Hermione,” Ginny placed a hand gently on her shoulder, “Just do what makes you happy. Draco’s not all that bad.”

“Don’t let him hear you saying his first name, he’ll lose it!” Hermione joked, hoping to change the topic.

Pansy giggled. “I *love* the whole Mr. Granger, thing, by the way, Ginny. Ingenious. Draco will *not* stop complaining about it. You should see our group chat. It’s hilarious!”

Hermione *did* want to see their group chat. But she felt that Draco deserved some privacy from her, so she let it go.

“I have to say, the Ministry-wide bulletin was a stroke of genius,” Ginny proclaimed triumphantly.

“Ohhh, that’s what you did. Why didn’t I get one?” Hermione wondered.

“Because, Hermione, you’d ruin all my fun,” Ginny responded.

Hermione frowned and wanted to rebut, but they were suddenly being descended upon by their respective husbands. Draco placed his hands on her shoulders casually while others, like George, took a seat in his wife’s lap and pretended to be a dainty woman.

“What’re you all talking about?” Ron asked casually.

“Oh, nothing,” Ginny responded with a wink at Hermione.

“Let’s get shots, Ron,” Pansy suggested. “I only got two weeks till I’m ovulating and I intend to get so drunk I never want to drink again.”

“I think it’s time for me to head home,” Hermione told Draco.

“Okay,” he was trying to get rid of the soot painting his clothes—to no avail. He held out his hand and helped her to her feet. Hermione dropped his hand, now aware of the stares on her after her admission.

“Oh, you can stay if you want,” she said quietly, willing their friends to pay attention to something else.

He scratched at his soot covered nose. “Who on earth would I stay to hang out with? Surely not Potter.”

Hermione smacked his chest. “Whatever, you two are mates now.”

“Did you hear that, Granger? We’re mates!” Harry taunted.

Draco took her hand again, as if they always held hands, as if this meant nothing, this casual flirty behaviour, this level of comfort that they found in one another. “Let’s get out of here before Potter starts trying to put the moves on me.”

Everyone at the table chuckled good-naturedly.

“Good night, everyone. Congrats, Gin and Angelina! Great game!”

Draco added, “Thanks for the invite, Red,” before following Hermione to the Floo.

They probably were sober enough to apparate, but Hermione preferred to be safe rather than splinched. They spun away together.

Draco walked her to her room, holding her hand the whole time. At her door, he leaned against the wall casually.

“Goodnight, wife, thank you for bringing me to watch Quidditch. It was a fun day.”

Hermione shrugged. “Glad you enjoyed it.” He looked disappointed for a moment, so she added, “I had a lot more fun than usual because you were there...so thanks...”

Draco smiled.

“We didn’t get to compare notes today...did you want to over lunch tomorrow?”

Draco’s eyes landed on her lips and he didn’t respond.

“Malfoy...?” Hermione asked, a little breathless.

His eyes snapped back up to hers. “Hmm?”

“Marriage law notes? Tomorrow over lunch?”

Draco nodded. His eyes roved over her face and Hermione almost invited him back into her bed. His body language was telling her that he would be very much into that idea. But that would be a bad idea—she needed clear boundaries or those pesky *feelings* might develop (more than they already had).

“Goodnight,” Hermione eventually said as the silence stretched on. She disconnected their hands and went into her room, the lock clicking shut behind her.

As she was trying to fall asleep, her mind kept going over her conversation with Pansy and Ginny about whether or not she wanted to end things with Draco. A few weeks ago, it wasn’t even a question, but even her friends seemed surprised that she was still planning on getting divorced now. How could things have changed so much in so little time?

Hermione’s phone dinged. She usually ignored it at night, but since she wasn’t even close to sleeping, she picked it up to see a message from Pansy. It was a picture of Hermione and Draco at the game. He was leaning toward her explaining something about the game and she was smiling up at him as he spoke.

Hermione smiled. It was a very cute photo.

Before she really thought it through, she sent the picture to Draco. He responded almost immediately and she wondered why he was having trouble falling asleep.

‘Pansy’s a stalker. I don’t even remember seeing her take any pictures.’

‘Me neither.’

She wasn’t sure what she expected him to say, but it wasn’t that. Hermione locked her phone, picked up her bedside book, and let it lull her to sleep.

Tuesday, April 19

Hermione met with Jerome over her lunch break. The man invited her to a swanky restaurant. He was young, younger than Hermione was imagining. Jerome had to be 30 at the absolute oldest. The lunch meeting was shockingly casual, despite the venue. The man did not give off the energy that he was an accountant for billionaires whatsoever. He was even wearing a muggle suit.

Jerome walked her through the accounts—causing Hermione’s eyes to boggle—and they easily set up new charities (all supporting causes dear to Hermione’s heart). The donations would begin in two months time, giving Hermione ample time to warn Narcissa Malfoy. Jerome also convinced Hermione to invest her personal money into several stock options, explaining that her money needed to work for her, or whatever other financial nonsense accountants talk about.

The meeting ended with them discussing the television show Brooklyn Nine-Nine; Jerome, it turns out, was a half-blood.

Thursday, April 21

Draco sighed as he undid his tie while walking down the hall to his room. Ever since Hermione got Evans to give him more reasonable hours, he had nothing to do. He often got home before her and was bored to no end. At least Evans had not (yet) fired Draco for Hermione’s unsolicited defense.

His mind wandered to their fantastic contract day the weekend previous. He couldn’t believe that she let him stay with her for the whole day. He was expecting her to kick him out at some point, but she never did.

Draco also couldn’t believe how intimate they had been the last time. It was...illuminating for him. Afterward, in the quiet of his room, he had realised that he loved her. It was shocking to know it with such certainty.

He loved her. He loved her body, she loved her mind, he loved her nagging, he loved her quiet presence in their shared home, he loved her passion, he loved arguing with her, making her laugh, making her come...And she still wanted a divorce.

Fuck.

Draco changed into his lounge clothes and pulled out his phone. He navigated to her contact and typed out a message. ‘When will you be home? Flopsy’s wondering.’

It was a lie, but he didn't want to seem too eager. Ever since Saturday, he had been amping up his charm. He wasn't sure if it was working or not, but Hermione did seem very ease in his presence these days. So, at least there was some progress on that front.

Draco could say with certainty that he had never been in love before. But he knew that he would do anything for her to feel the same way toward him.

While he waited for a response, his eyes glazed over again remembering her throwing her head back in pleasure as she gushed onto his face.

Her reply was faster than usual when she was at work. 'Soon, just packing up. I think I cracked the spell!'

'You're brilliant,' he responded.

Draco went to find some wine to open to congratulate her on her genius.

After Hermione spent the better part of an hour going on about how she cracked the spell and Draco had poured her a second glass of congratulatory wine, the conversation shifted to talk about Draco's most recent bought of research into a case about international dragon egg smuggling. Hermione was fascinated and asked him questions for near on an hour. When he was finally bored of talking about it, he asked her how her occlumency was coming along.

"I've been meditating every morning and night like you suggested. Also, reading that book from our library. But...I'm still not noticing much of a difference. What did you do to make you crack it?"

Draco regretted asking her about it. "It was..." he didn't want to lie, but he also had no desire to dredge up his dead aunt. "Let's just say, you won't want to use the methods that I did."

She frowned, then her eyes widened. She reached for his hand and held it gently. "I'm so sorry."

Draco's heart clenched and he looked away. "Anyways, you've only been practicing for a little over a month at this point; you need years of practice to master it. I'm only so good because it's been a decade *and* I'm a natural occlumens. You are not a natural, unfortunately." She scowled. "You can't be good at everything, darling wife."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Fine, I'll keep at it. But do you think we can move on from the meditation phase and start with building walls?"

He assessed her, immediately distracted by her eager expression. "I would suggest you practice your meditation for at least another month before you start building walls." Draco would likewise benefit from meditation before he did something stupid like admit his feelings to the wife that wanted to divorce him.

"Another month?" she sighed dramatically.

"It takes time, Granger. I'm surprised you're so impatient."

“I don’t like being bad at things,” she admitted, probably with the help of the wine.

“You’re learning, doesn’t mean you’re bad.”

“Yeah, whatever. When’d you get so nice, anyway?” she inquired.

Draco built his wall quickly, hoping his clear adoration for her was not evident on his face. “Shall we head to bed? It is a worknight, after all.”

Hermione rolled her eyes at his imitation of her, but walked down the hall and wished him a goodnight before locking herself in her room. Draco wished he could follow her. It was nearing contract day and his ability to ignore her body and his desire for her was slipping by the second. He had a nice long shower before plugging in his phone and turning out his light.

He decided, in a stroke of genius, to invite her out for dinner. He thought it might be a good way to romance her. He also wanted to talk to her about trying out some new things on Saturday.

‘Want to do dinner tomorrow night? We can see one of our Diagon Alley restaurants.’

She responded quickly, evidently still awake. ‘Yes, that sounds lovely.’

Draco smiled, wondering what he should wear the following evening.

Friday, April 22

Hermione was wearing something a tad more scandalous than she normally would, showing off her hips and breasts rather boldly. Draco could barely contain himself, his eyes glued to her for far longer than was gentlemanly. He found himself glaring at their server who likewise could not keep his eyes off of her.

Draco casually took her hand and planted a kiss on it. Hermione flushed and smiled.

“What was that for?” she asked.

“Just staking my claim,” he responded.

Hermione rolled her eyes. He knew she would launch into some tirade about sexism and chivalry, as she was wont to do, but he also knew that she enjoyed the idea of his possessiveness based on her response to him the night of their handfasting. He let his mind wander to the well played memory of “*you’re mine*”, “*yes*.”

Hermione finished her rant and he smiled placatingly.

They fell into silence and she asked, “Is there a reason you wanted to dine out tonight?”

Draco blinked at her. He was apparently not doing the best job of making his feelings toward her clear. But Draco was a coward and the idea of telling her how he felt (beyond his sexual

attraction) was daunting. His solution of trying to hint at it and see if she returned any sort of feelings at all was clearly not working very well.

They were forced to live together for another five months. What if he told her how he felt and she rejected him? Then they would have to find a way to co-exist in that awkwardness for months...Not to mention, Draco would be shocked if she returned his affections. She really only seemed to want him for his body—something Draco tried not to let wound him too much.

“I thought Flopsy would enjoy the evening off,” he responded eventually.

She narrowed her eyes. “I think you’re lying.”

Draco internally cursed. She was getting better at reading him. “Is it so wrong that I wanted to spend the night out with my wife? Besides, it’s just a continuation of celebrating your success with the computer charm. Speaking of—” Draco pulled a gift bag from thin air. “Congratulations.”

Hermione took the bag in confusion. “What’s this?”

“Open it and find out, Granger.”

“But why are you giving me a gift?”

Draco refrained from rolling his eyes. “It’s a celebratory gift.”

Hermione took out the tissue paper and peered into the admittedly large gift bag. She pulled out the ergonomic keyboard and mouse.

“I’m told it’s important that you have an ‘er-go-nomic’ something or other,” Draco explained.

She smiled at him broadly. “This is awesome! Thank you.”

“There’s something else.”

“Oh.” She peered back in the bag and pulled out a book wrapped in thick mushroom wrapping paper. She looked at him briefly, then tore into the wrapping. “Alice in Wonderland? Is this—is this another first edition?”

Draco couldn’t help the grin overtaking his face at her look of surprise and delight. “Do you like it?”

Hermione stood and pulled him from his seat. She hugged him tightly, drawing a few looks from the other patrons. “Thank you!” Hermione said into his chest. She leaned back and looked up into his eyes. Draco found himself leaning toward her. “I love it,” she answered, her voice oddly breathy.

Hermione abruptly stepped from his embrace and returned to her seat. Draco summoned Flopsy to take her gift home so Hermione didn’t have to carry it around.

“That was unexpected,” she said finally. “If you keep getting me first editions, I’m going to have to get a climate-controlled bookshelf.”

“We have one already in the library,” Draco commented.

Hermione stared at him. “We do?”

“Of course, wife, we are rich and infamous, after all.”

Hermione laughed. She adjusted her dress, completely and entirely distracting Draco with her on-display cleavage.

“What do you think you’ll work on next?” he asked finally.

She launched into a tale about needing to complete the logistics which would take a few weeks as well as creating a training protocol for those who would learn about computers, which would probably take a month or two. Then, she planned on finding a way to make a magical version of the internet. The internet seemed like a truly magical invention and Draco thought how amazing it would be to be able to look up anything at the click of a button. She told him he could currently do that on his phone, but as of right now it only contained muggle information and nothing magical.

“You really are wasted in the Muggle Liaison Office.”

Hermione frowned. “I don’t think I’m wasted there. This is my life’s goal. And, who knows. Maybe after I finish the internet project, I will consider...” she paused, clearly hesitant.

“Changing departments or changing careers. But there are certain things that I know I will get done better than other people and developing the internet for magical beings will probably take me a year or two...”

“Then on to the Unspeakables?”

She chuckled. “You really want me to work for the Department of Mysteries.”

He shrugged. “You’re the brightest witch in Europe by far. Imagine how you might revolutionize magic itself...” Draco was genuine. He was sure she would come up with something so smart that magic would look completely different by the time she was done.

Hermione looked away, embarrassed. “Thank you for your faith, husband. But it’s still a few years away at this point—if I even decide to do that.”

Draco smirked. It was obvious that she had decided.

As dinner wrapped up, he asked her if she wanted to go to a bar. His goal of discussing their sex life top of mind, especially in that dress she was wearing.

Hermione agreed, stating that she was excited to keep celebrating her new charm.

The bar he chose was dimly lit, had plush armchairs, soft music playing and felt oddly sexual. Draco watched her take in the ambiance with a slight heat crawling up her neck. He

let his hand fall on her lower back and guided her to an empty pair of armchairs and a small side table. The bar was soundproofed so that the patrons could experience a social outing, but still maintain their discretion. All they could hear was a soft hum of voices and a muted rhythmic beat. It was hard to make out who was in the dimly lit and warded bar, there were only vague shapes that your eyes would slide away from against your will—a notice-me-not charm.

The server arrived and his eyes swept over Hermione's form. Draco wanted to punch him. Instead, Draco took her hand pointedly and asked what she wanted.

Hermione bit her lip. "Oh. Um...long island iced tea? Do they make that here?" she asked the server.

The man nodded, eyes tracing Hermione's figure.

"Fire whiskey. Neat," Draco ordered icily.

The server walked away with a scowl. Hermione blinked at Draco. "Why so short with him?"

Draco raised his eyebrows. "I don't take very kindly to men ogling my wife, Granger," he responded.

"Ogling?"

Draco gave her a look. "As if you don't know."

She blinked at him curiously. "Know what?"

Draco leaned forward, his knee touching her bare one. "How gorgeous you are in that dress. Half the men in the last place couldn't stop staring at you."

She glanced down at herself with a genuine frown. "Really?"

Draco scooted closer and laid a hand on her knee. She looked down at it curiously then up at him. "Really," he assured her darkly.

Their server returned and interrupted the growing tension between them. Hermione took her drink and noted that the man was looking at her appreciatively. Draco took his own and sat back in the armchair.

"This place has privacy charms around each set of chairs. Just so you know."

"That's interesting," she responded, glancing around. "I wonder what spell they use..."

"I was actually hoping to talk to you about something somewhat private, but I thought you might want to be a bit drunk when I did...considering what a prude you are."

"That's hardly nice, Malfoy." He shrugged and sipped at his drink. "What is it?" she asked curiously. "Actually, for good measure and because people are constantly spying on me..." she took out her wand and cast a *muffliato*.

“I...” Draco was unsure if he should actually bring this up or not. But he did want to check in with her, especially after the whole handfasting misunderstanding. Despite saying that she needed to be drunk, it was he who needed to be drunk because she intimidated him so much.

Hermione misread his hesitation. “Don’t worry, no one can hear us now, even if they come right up to us.”

Draco took another sip. “I wanted to say that I have been enjoying our...contract time together.”

She flushed hotly and looked away, though he noted a coy smile on her face. He wanted to move closer to her, but the armchairs were not exactly conducive to getting close to one another. They were wide enough that she could sit on his lap...if he could convince her to do so.

After a pause, she said, “As have I.” His engagement ring was warm on his hand, with her embarrassment or desire, he wasn’t sure which.

“I just...wanted to check in.”

Hermione began chugging her drink. “About what?”

“Perhaps it is too early on,” he conceded.

She scooted to the edge of her seat and leaned toward him, clearly intrigued. “About what?” she repeated.

“Well. I think that any good sexual relationship has check ins where we talk about the experience, what other desires we might have, what boundaries we would like to put in place...”

“Yes. That’s—um—that’s a good idea.” She paused. “I am glad I’m a bit drunk,” she stated. “So, where do we begin?” she asked.

“Well first off, what have you been enjoying so far?”

She fidgeted and looked off into the distance for a while.

“I can start, if you prefer,” Draco said softly. She nodded. He took a minute to build his walls to help hide his nervousness at being so vulnerable, but knew that they would only grow to enjoy one another more after this conversation. “Come here,” he commanded.

To his delight and surprise, she stood and sat on his lap, adjusting herself a bit so that she was looking out into the dim bar (and unable to see much of anything thanks to the privacy spells). If she turned her head, she would be looking directly into his eyes. Hermione took a gulp of her drink, which was running shockingly low.

Draco signalled with his hand for another and contented himself to bask in her presence while she shifted and fidgeted. It was doing nothing to calm his ever-present desire for her. Their server reappeared, noting their new position. He rubbed at his ears, clearly unable to

hear anything. He simply dropped off a new drink for both of them and left without question. This bar was known for its discretion, so he assumed the man was unsurprised to find that they had added additional wards.

Her new drink in her hand and a new one in his, Draco started. He spoke low, only for her to hear. "I like going slow with you," he admitted softly. "I like how loud you are in bed, it is music to my ears. I love when you shout my name, it makes me want to come immediately every time I hear it. I deeply enjoy watching you squirm and talking dirty to you. I like praising you more than I like shaming you, but I do like both." She was squirming more than before, clearly getting turned on. "I love to lick your cunt. You taste fabulous."

Hermione scoffed.

"I'm serious. Many women have a strong taste that I do not enjoy. You have...I don't know how to describe it. I love playing with your breasts. I like when you beg but I also like when you take charge. I much prefer to take charge, generally speaking, though. I like fucking you in good lighting." She shuddered and took another gulp of her drink. "I like when you wear sexy clothing, but I like ripping it off your body more."

Her hand clenched the arm rest.

"I like coming inside you."

She gulped. Her eyes flitted to his lips briefly, then skirted away.

"I like hearing you express your desires while we're fucking. Your voice is so..." Draco trailed off, replaying his often revisited memory of *you're mine* and her breathy *yes*. "I like," he continued, "when you said you were mine. I like teasing you and dragging it out. I like when you wrap your lips around my cock."

Hermione took a sip of her drink. She had slowed down, which was probably a good idea since she had ordered an extremely alcoholic drink.

"I think I covered my likes. Your turn."

She cleared her throat and spoke to her glass instead of him, which he had expected. "I like... I like the weight when you press your body against mine while we're...and I like when—I can't believe we're having this conversation—I like when you say things to me...when you make me say things..." He nodded, assuming as much. "I really, really like when you put your head between my legs. It is...I can't even describe it." She took another sip of her drink and remained silent.

"Is that all?" he asked softly, trying to not make her feel judged.

"I like telling you what to do, but haven't really done that...yet."

"Don't worry, love, we'll get to the part about what you *want* to do soon."

Her chest rose and fell with her heavy breathing. From Draco's position, her breasts were still a distraction.

“I like...how you...” she struggled to say, “worship me.” Draco licked his lips. “I like when you kiss me,” she admitted quietly. “You’re such a good kisser.” Draco’s hand landed on her thigh making her jump slightly.

“You are too,” he responded.

“I like...well...no.”

“What were you going to say?” he asked curiously.

“I was going to say that I like when it’s fast and hard. But...that’s only when I’m taking charge. I like how slow you are...it’s almost tortuous...but it’s...” she sighed heavily. He thought she was done, when she added, “I like how natural it feels with you.”

Draco grinned at that, not that she was looking at his face. His heart was racing with her last confession. Maybe it wasn’t entirely a lost cause. Maybe she might grow to feel as he did...

“Me too,” he responded. She took another gulp of her drink and Draco took a sip of his. “Now, what have you not liked so far?”

She looked at him. “Nothing.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Nothing at all?”

Hermione let her mind wander over their sexual encounters and he let her reflect silently. “I can’t think of anything...maybe...the one time you forgot a contraception charm. But I’m on the potion now, so there’s nothing to worry about.”

He nodded.

“What about you?” she asked, wide brown eyes meeting his.

Draco shifted under her gaze. He wanted to abandon this conversation and take her right here in the bar. “I don’t like having to close the curtains. I don’t like leaving right afterwards.”

She blinked at him. “I...I don’t like being highly visible. I feel self conscious,” she said.

Draco nodded. “I understand. I hope it doesn’t come off as me pressuring you, I’m just trying to let you know about my desires. And I would love to fuck you in the brightness of the sun more. Because you’re gorgeous. As our servers today have proven.”

Hermione bit her lip and flushed.

“But if you’re more comfortable in the semi-darkness, then that’s okay too.”

She looked away again. “You don’t always have to leave right afterward. We could. Maybe we can cuddle for a bit before you leave.”

Draco nodded. He was happy she agreed to that. The few times they had cuddled the Saturday previous had made his heart soar. “Of course, if you wish to be left alone, I will

leave at any time.”

She patted her hair absently and nodded.

“Anything else you don’t like before we move on to the next one?”

She shook her head.

“What is an absolute no for you?” Draco asked with interest.

She scrunched her face in thought. “I’m...I’m not sure. I think maybe anything that isn’t strictly vanilla, I would need to have a conversation with you about beforehand. I’m not opposed, I just...I’d need more information. And you?”

“I don’t have many things that I won’t do...” Draco admitted easily. “I’m not really into being pegged.”

“Pegged?”

Draco smirked. “It’s when you wear a strap on—” she flushed and looked away, “and you fuck me up the ass. Some women like the power it gives, some men like giving up that power. But I’ve never been huge on anything up my bum...yours...I might be more open to.”

Her jaw dropped.

“Would you be open to that?” he asked, his eyes trailing the expanse of her neck.

“Oh. Uh. Maybe. I don’t...does it feel good for me?”

He considered this. “It depends. Some women really like it. It is a different experience. But there is more prep work involved. I would of course, make sure that other parts of your anatomy were not neglected. Most of your pleasure is centred in one spot anyway...”

She reflected on this. “Um. Maybe. But...probably not for...a while.”

“Okay. I’ll ask again in a while.”

They smiled at each other and took a drink.

“Anything else that is a no?”

“I don’t like anything too degrading,” she said. “I’ve liked light degradation, but nothing that would actually offend me. A dirty name here or there, some light shame. But nothing more than that.”

He nodded. “Have I gone too far?” he asked while thinking about his slut and sex fiend comments.

“Oh. No. So far, it’s been the perfect amount.”

Draco smirked in pride. “Noted. And what would you like to do?” Hermione flushed deeply again. “You’ve already said that you want to order me around a bit, which I am very much into. What exactly do you mean by that?”

She shrugged. “I—I’m not entirely sure. I’ve never really done anything like that before.”

“But you want to?” She looked at him and nodded slowly. Draco felt his dick twitch. He knew she was a kinky witch. He just knew it. Draco grinned. “We can look into it together if you want. I have...explored within the kink community.”

She squirmed against him. “Okay.”

“What else? You want to explore with power dynamics. You’ve said you like when I take charge, but you also want to take charge. Is there anything that comes to mind specifically? Do you like the idea of...ropes, handcuffs...?”

“I don’t know if I’m ready for that.”

He added, “I meant that you would tie me, up, wife.” The image was rather distracting of Hermione with a crop while he was tied to her bed and subject to her every whim.

She bit her lip. “I might...consider that.”

Draco made a mental note to give her his kink books. “Anything else you’ve been wanting to try?”

“You go first,” she countered, clearly having something she wasn’t yet ready to admit to.

Draco was feeling rather turned on and drunk by this point, so he had no qualms in sharing his sexual desires with her. “I want many, many things, my wife. I would love nothing more than to edge you for a few hours. I love when you get frustrated when I won’t let you find your release. Technically, I’ve already been edging you a bit, but I’d like to go really hard. Have you liked the edging?” he asked, confident in her answer.

“Yes,” she confessed under her breath.

“A good spanking would definitely be interesting to me.”

“Would it hurt?”

Draco was almost ravenous at the tentativeness in her voice. She was open to it. “Yes,” he responded truthfully, “but it is not meant to make you feel a lot of pain. It’s similar to when I grip your hips very hard when we’re fucking and it leaves bruises. You like when I do that, don’t you?”

“Yes,” she admitted softly.

Draco’s lips quirked. “We can go as hard or as soft as you want.” She nodded tentatively. He was fully hard by this point, but intended on completing their conversation. “I wouldn’t mind using a few accessories with you: vibrators, ropes, a swing, a flogger...”

She gulped. “I would be—interested in trying...”

“These things would require more planning and a conversation between the both of us before and after,” he clarified. “I’m just gauging your interest right now.”

She nodded again. She was almost never so quiet. Draco trailed a hand down her thigh slowly and she squirmed in response.

“You doing okay?” he asked.

Hermione turned to him. “Huh?”

“You’re really quiet.”

“Oh. Yeah. I’m good. I’m just—thinking. Were you done your list?”

Draco’s thumb swirled across her thigh. He continued, “I would like to send you pictures,” he admitted. Blaise had told him about how he and Luna had been “sexting” and it seemed undeniably hot. “And I would like to receive pictures.”

“Oh. But...during work?” she squeaked.

“Whenever. We can agree to boundaries that suit you.”

“I—I would say not...not during work. At least...not yet.”

Draco’s eyes lit up. “But any other time?”

Hermione hesitated. “I don’t...I don’t see why not. But the pictures would have to strictly remain between us. You’d have to do an unbreakable for me to agree.”

“Who will be our witness?”

She thought on that. “Shit. Uh. We can add it to the contract?”

“Excellent idea.” He continued, “I would like to be able to fuck you in public at some point.” Thinking of how badly he wanted her to ride him in this very armchair.

Hermione’s breath halted for a moment. “What?”

“Not for people to see. We could cast wards. Just the idea of you letting go in secret surrounded by all of your friends...” Draco gripped her thigh tightly. She jolted slightly.

“I didn’t realize you wanted to do so much.”

He looked at her eyes. “I want to do it all with you, wife,” he admitted like the lovesick fool that he was.

“Have I been...” she stopped talking and looked away.

“What?” he urged.

“Have I been disappointing you because we haven’t been doing all of this?”

Draco held her chin until she made eye contact with him. “Of course not. Did you not hear the long list of things that I have been enjoying in terms of our time together? You have not been disappointing me in the least. You are extraordinary.”

Her gaze flickered to his lips, then back to his eyes.

“I want to roleplay,” she said quickly. “I want to dress up in our school uniforms and...and in the library. I want to...”

Draco felt his dick twitch at the thought. She was such a little minx. “What do you want to do in the library?”

“I...well...the library was my original meditation spot, but then I kept...imagining you appearing and—you...you would always take away my book and...” she cleared her throat. “And the shelves do make good hand holds,” was all she could say before finishing her drink in a long gulp.

She fantasized about him. Frequently, it seemed. Draco felt heat pulsing through his veins. His engagement ring was burning pleasantly.

“And in the bath. I would love to...and maybe the shower too.”

Draco stared deeply into her eyes. “I would love to. We need a safe word, going forward.”

“How about ‘stop.’”

He rolled his eyes at her. “That works, although it’s not very fun,” he teased.

She shrugged. “It’s about being clear, not about being fun,” she responded.

Draco wanted to kiss her even more. Such a smart mouth. “Fine. ‘Stop’ will be our safe word and ‘pause’ can also work if we need a quick break or a check in.”

“Oh,” she remembered something, “I like when you tell me I’m gorgeous and perfect. It makes me feel good.”

“Anything else, gorgeous?”

She fidgeted and glowed at his words. “Not that I can think of...I mean I am very drunk right now.”

Draco chuckled darkly. “Me too. Let me summarize then: we both really like what we are already doing and want to keep doing that. We’ll not immediately abandon one another after we come, and we might consider opening some curtains.” She nodded. “I would like to venture more into some kinky things like bondage, spanking, power dynamics, and toys. You would like to do some Hogwarts library roleplaying, and water fun. We will send each other fun pictures and texts when we feel like it, as long as it is not during work time. Our safe

word is stop or pause. You would like to try your hand at dominating me. And I would like to fuck you in public.”

Hermione licked her lips. “I don’t know if we missed anything,” she responded, her eyes dark with desire.

Draco nearly groaned at the look she was throwing his way. He decided to chance it and pulled her in for a slow kiss. She responded immediately, turning and straddling him. Draco thrust his cock up against her thin panties. But it was Friday, not Saturday, and he didn’t want to violate her rule of once a week. She had to be the one to initiate it or he could end up in trouble again.

Draco pulled away. “I have some books to lend you,” he said darkly.

She nodded vigorously. “I like reading.”

“Once you’ve finished them, we can start exploring some of the more...hands on things we discussed tonight.”

“Okay,” she replied eagerly.

Draco almost pulled her in for another kiss.

“We should...”

Hermione nodded and scrambled off his lap. He pulled out some galleons and left them on the side table beside their armchair. He clasped her hand and led them to the Floo to bring them home. Draco didn’t try to start anything between them again, despite his raging hard on, and simply walked her to her room, wishing her goodnight.

Hermione bit her lip but didn’t say or do anything, disappearing into her room silently.

Draco went to his room to work on his little friend. He was just wrestling his briefs off when his phone dinged. He looked at it in confusion. It was nearing midnight. Draco grabbed it and saw that he had a notification from Hermione. He unlocked his phone quickly and opened her text. It was a picture.

Holy hell.

It was a picture of her. Draco nearly burst. She had somehow succeeded in creating a rather artful photo of what was clearly her with her hand in her pants. The camera angle only showed the top of her panties, her hand disappearing beneath the sheets and into her underwear.

‘Sweet dreams,’ she wrote.

Draco swore. This woman would be the death of him. He found a way to save the photo. He was beyond surprised that she had sent one before they had signed the contract.

Draco wanted to return the favour, so he scrambled back into his trousers and did his best to recreate her artful picture. His hand was in his briefs and gripping himself, but she would not be able to actually see anything of note.

He sent the photo without a second thought.

‘Try not to stay up too late thinking of me,’ Draco texted back.

She didn’t respond, so he stumbled back out of his trousers and briefs and started working on his erection. The memory of her on his lap and the photo she sent him provided more than enough imagery for him.

Just when he was getting close, his phone chimed again. It was her. Draco stopped his hand with shaky control and opened the message. It was an audio recording. He had never received one before, so he had to press a few buttons first to understand what was happening. The recording was short, a mere 15 seconds, but it was something that he would definitely be replaying for a very long time.

She was panting loudly and whimpering as her orgasm neared. “Oh fuck—*Draco*. I’m going to—oh Gods. *Draco!*” She moaned as she came loudly. Hermione panted for a few more seconds on the recording, then it ended.

Draco swore deeply and played it back again. Then again. And once more for good measure. He fumbled around with his phone trying to figure out how to record himself. After several failed attempts, he found the microphone button and did a test one. It worked well enough. He then hit record and held the phone to his face while pumping his hand up and down. He began speaking.

“You’re such a hot little minx, aren’t you? My little slut of wife, always thinking about fucking me,” he murmured breathlessly. “I’m going to make you scream tomorrow, Hermione,” he promised, his voice cracking as he neared the edge. “I’m going to—fuck—*you’re mine*,” he growled, then he came with a grunt. He ended the recording shortly after his breathing evened out. He sent it to her without listening to it, knowing he might back out if he did.

She responded, ‘I can’t wait until tomorrow.’ Then added, ‘Stop texting me or I’ll have to change my underwear *again*’.

‘Just sleep without any underwear,’ he responded.

‘I’ll see you in the morning,’ she replied.

Draco let his phone fall to the side, then cleaned himself up with wandless magic. He fell asleep reflecting on his stroke of genius about having a sex talk with her and convincing her to sext him. At least now he would get to see her body more than once a week. Plus, his smartphone would allow him to look back at it whenever he wanted. Muggles truly were geniuses.

On the Edge

Chapter Notes

The second half of your Valentine's Day chapter--it's still technically the 14th where I am.
<3

Saturday, April 23

Hermione's phone dinging pulled her out of sleep. She drank her weekly hangover potion diligently, wanting a clear head for what was about to come. She checked her phone.

'I'll see you in ten.'

Hermione closed her curtains. Even though she knew he wanted them open, she wasn't quite yet ready for that.

Hermione scrambled to her bathroom to brush her teeth, wash her face, and freshen up the downstairs. She ran to her underwear drawer and pulled on one of her strappy underwear sets with difficulty. She had to adjust her nipples about three times before they sat properly. Hermione examined herself in the mirror. She wished she had time to trim her pubic hair as well, it was getting a bit on the longer side, but he was knocking at her door.

She scooped up Crookshanks and tried not to run to the door.

"Hi," she greeted shyly, despite her outrageously sexy underwear.

Crookshanks meowed at Draco in greeting as well. Draco's eyes trailed over her body reverently. He took Crookshanks from her hands, pet him once, then tossed him into the hallway and closed the door.

Hermione bit her lip. They stared at one another for a long time without saying anything. Draco was wearing his sleep pants and no top, as was common for him. He pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and unfolded it.

"You have a pen?" he asked.

Hermione nodded and went to get it, intentionally bending over more than she needed to. She glanced over her shoulder to see the dark look in his eyes. She returned with the pen and handed it to him. He signed what she recognized as their marriage contract against the wall. He handed her the paper and pen.

She read his addendum about not sharing any sexually explicit materials with other people. Hermione nodded at the phrasing and signed away without a second thought. She handed him back the contract.

“Won’t be a moment,” Draco said, then slipped out of the room.

When he came back, he had nothing in his hands. He closed the door decisively and walked her to the bed. A low tension stretched between them as he pushed her onto the bed. Hermione fell back with a squeal. Draco smiled widely and climbed between her legs and up her body.

“I very much like this outfit of yours, Granger,” he murmured, his hands running over the straps and lace appreciatively.

“Thank you,” she responded.

“I also really liked the art you sent me last night.”

Hermione’s breath hitched. She wasn’t sure if they were going to talk about it. She had surprised herself with her boldness. She had never done anything like it, but their talk at the bar had really wound her up.

“Can I ask, did you use a vibrator last night, or your hand?”

Hermione flushed deeply and looked into his eyes, mere inches away from her own. “My hand,” she admitted. “I didn’t want the noise of the vibrator to...interfere with the recording. I...” she hesitated, but soldiered on, knowing how much he liked making her admit to her dirty thoughts, “I used the hand that you held when you walked me to my room last night. It smelled of your cologne.”

Draco’s breath sped up and he made a noise in the back of his throat. “Is that so?”

Hermione nodded. She wanted him to kiss her now. He had simply been pressing into her and staring into her eyes. She loved the pressure, but officially wanted more.

“I would love if you showed me what you did last night.”

Hermione blinked at him in surprise. She wanted his hands on her, not her own. “Why?”

Draco kissed her cheek. “Because then I’ll be better able to imagine it when I receive your filthy texts.”

Her face was hot, but she found herself nodding. Draco planted a brief kiss on her lips, then removed himself from above her and stood at the foot of the bed. He dropped his pants and boxers without a thought and sat on the end of the bed, waiting intently.

Hermione took a shuddering breath, and reached for her phone on the bedside table. Draco raised an eyebrow, but refrained from asking a question. She opened their chat and pulled up the photo he sent her. She showed him, then looked back at it. Hermione gripped the phone tightly as she slithered her hand down her body. Her fingers slid into her strappy underwear

and began moving against her core insistently. Her eyes were glued to the picture he had sent her.

“Do you always start so fast?” he asked from afar.

Hermione’s eyes snapped to his, she had forgotten he was there for a moment. His hand was on his cock, stroking slowly. She stared, not sure what he had asked her. He stopped moving his hand, and asked again.

“Oh. I...no. Usually it’s slower. But last night I was—very...ready.” Her core clenched, reminding her how ready she was right now.

“Keep going,” he instructed.

Hermione nodded and looked between his photo and the very naked man before her. She worked herself into a frenzy pretty quickly, her fingers dancing around her clit.

“What are you thinking?” he asked deeply.

Hermione had to clear her throat twice to respond. “I...I’m thinking about you,” she whimpered.

“Be specific.” She let out a shaky sigh and slowed her hand. “Keep your pace.”

Hermione tried to focus on her hand and his question, but it was supremely difficult. “You. I’m thinking...you. And how you...your hands. Fingers. So good.”

Draco’s breathing was picking up, along with hers. “You like when I touch you?”

Hermione nodded, staring at him, her phone forgotten as she felt her world coming to a brief end.

“I always think about you,” she admitted breathily. Then she came undone, her hips jerking against her hand and her eyes screwed shut in pleasure.

Hermione noted belatedly that Draco had also reached his peak and had already cleaned up his mess. He joined her on the bed again. Hermione glanced at his hungry eyes.

“Were you being honest?” he asked gruffly.

She blinked at him, confused.

“That you always think of me?”

Hermione felt her stomach swoop and looked away. She really ought to not say anything at all when she was so close to orgasm. How embarrassing. She gazed up at her canopy. “I mean...yeah.”

His hand landed on her hip. “Since when? How often?”

Hermione shrugged, still taking in her wispy canopy and refusing to look at him. She could feel his intense gaze on her skin. "...Since our first time," she admitted quietly.

He was kissing her suddenly. He set a punishing and controlling pace. Hermione spread her legs and he slid between them, moving his naked waist against the fabric of her lingerie. Before she quite realized how it had happened, her panties were gone and he was sliding into her with a grunt. Hermione moaned, tearing her lips from his. He adjusted his angle and thrust into her, demanding.

Draco attached his lips to her neck and bit down. She groaned as a flash of pleasure streaked through her body. He thrust into her again, hard. They moved half a foot up the bed. Hermione held onto his arms for dear life. Draco's hips were relentless, stoking a fire within her.

Draco was muttering something under his breath that she couldn't quite focus on as her body neared its peak again in only a few minutes. This man was insatiable. He picked up his pace. She did her best to move against him, but trying to match his erratic pace was impossible.

"Say it again," he ordered gruffly into her ear.

Hermione panted and tried to focus on his words. "Wh-what?"

"Say you think of me. While you. Touch yourself."

Hermione arched her back at his tone alone. "I-I think of you," she confessed. "When I—" Hermione groaned as his finger landed on her clit.

"Say it," he demanded.

"I think of you. *Oh*. I—when I. Touch my—self."

A noise emanated from the back of his throat and his hips stilled as he came hotly inside her. She had never experienced the feeling of him coming inside her while she was coherent enough to think. It was strange how turned on by the act she was. As he jerked against her and whimpered into her ear, Hermione clenched around him, hoping to extend his orgasm. When he stopped jerking against her, Draco brought his finger back to her clit.

Hermione's eyes rolled back as she came suddenly. Hermione gripped his muscular biceps tightly, gasping and groaning loudly.

Draco removed himself from her body and laid down beside her, panting. Hermione glanced at him to see a rare flush on his face. She looked away, feeling like she was invading some sort of his privacy.

"You're so hot," he muttered, his breathing finally slowing down.

Hermione, bottomless but still wearing her sexy bra, looked around for a robe to put on. She never liked laying around naked. She summoned her robe to her and pulled it on haphazardly. He watched her but said nothing.

“Did you want to clean up?” Draco asked finally.

“Oh, yeah. That would be great.”

He performed his wandless cleaning spell that he usually did, then he left the bed and walked around to her side. He pulled her to her feet and brought her into her bathroom. Hermione’s stomach swooped. She had said she wanted shower and bath sex. *Are we going to do it right now?* She wondered, feeling tired already.

Draco kissed her softly, then easily placed her on top of the counter.

“Take off your clothing,” he stated.

He turned away, seemingly uninterested in her undressing and opened the shower door. He fiddled with the knobs until he found a temperature that he deemed appropriate. Draco then examined her soaps. He shook his head and turned back to her. She had taken off her robe, but was finding it just as difficult to take the bra off as it had been to put it on.

“Planning on showering in your bra?” he asked sarcastically.

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Just help me, you git.”

Draco smirked. “First, I need to get my soap. Yours is terrible. It’s a wonder you smell good at all.”

He disappeared quickly, Hermione staring at his toned ass as he left. She turned around to take in her rather wild hair and the dark bruise forming on her neck in the shape of teeth. She sighed, realizing that she would require a *lot* of makeup to cover up that mark.

Draco returned with a nondescript silver bottle. He placed it in the still running shower and turned to her. Hermione hopped off the counter and turned around. He unhooked her bra and shimmed it off of her delicately. It wasn’t anywhere near smooth, but he was far better at it than she had been.

Draco nudged her toward the shower. Instead of getting in with her, he closed the glass door and sat on the counter, staring at her.

“Use the soap, between your legs. It’s specially designed to counteract bladder and yeast infections in women.”

Hermione stared at him, the water spraying against her back. “Why do you own a soap for women?” He body heated under his stare.

“I sleep with women.”

She couldn’t argue that point. Hermione turned away from him, unable to handle his watchful gaze any longer and rinsed off quickly, not letting the water get her hair. She used the soap as directed and was done her quick shower in less than two minutes. When she turned back around, Draco was sitting on the edge of the now full tub. He stood as her eyes landed on him.

“Leave the shower on,” he told her.

Hermione wondered if now was when he would fuck her in the shower.

But no. He handed her a towel and took her place under the water. He rinsed off quickly, holding her gaze the whole time his hands ran over his lithe form. Draco turned off the shower and grabbed another towel to dry himself.

“In the tub,” he instructed.

Hermione’s eyes flitted to him. “Why?” she challenged, for the first time in a long time. She hadn’t realized how willingly she followed his instructions before.

He narrowed his eyes. “In the tub, wife.”

“Are we—are we going to—”

“What?”

“Is this like what we discussed last night?” she tried instead.

“I guess you’ll have to get in the tub to find out.”

Hermione rolled her eyes at his obstinance. She hung her towel on a hook and slowly climbed into the tub with his help. Once she was situated, Draco climbed in and sat across from her. His legs weaseled beneath her own, but otherwise, he kept his hands to himself.

“Just relax, Granger. I noticed that last week you were very sore after our time together. The bath has potions in it to help counteract pain. I also plan on being fairly rough with you later and it’ll help with that too.”

Hermione clenched. *How am I supposed to relax now?*

Draco stared at her, his eyes tracing her neck, the mark he had left there, and the swell of her breasts, just barely peaking above the water line. He grabbed her foot, making her jump slightly, then started to massage it. Hermione slipped lower in the water, her head falling back in bliss as his hands worked away.

Sometime later, he was nudging her awake. She had fallen asleep. Hermione flushed in embarrassment.

“How long was I asleep?” she asked, gathering her wits.

Draco shrugged, uncaring. “No idea. But I’m starved. Shall we have breakfast?”

“Oh.” Her stomach growled on cue. “That sounds nice.”

“Fantastic.” Draco exited the tub. He stood to the side, offering his hand to help her out of it. Once he was sure Hermione was steady, he was suddenly pushing her against the counter top again, his lips landing on hers roughly.

Hermione gasped in shock. His tongue ran against hers, eliciting small noises in the back of her throat. Draco pulled away suddenly with a smirk.

“Dry off.” He tossed her a towel and grabbed his own.

Hermione tried not to watch the water dripping down his perfect body, but his wide grin made it clear that he noticed her staring. He left the bathroom first, saying that he would get Flopsy to put the food in the solarium. Hermione stared at her flushed face in the mirror wondering what on earth Draco had planned for them today. She pulled on her “sexy” robe—aka the shorter one—and made her way to the solarium.

*

The day proceeded rather debaucherously.

After breakfast, Draco wanted to distance himself from his embarrassing display of emotion that morning, so he led her to the second living room with their large TV, bent her over the sofa, and railed her from behind so hard that her butt was rosy by the end and even the earlier bath didn’t prevent the finger bruises on her hips. Her moans of pleasure were music to his ears.

They had barely caught their breaths when Draco asked, “Can I edge you now?”

Hermione turned around, leaning on the sofa arm. She bit her lip. “Okay.”

“You know what that means?”

She nodded, her face flushed from their earlier activity, hair wild.

“Tell me.”

“You’ll...you push me to the edge, but I can’t—I mean...until you say so, I can’t come.”

“I love hearing you say such filthy things.” She bit her lip again. “Yes. I’ll push you to the edge, but won’t let you come for a long time, until you’ve earned it. And you can only orgasm when I tell you. Which means you’ll have to follow to my instructions.”

“Okay.”

“Meaning if I tell you to touch yourself, you will.” She nodded. “And if I tell you you can’t touch yourself, you will not.”

“I understand what following instructions means,” she retorted with a grin.

“I guess we’ll see if you do.” He raised a challenging eyebrow. “Any questions?”

She nodded, more enthusiastic this time. “How—how long will I have to wait?”

“Until I say so,” he repeated her words.

“And what happens if I...I mean...if I accidentally...”

Draco raised an eyebrow. “I won’t let you.”

“I mean, it could happen.”

“I know your tells. I’m not worried. But normally, you would be punished.”

Her mouth opened. “Punished?”

Draco kissed her nose. “Don’t worry. We’re not there yet. If by some series of unpredictable events, you come before I tell you to, I’ll just be very, very disappointed.”

She frowned. It was evident she did not want to disappoint him. “And if I make it?”

“You mean *when* you manage to hold off your orgasm, hours from now, I’ll be very, very proud of you, wife.” She fought off a smile. “And you’ll be *very* happy.”

“Let’s try it,” Hermione said.

“Remember our safe words?”

She smiled. “Stop.”

“And pause,” he reminded her.

“Yes. And pause. What do I do?”

“Just follow my lead, wife.”

From there, he pushed her onto the sofa and attached his lips to her core, making her whimper and whine and altogether beg for more. He laved at her slowly, refusing to speed up, even as she writhed against him, her thighs shaking.

“Oh, God. Please, Draco!” Her walls fluttered around his fingers.

“Did I say you could come yet?”

She bit her lip. “Please...I—”

Draco, however, did not let her finish and instead pulled her up from the sofa and lead her back to her bed. She followed willingly, though her frustration was evident. There, he placed her on his lap and she got to work riding him with abandon, her head thrown back in pleasure.

“That’s right,” Draco coaxed, “Ride my cock.”

Hermione gasped, her skin flushed. Draco loved how deep he was in this position. Fighting off his own orgasm was proving to be more challenging than he initially thought it would be. But he managed, even as her hands tangled into the hair at the nape of his neck and her nipples dragged against his chest.

He slowed her pace down to help stave off both of their impending orgasms. Hermione ground against him sensuously. Draco attached his lips to her neck, determined to leave another mark. They lasted a long time like this, her body rolling against his, his lips roaming over her neck, collarbone, and jaw. But eventually they both started to approach the end.

So, Draco stilled her hips completely. This time she huffed in frustration. Still seated on him, Hermione begged, “Just a few more seconds—I’m so close.”

“Have I given you permission yet, wife?”

She cried out in frustration. “No, but—”

Draco rolled them over and pulled out of her. She whimpered. He played with her breasts for a long time. It helped he come back from the edge, but she remained very much on the edge. He loved her breasts. Her chest arched against his fingers and lips, demanding satisfaction.

“*Draco...*” she begged.

“You’re mine,” he purred against her nipple. She nodded wildly. “Say it. Say you’re mine.”

“I’m yours,” she breathed.

Draco snapped his hips against hers involuntarily. He almost came. *Gods*. He breathed deeply trying to keep it together. “You’re mine,” he repeated. “Which means this cunt belongs to me.” He cupped her and her hips lifted off the bed. “And you come when I say you can, and only then.”

“Yours,” she agreed. “Let me—I need—”

“Did I say you could?”

“I-I-I! *Oh—*”

Draco stopped his ministrations and simply sat, staring at her as her breathing evened out and she scowled in response. She fisted her sheets. She had been dangerously close that time.

“You hanging in there, wife?” he muttered, his cock pulsing in desire.

“Yeah.” She was breathing heavily. “Are you actually going to let me—”

Then, he slid into her again, rolling her over and holding her upright in his lap, thrusting into her slowly. Her body shook with restrained pleasure as she clung to him for dear life. Hermione was whimpering and pleading with him to let her finish, but he refused.

He pulled out of her again as her core started to clench.

“Please,” she begged, her hips writhing against his. “I’ll—I’ll take a bigger allowance.”

Draco held her hips still in his lap. “How much bigger?” he asked, barely holding it together.

Hermione tried her best to rub against him. “Whatever you want.” Draco almost came at her words alone.

Draco pulled her into a kiss and brought his fingers to her clit. Hermione gasped and undulated against him insistently. “100,000 more.”

She nodded. “Yes—yes. 100. 200. Whatever you want. Just let me—*oh!*”

Draco pulled away from her before she could succumb. Draco forced himself to move across the room from her and wait while she panted and questioned why on earth she agreed to edging.

“You still good?” he asked, chest heaving and his own desire barely in check.

Hermione replied, “Yes. But if you don’t let me come soon, I’m taking matters into my own hands.” Hermione’s hands lowered down her body.

“Did I give you permission to touch yourself?” Draco asked.

She froze and looked at him across the room. Draco stalked forward and batted her hand away gently. He descended on her once more, his head moving between her legs insistently. Hermione clasped his hair painfully. He continued his job until she arched her back, preparing to finally come.

“Draco. Please. Oh gods, finally, finally, I’m—300 more—”

He pulled away—with difficulty. She swore loudly. Draco, however, didn’t make her wait this time, and slid into her, hiking her legs around his back. He pounded into her as she begged over and over to let her finish. With her legs, Hermione gripped him tight to her, likely trying to keep him from moving away from her again.

Finally, Draco, seconds from his own orgasm, said, “You’ve been so good, wife.” She whimpered in response. “Come for me. Come all over my cock.”

In a long keening moan, Hermione clenched around him, pulling him into her. Draco came shortly afterward, his muscles tight as he shuddered in pleasure for what felt like minutes. He lost track of the world for a few moments. When he tuned back in, she was still coming, her body spasming as she repeated his name. Draco wished he had recorded it.

Hermione couldn’t talk for a long time after that. She just stared blankly, mouth slightly open. Draco was smug with pride. He had rendered her speechless. Eventually, she said, “holy shit.”

Draco concurred. “I’m proud of you, wife. You did a very well. I’ll have to reward you somehow for lasting so long.”

She glanced at him, but looked away quickly, mouth still slightly open. Hermione closed her eyes as her breathing evened out. Draco snuggled into her and kissed her neck as the woman fell asleep.

He took much longer to fall asleep, reflecting on their intimacy. It warmed his heart how much she trusted him with her in this way. Their previous chat had made it clear that she had a lot of faith in him. It was startling. It was amazing. It made him want to be a better person.

He wondered how she would react if he deposited an extra 300,000 galleons in her Gringotts' account.

Draco let her sleep, dozing in and out and planning what they were going to tackle next. First, they would definitely need another shower. This time, it would be a fun one, though.

*

Hermione's hands were braced against the shower wall, barely holding her up as she came loudly, her moans echoing off the tile. Her hips ached from the already developed bruises from Draco's fingers, but she couldn't bring herself to ask him to move them. She supposed she did like how possessive he was. And the pain sent a shocking spark of pleasure along her body.

He groaned as he too finished, then pulled out of her. Draco took care to wash her body delicately. Hermione reciprocated. They ended the shower with an extended kiss beneath the hot stream of water.

To say their contract day was more sexual than ever would be an understatement. She had lost count of how many positions they had even done by that point. Yet, he didn't seem to tire of her, nor she of him.

They dried themselves off, a low tension hanging in the air between them. Hermione pulled on her robe and Draco tied his towel around his waist. "Lunch?" he asked.

Hermione nodded and they made their way to the dining room to eat a delicious late lunch. After dining in a comfortable, yet sexually tense, silence, Draco brought her to his room. He picked up a few books that sat on his nightstand, then they went back to Hermione's room. She wondered why he seemed to prefer spending their contract time in her room instead of his own.

They sat in her reading nook. Draco summoned water and made her drink some. Once she had had about half a glass, he summoned his own water and drank as well. The silence had gone on for almost an hour at this point. Hermione wasn't uneasy, more surprised; they usually spoke a lot. He made her drink another glass of water.

"These are my kink books," he said finally, once his second water was almost empty. He handed her the stack of books.

Hermione read the titles with interest. He picked up the first book. "This is where I would suggest starting. It's just a general outline of different kinky acts as well as common practices to make sure that everyone is safe, happy, pleased, and comfortable. They're all quick reads, especially for you."

Hermione chuckled. They were thin books by her standards. She began turning the pages to scan the book he suggested (*Introduction to Kink*). The first section spoke about the kink community and the norms he had just mentioned, the rest read a bit like an encyclopedia with different kinks and kinky acts listed along with examples, suggested reading, pictures, definitions, and more. Hermione was instantly enraptured and wanted to devour the book as soon as possible.

“Why would you give me this now? You must know I want to immediately read it.”

Draco smirked. “Yes, I know.”

“But it’s...it’s contract day. You want me to spend it reading?”

Draco replied, “I like watching you read. It definitely does something for me.”

Hermione bit her lip.

“Besides. If you read through the introductory section, then the bit on spanking, we could do that today. If you’re not opposed. Maybe some light bondage as well...” He gazed off into space, imagining something that made Hermione’s core tighten and her face go red.

“Oh.”

“Only if you still want to,” he said quickly.

“Yes. I mean—yeah. I would like to...to try that.”

Draco kissed her briefly. “Get to reading then. I’m going to find some clothing to wear. Do you want some tea?”

Hermione nodded eagerly. “I’m spent. I would love an earl grey or something along those lines.”

“Of course, wife.”

Draco stood up and made his way to the door. “And, uh, Malfoy, can we move to the library? It seems a shame to not use it when I am studying.”

He turned to her and gave her a wicked grin. “I’ll see you there.”

Hermione bit her lip. *Gods, he’s hot.* She left the stack of books in her room and only took the one she intended on reading. She put on her longer robe, but didn’t get dressed. The idea of being so devested while in the library made her clench.

He met her there sometime later, when she had already finished reading the first section of the book. He eyed her critically and laughed at her progress. “I can’t believe I’ve already missed half of it.”

Hermione accepted her tea and sipped it slowly. “You took your sweet time.”

“Sorry, dear, Blaise was texting me, and I got distracted.”

Hermione wondered idly what the two of them had been talking about, but she didn’t have the attention to pay to him then. She returned to her book and kept reading, her face reacting in surprise and curiosity (and sometimes dislike) the more she read. Hermione forgot that he was even there until he cleared his throat sometime later. Hermione jumped in response.

“Oh dear, how long has it been?” she asked. She had made it through about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the book.

Draco shrugged. “No idea. Left my phone in my bedroom. There’s a clock in here, but I don’t feel like leaving my perfect view.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Sorry, you only wanted me to read those two sections, right? We can—”

“No. It’s fine. Keep reading. You’re nearly done, and I’m enjoying watching your expressions change.”

She fidgeted. “Okay...It shouldn’t be too long now.”

“Take your time,” he replied. He snapped his fingers and more tea filled both of their mugs.

Sometime later, mind racing with possibilities, Hermione closed the book slowly. Her body was tingling with her newfound knowledge.

“So...” Draco said slowly.

“So...haven’t we already been more or less following the protocols?” she asked, finishing her tea.

“More or less. The most important thing with kink is communication and consent because a lot of what you’re doing can result in emotional highs and lows and even physical harm. It’s very important that communication and trust be established.”

“Well don’t we...I mean. We already have that. Right?” she responded, now concerned that he didn’t trust her.

“I think we do. Did you come across anything that piqued your interest?”

Hermione looked away from his dark eyes. “...Yes.”

“Like?”

Hermione let her mind race. “Most are already things I have thought of, to be honest. I would agree that I would like to try some...bondage and spanking,” she admitted. “I’m just a bit...nervous.”

“Nervous because you’ve never done it before or nervous because you think we need to better establish our sexual relationship first?”

She thought on that. "I think the first one. I feel we have a good sexual relationship. Don't you?"

Draco smiled, smug. "*Very* good. So why don't we try you tying me up, then? That way you can get a feel for it, you're not giving up any power as you dive in. Maybe later tonight we'll switch roles."

Hermione swallowed. The idea did appeal to her. Making him beg. "Okay. Wait. Is this why you always choose my room?"

"Hmm?"

"Because you're supposed to make sure that you're in a space where you both feel safe," she recited.

Draco blinked at her. "I suppose."

Her heart warmed. "You should know that I feel safe in your room."

"We can go to my room if you prefer..."

Hermione, however, quite liked the image of him tied up in her bed, so she informed him that she would prefer her room, for tonight. They made their way to her room quietly, the tension mounting. Draco told her to wait on the bed and went to get his ropes and ties.

What proceeded was a very instructive and sexy lesson about how to tie different knots. They settled on silk ties because Hermione was worried about hurting him and wanted something a little more lax for her first attempt.

"Shall we discuss the scene?" he asked as she fiddled with the silk ties, tying and untying them.

Hermione nodded, nervous again.

"What would you like to do?" Draco asked calmly.

"I think I'd like to tie you and...maybe edge you like you did for me earlier. No...no crops or anything yet."

"And what do you want me to call you? Can I talk?"

Hermione knew how important setting the scene was, but she almost wished they just dove into it head first. She was feeling very awkward. He took her hand when she didn't respond.

"Hermione, we don't have to do this. If you're not ready, we'll wait until you are."

Hermione sighed. "No. I want to. I'm just a bit nervous."

"About what?"

She tied the silk in her hands as he had taught her. “You know I don’t like being bad at things.”

Draco took her fidgeting hands into his. She looked into his eyes. “Trust me, you will be fantastic at bossing me around.”

Hermione rolled her eyes at him and couldn’t help the smile that graced her lips.

“And if you need to take a break or stop at any point, just tell me and we will,” he reassured her.

“Okay.” She felt a bit better. “I think. I think you can talk for now. I’ll decide as we’re going. It’s just important you follow my instructions. Is there anything you don’t want me to do?” she asked curiously.

Draco shook his head.

Hermione felt a spark of desire flood her. “And if you don’t listen to me? Do you get... punished?” she wondered, thinking back to what he had said earlier.

Draco shrugged. “Whatever you want. But since we’re just getting started, maybe limit to light slaps, should the need arise.”

“Okay. And what about edging?”

“Yes.”

It really did seem like he would say yes to anything she asked. “Are you ready?” she asked him.

He nodded again.

“Okay, let’s start.” Hermione took a deep breath, then stood and looked down on him as he remained seated on the bed. “You will do as you’re told.”

He nodded.

“Answer me.”

“Yes.”

Hermione felt a thrill run through her. She channeled her inner Draco and imagined how he would respond to that. “Yes what?”

“Yes, I will do as I am told.”

“Call me mistress,” she ordered, trying out the name. The book had offered several dom names, gendered and un-gendered, but she wasn’t particularly into any of them. She did feel weird when he didn’t address her, though, so she thought it was worth a try.

“Yes, mistress.”

Hermione smiled. She did like the name.

“Good. Stand and take off your clothing.”

Draco stood, towering over her again and started to tear off his clothing.

“Slower,” Hermione commanded.

His arms slowed their work and he threw a heated look her way. Her eyes traced his now naked form, his cock already erect for her. Hermione was drunk on the power. She felt like giggling, but wanted to keep to the established power dynamic.

“What next, mistress?” he asked earnestly, moving toward her.

“Tie your feet to the bedframe,” Hermione stated.

Draco ran his tongue over his teeth, then complied, tying his first ankle with ease, then having difficulty with the second. Hermione did not move to help him and instead watched him fumble slowly. Eventually, he was tied in, legs spread apart and seated in the middle of her bed. The ties were very long, so while her bed was massive, he was not pulled to the far corners of it.

“Tie your right hand,” she instructed.

Draco did so, again with some difficulty due to the angle. He was laying on the bed now. Almost entirely at her mercy.

“Touch yourself. Slowly,” she ordered.

“Yes, mistress.” Draco licked his lips, then brought his hand to his erection and fisted it slowly. Hermione’s core tightened. She let him stroke himself for a few moments, then she went to the side of the bed.

“Stop touching yourself,” she instructed.

Draco slowed, but didn’t stop entirely. So, she took his hand, forcefully stopping him. He resisted, so she gave him a light slap on the wrist. His face flushed. Hermione liked how red he was. She felt a thrill go through her.

“What did I say?” she asked, leaning over him.

Draco swallowed. “Sorry, mistress,” he looked away from her eyes.

She took his wrist and tied him to the bedpost so that his arms and legs were useless. He could still move—the ties weren’t super tight, but he couldn’t go much beyond a foot in any direction.

Draco looked at her intently. “What are you going to do to me, mistress?” he asked coyly.

Hermione smiled and climbed onto the bed. "I think the question is what you're going to do to me. You have to earn your rewards, husband."

Hermione then proceeded to climb onto his face. She had read about throning. It was rather interesting to her. Draco wasted no time in connecting his mouth with her core. Hermione held onto the headboard and undulated her hips against his face, crying out in pleasure. She thought that perhaps it would have taken her longer, given how much she had already orgasmed that day, but she came surprisingly quickly. This was probably due to the inherently dom position she was in and the fact that he kept straining against the ties to try to touch her. As she shattered, seated on his face, Hermione moaned to her headboard.

When she climbed off of him, she licked his neck and murmured, "Good boy." Then she bit his ear.

His breathing hitched when she said that. Hermione now understood his obsession with making her squirm. He was better at this whole edging thing than she was, though, because after his performance, all she wanted to do was ride him until he was groaning in pleasure. And that's what she did. Hermione wasted no time in sliding onto him. Her hands came to rest on his pecs and she began a deep thrust and grind against him.

"Fuck," Draco groaned.

Hermione chuckled darkly, picking up the pace. Draco did his best to thrust up into her, but his legs were at a difficult angle to do so. Draco looked up at her, slack jawed as he neared his release. Hermione just barely stopped herself and slid off of him. His lungs expanded and collapsed rapidly.

"Mistress?" he asked.

Hermione tried to think of a way to tease him. Struck by an idea, she kissed her way down his chest and layered kisses on his hip bones, doing her best to avoid his leaking shaft. Draco strained against the ties as she artfully avoided his cock yet again, but was close enough to feel the heat radiating off it. Hermione looked up at him and smirked.

"Please," he begged softly.

She sat up further. "Please, what?"

Draco didn't hesitate like she did whenever she wanted to express her desires. "Please, mistress, touch me."

"Only because you asked so nicely."

Hermione swallowed him, nearly gagging at the depth. He groaned deeply. She bobbed her head a few times, then trailed her tongue from the base to the tip and back again. His hips were trembling. Hermione grinned. She took him in her mouth again and he screwed his eyes shut. He had started muttering under his breath, a sign that he was close.

She pulled away and sat back on her ankles. Hermione waited until he opened his eyes and looked at her, his breathing uneven. She was again baffled by how he was able to do this so effectively; all Hermione wanted to do was give in to his desires. Somehow, Draco had edged her for hours that morning—the self-control was admirable.

She trailed her hands up and down his thighs, waiting for him to calm down. She wasn't sure if it was working, though because he remained hard as a rock and his breathing barely evened out. Impatient, she sat atop him again. This time she leaned backwards, putting her hands on his thighs to give him a clear view of their connecting bodies. Draco stared down at her hungrily. Hermione moved, knowing that she would let them both finish this time.

Draco began muttering again, so Hermione commanded him to, "Speak up."

He obliged. "You're perfect, mistress, so hot, and perfect, your body, your mind, you, Merlin, you're so—I lo—I'm going to—"

Hermione stared into his eyes as his body thrust up against hers as much as it could and his face screwed up in pleasure. She felt a surge of power in that moment as he groaned and whimpered, barely able to form words. Her core was pounding, but she hadn't finished. She brought a hand to her clit as he continued to orgasm and stroked herself a few times. That did the trick. Hermione collapsed onto him moaning into his neck.

When she had recovered, Hermione sat up, still on him. "Well done, husband," she murmured. Draco grinned.

"Thank you, mistress."

Hermione slowly removed herself from him, then started to untie him. She noted that he had faint bruising on his wrists and ankles. She kissed him briefly on each spot while he watched in silence. Once he was fully free, Hermione snuggled into his side.

"So?" she asked, nervous for his response.

"Yes."

"Yes?"

"Yes, that was amazing. Yes, let's do it again."

Hermione giggled and smiled happily. "Good. Was there anything that you didn't like?"

He looked down at her and grinned. "No."

"Was there anything that you would have liked?" she asked.

He thought longer. "You could have bossed me around more or made me work for it more..."

Hermione laughed. "I don't know how you do it," she admitted to his chest. "I just wanted to give you whatever you wanted. I could barely stop."

Draco tightened his arm around her. "Is that so?" She nodded. "Well, the trick is, knowing what your partner wants. I know you want to be teased. You want to be dominated. You want it to last as long as possible to the point of you losing your mind."

Hermione gulped. She didn't deny it.

"So, it's easy for me to edge you, because I know you want it and that you'll enjoy it more when I do it."

"But you don't like being teased as much, do you?" she asked.

Draco shrugged. "Sometimes. Like I said last night, I prefer to be in charge. But when you choose to be in charge of me...well, I'm giving you full control. I want to be at your every whim. I don't want it to be easy for me."

Hermione nodded, thinking about what she would change were they to do it again. "And your name. Did you mind?"

"Husband? I quite liked that actually. And you? Did you like mistress?"

Hermione squirmed. "More than I thought I would. I would be open to trying other names though."

"Sure, wife. And did you like being in charge?"

Hermione looked into his grey eyes again. "Yes," she admitted. "I mean. It was...liberating in a way. But it was also kind of stressful. I didn't fully grasp how much responsibility it is. I wanted to make sure you were okay, I was okay, we were both having fun...it's definitely easier to be dommed than be the dom."

Draco chuckled. "That's very true. Is there anything you would have liked to have changed?"

Hermione reflected. "Perhaps, I would have liked to have done more before you were tied up. Once you were tied up, your hands were no longer available to me...which I didn't particularly enjoy..." she laughed.

Draco stroked her hip. "You could have used my mouth more," he offered.

Hermione flushed. "Yes. I did...like that position."

"You could have made me suck your breasts, your neck, kiss you...don't underestimate the mouth," he said cheekily.

"Noted."

"I also don't need to be tied up for you to dom me. It's easier at first maybe, as you get used to the dynamic, but keep in mind, if we're doing a you in charge night, I'll always follow whatever you say. So, ties aren't always necessary, they do help when I don't have it in me to stop what I'm doing though," he chuckled.

“You didn’t mind the slap? It wasn’t too hard?”

He shook his head. “The slap was deserved. I didn’t listen. Besides, it was very light. You could have gone harder.”

Hermione smiled. “Great. Because you need a slap every once in a while.”

They descended into silence. Hermione began massaging his arms and legs, helping him relax after being tied up for so long. Eventually, she stopped trailing her hands up and down his body.

Draco kissed her forehead. “Shall we eat dinner?”

“Yes please.”

*

Draco could not believe the image before him.

After dinner and another quick shower fuck, they had taken a nap break. Upon waking, Hermione had informed him that she was ready to try some bondage and spanking. Draco had been very eager to do so. So, he had conjured a table into her room. It had rings in it to tie ropes to. They used softly lined cuffs because she was nervous and he didn’t want to be too rough until he knew what she could handle.

Hermione was on all fours, tied to the table, back slightly arched, presenting to him.

He circled the table and took her in, his pajamas still on from their earlier nap. Her hair was a frazzled mess from their day of fucking. He had plans to do some more pulling presently.

“We’ll go medium force and only 10. If at any point it is too much, you say stop. I stop. Simple. I tend to...intersperse my pain with pleasure, so there may be some touching between spans. I also would like to use this.” He circled to the front and show her the magical bullet vibrator. It would suction to whatever body part you placed it on. He explained its function. She licked her lips and nodded. Draco was beyond turned on. “Once you’ve received your punishment, you’ll get your reward. Can I pull your hair?”

Hermione looked at him from her supine position. “Yes. But...only lightly. Not...not too hard.”

Draco brought his hand to her hair slowly. He pulled at her curls. “This okay?” She gasped and squirmed.

“Yes.”

Draco’s cock twitched. “We’ll start now, if you’re ready.”

“Okay.”

Draco circled to the back of her and looked at her glistening core. She was already so ready for him. He held back a groan. He clicked the vibrator on low, then placed it on her clit. She twitched as if to move away from it, then started slightly rocking against it, wanting friction. Draco steadied her hips. Hermione looked back at him over her shoulder.

He committed the image to his memory. "Can you count for me?" he asked.

"Count?"

"Yes. Before each stroke, count. It's another way for me to know you're ready for the next one."

"Okay."

Draco brought his hand to her lower back to steady her, then said, "Count."

Hermione gulped. "One," she said quietly.

Draco brought his hand down against her buttocks swiftly. She yelped at the contact. He rubbed her cheek soothingly, then pulled his hand off her. "Too strong?" he asked, staring at his hand print greedily.

"No. It...it was good."

"Count," he responded.

"Two," she called out a bit more firmly.

Draco's hand swung against her same cheek, clapping deliciously. Hermione gasped at the contact, but said nothing. The vibrator buzzed quietly in the background. Draco raised his hand and she counted immediately. He brought it back down firmly and she grunted. Draco was hard as a rock, but he still wasn't sure that she was enjoying herself. He brought his hand to her core and slid a finger in smoothly. She gasped loudly and moved against him. She was very wet, which reassured him.

"How are you doing?" he asked, his finger sliding in and out of her.

"Mhm," she nodded. "Good. Yes."

"It's not too hard?"

"No—it's. Yes. It's good."

"You like it?" he pressed, curling his fingers.

"Yes!" she groaned.

Draco smirked and pulled out of her. The vibrator continued buzzing away. He raised his hand and she counted, "Four." Draco's hand connected with the same cheek, which was almost fully flushed at that point. "Five," she said with difficulty, her hips wiggling

unsteadily. Draco's hand connected with the same cheek for the final time. He massaged her gently, her butt red as a tomato.

"You're doing so well, wife," he said deeply. "It's time for the other side. But first..."

He turned up the vibrator slightly and her hips jerked unsteadily. Her hands were shaking.

"How're you doing?" he asked. "You're shaking."

Her hips spasmed as the vibrator buzzed away. "Good," she replied weakly. "Just tired. And I'm close..." she confessed.

"You'll tell me if you need to stop."

Hermione looked over her shoulder at him again and Draco swore lowly. "Yes, I'll tell you. Keep going."

"Hang in there, wife. We have five more to go." He massaged her other cheek, then slipped his finger back into her. She gasped and groaned as he worked her for a moment. He pulled away. "Count."

It took her a moment to remember. Then, "Six." She groaned. "Seven." She tilted slightly forward and he pulled her back by the hips. "Eight." Draco fingered her again, wanting her to be very near the edge when they got to ten. "Nine." He turned up the vibrator to max. "Ten!" she called weakly and his hand connected with her for the last time. He massaged her gently, both cheeks. She shivered in pleasure, but hadn't come yet.

Draco stepped out of his pajamas and climbed onto the table behind her. He ran his hands down her back slowly, then slid into her without further ado. Hermione moaned, her body trembling. Draco gripped her hips in his favourite and already very bruised spot, and began pumping into her. She bounced back against him. Draco could feel the buzz of the vibrator from inside her. It was a strange sensation he had never gotten used to. She moaned as he moved.

Draco put his hand into the base of her hair and pulled back gently at first. She gasped, her breath stuttering. Then, once he was sure his hold was strong, he pulled more insistently. She strained against her cuffs. He turned her head so that she was looking at him—albeit with difficulty.

"Draco!" she cried, her body starting to flutter around him. He pulled her hair harder, as they both came loudly.

Draco breathed heavily for a few moments before removing himself from her. She collapsed onto her face, her arms exhausted from the tension. Draco made quick work of untying her so that she could relax her sore muscles. He helped her to the bed where she stretched out, looking dazed.

Draco lay beside her and started massaging her arms. "Okay?"

"Excellent," she responded. "Sore, though."

Draco nodded, his hips and lower back were quite sore from all the work. He continued massaging her body gently. Draco summoned the bruise paste and got to work massaging that into her.

“Was I too hard?” he asked.

“No.”

“You liked it?”

She smiled. “I did. I was kind of surprised by how much I liked it. But I think we need a softer table.”

Draco chuckled. “Yes, I’ll have to invest in a spanking bench.”

Hermione fell asleep while Draco continued to massage her. He spooned her and drifted off for a few hours, intent on waking her up for another round.

Sunday, April 24

Hermione awoke slowly, her body sore from the previous day’s activities. She glanced around, half expecting him to still be in the bed, but he must have slipped out at some point after she finally passed out. Hermione flushed crimson as images from their night flashed through her mind. She shook herself and had a shower, although her shower was now tainted with images and memories of him and it did nothing to clear her filthy mind.

Hermione towelled off slowly. Her body was slightly less stiff from the hot water. She checked her phone. She realized that Ginny had texted her early the day previous and Hermione hadn’t even noticed. Had they really spent all day wrapped up in one another?

‘Are you coming to Weasley brunch tomorrow?’ Ginny asked.

Hermione checked the time and swore under her breath. Brunch was starting in 30 minutes. Her hair was still dripping wet and her body covered in a myriad of bruises that were only just starting to set in. Hermione examined her neck and cursed her husband. So much for the bath supposedly helping. She would seriously have to invest in some better bruise salve or better makeup because her glammers were shit.

‘Yes. I might be late. Should Malfoy come?’ Hermione texted rapidly, drying her hair hastily and tearing her eyes from the finger bruises on her hips.

Ginny responded almost immediately. ‘Wow, someone was too busy to answer her best friend *all day*. I wonder whatever you were getting up to on contract day...’

Hermione cursed herself for telling Ginny what day of the week their contract day was. In retrospect though, it was the best day of the week because they had the full day free from work and she had a full day to recover...Hermione flushed again. *Stupid Malfoy and his stupid sexy body.*

‘Bring him,’ Ginny replied. ‘I like to bother Mr. Granger.’

Hermione laughed and sent a thumbs up in response. She then checked her other message which was from the man in question.

‘Morning, beautiful. I’m in the solarium doing some reading if you want to join for breakfast.’

Hermione’s heart stuttered at his easy endearment. She wasn’t sure if it was just him listening to her turn ons or if he was actually feeling something more for her. Much like the week before, their last sexual encounter the night before had been akin to lovemaking. Soft, slow, fulfilling. It was incredibly confusing to her.

‘We’re invited to Weasley brunch’ she replied.

A knock resounded on her door. Hermione looked at her open bathroom door and swore. She was still stark-naked standing in front of the mirror. She threw on the closest robe she could find, which of course had to be the sexy one. Hermione opened her door gruffly to see a far too put together Draco looking downright handsome. He eyed her bruised neck and smirked.

“It would be great if you didn’t leave so many bruises behind, Malfoy. Makes it hard to go out in public,” she said in way of greeting.

He grinned broadly. “Whatever, Granger. We both know that you like them. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be doing it.”

Hermione had no response for that, so she ignored him. “Did you get my text?”

“Yes. Weasley brunch. What a delight. What does it entail?”

“Just a very large gathering of the extended Weasley family. I’m heading out in twenty-five minutes. Are you coming?”

“I’m invited?” he asked and leaned against her door frame.

Hermione wondered if he knew how attractive he looked when he leaned on things. He had to know. Otherwise, why would he do it?

“Yes.”

He thought for a moment. “Alright.”

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

“Well, you’re going, right?”

“Yes,” she responded, confused.

“I’ll be there then.”

Hermione blinked at him. “Great. 25 minutes.”

He nodded and she closed the door in his face, needing to get some clothing on her body. She heard him walking away toward the solarium, probably to clean up the food that they would not be eating.

Hermione’s hair was somewhat tamed and she was sporting jeans and jumper. She made extra sure that her neck was covered with makeup. When she met Draco in their living room twenty minutes later, she even had him inspect her neck, once again blaming him for being a possessive twat.

He had the grace to cast an impressive glamour on her neck that shut her up pretty quickly. Hermione inspected herself in the mirror, then grabbed his hand and led them through the Floo to the Burrow.

The kitchen was overflowing with people and chaos, as per usual. Victoire and Teddy were also there, running around making noise. Hermione glanced at Draco who took in the messy and chaotic atmosphere and immediately looked overwhelmed. Hermione realized that she should have better prepared him.

“Who are you?” Teddy asked invasively as Draco stared back at him blankly. The 8-year-old changed his hair to match Draco’s and the two looked shockingly similar.

“This is my husband, Draco Malfoy,” Hermione introduced. “Malfoy, this is Theodore Lupin. Remus and Nymphadora’s son.”

Draco nodded. “Er—hi. I think...” he reflected for a moment. “Yes, you’re my cousin.”

Teddy blinked at him, then ran away in confusion shouting for Harry about a stranger claiming to be his cousin.

“A bit of warning might have been nice, Granger,” he intoned.

“Sorry. I—I just woke up,” she said in her defense. “Which really is your fault because honestly, we were up until like 4 am and—hi Ginny!”

“Up until 4 am?” Ginny asked knowingly.

“No, that’s. It was...movies. Watching movies.”

Ginny wagged her eyebrows. “X-rated?”

Draco looked between them, clearly confused about what X-rated movies were. Hermione planned to keep it that way.

“Your neck, Hermione. It is positively shimmering,” Ginny crooned, then sauntered away with a wink.

Hermione slapped a hand on her neck in embarrassment. “You said the glamour was undetectable!” she hissed at Draco.

“It is, Granger. She’s just messing with you. And you went and confirmed her suspicions. I swear Red is secretly a Slytherin.”

Hermione sighed and started making her way toward the living room where most people were. She reintroduced Draco to everyone as she went. They passed Charlie, Fleur, Victoire, Bill, Percy, and Arthur before they made it to the living room.

“There are a lot of Weasleys,” Draco muttered.

Then they encountered Molly and the more familiar faces. Draco officially introduced himself to Molly and offered her one of their vintage wines. Molly smiled in surprise and excused herself to go put the wine into the pantry.

“When did you even grab that bottle?” Hermione asked.

Draco shrugged. “Never show up empty handed, Granger.”

“They’re family to me, Malfoy, why would I show up with something? Molly wouldn’t accept it.”

Draco merely raised an eyebrow.

“Oi! Granger!” Harry called jovially. Hermione smiled at him and walked his way. “Oh, not you Hermione,” Harry greeted rudely. “Your *dearest* husband.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “I’ll leave you two to talk about Quidditch or whatever other rubbish.” Hermione went to find Ginny.

The woman was talking with Angelina about their upcoming match in Ireland and sounding very confident. Upon Hermione’s arrival, though, Ginny immediately changed the topic to Hermione and Draco, much to her discontent.

“Can we ever talk about something besides my husband?” Hermione complained quietly, not wanting to attract attention.

Angelina shrugged. “It’s very entertaining to us,” she responded. “So, what’s this about a glamour around your neck? I don’t see anything, Gin.”

Ginny laughed. “You can’t see it because her husband was the one who did the charm. Hermione is truly terrible at glammers. If she had done it, you would have seen it a mile away.”

Hermione frowned and smacked the redhead. “Rude.”

Ginny shrugged. “I call it like I see it. And I see that you and Granger seem to be really jiving lately. Even more so than when I last saw you two eating lunch at the Ministry earlier this week...I wonder what might have happened in the past 24 hours...”

Hermione’s eye twitched. “I’m leaving this conversation.”

Both the strong women physically restrained her. “Give us something, Hermione.”

“Why are you so interested in my love life?” she complained.

Ginny shrieked, drawing the eyes of several Weasleys, who promptly turned away when they realized it was just an over-reaction and not something to worry about. Draco’s eyes landed on Hermione’s briefly and she could sense his question from across the room. She smiled weakly and turned away.

“Must you?” Hermione groaned.

“Love life!” Ginny whisper-shrieked. “So...does that mean...?”

“You two are actually giving it a go?” Angelina asked when Hermione didn’t respond.

Hermione remained mute and fiddled with her dress. “I wouldn’t say that. It was just...a slip of the tongue...”

“Slip of the tongue, *my my!*” Ginny laughed.

“Oh my god!” Hermione placed her head in her hands in embarrassment.

Angelina pat her back comfortingly. “Listen, Hermione. Draco seems like a decent bloke these days. Besides, that ass. I mean. Wow. Even George can’t stop talking about it!”

The women broke out into raucous laughter. The conversation shifted, thankfully, when Molly joined them and asked for their help setting the table.

*

The brunch was a nice affair overall, but Draco was distinctly uncomfortable around the sheer number of family members. There were so many names and strange dynamics that he didn’t understand. For instance, Potter seemed to be a sort of surrogate mother to Draco’s cousin, Teddy. Victoire seemed oddly attached to Hermione, Molly was always frowning at Charlie’s hair, and so forth.

There was also that awkward moment that arose when there was a small pause in the conversation at the massive dining room table and Teddy had the audacity to ask why he didn’t know that Draco was his cousin. A tense silence stretched over the table while Draco tried to find the right words and Hermione had sat very straight, her gaze whipping between the child and him.

“Because he used to be an idiot,” George had piped in, making a few people chuckle in response. The moment passed quickly after that. He’d have to thank the man later somehow. Maybe he’d just buy a bunch of WWW products.

The meal passed faster than Draco could keep track of. Hermione seemed completely at ease with her extended family, everyone laughing and talking easily, the occasional argument breaking out as well. It did help that Pansy was there. It gave him someone to talk to who understood how bizarre this experience was. Pansy was more at ease amongst the Weasley

clan than he was though, probably due to her ingratiating herself into their lives since she her marriage to Ron.

When the brunch wrapped up, a few of them went outside to walk the grounds, chuck some garden gnomes, and ride brooms. Draco found the quiet of the outdoors a welcome respite. He walked with Pansy for a bit. Hermione was laughing along with Teddy and Victoire as they tossed garden gnomes as far as their arms could carry them.

“You seem rather happy this afternoon, Draco,” Pansy commented with a smirk.

Draco shrugged, his eyes still following Hermione’s movements.

“You can’t even take your eyes off her...” Pansy said when he didn’t say anything.

Again, he shrugged. There was no point in trying to hide this from Pansy. She already knew. She knew weeks ago, he just had never confirmed anything.

“I take it things are going well? Contract day turning out to be lots of fun?”

Draco scratched his neck and held back a grin. “You could say that.”

“And on the romancing her front. How’s that going?”

Draco sighed. “Could be better.”

Pansy took a seat on the grass. Draco sat beside her gingerly. He charmed the ground to not stain his clothing.

“Why’s that?” she asked.

Draco cast a quick silencing ward so that they wouldn’t be overheard. Pansy raised an eyebrow and waited for him to speak. “I feel like I’m nothing but charm and have been for weeks, but she seems completely oblivious to my intentions.”

“Well, have you spoken to her?” Pansy asked.

Draco plucked at blades of grass. “Well...”

The brunette rolled her eyes. “You can’t expect her to just guess what you’re thinking, Draco.”

“I just don’t want to freak her out. And I...”

“Listen,” Pansy said seriously. “It’s scary. Putting your heart out there. It’s terrifying. I...” Pansy took a deep breath and looked out over the grassy meadow. “I told Ron that I’m falling in love with him two days ago. He...he didn’t say anything back. He just stared at me then left the room. I’ve just pretended that I didn’t say it. But...” Pansy was suddenly crying.

“Oh shit.” Draco placed a hand on her shoulder uncomfortably. He was terrible at comforting people. Draco was much better with anger. “Should I go and punch him in the face? Or the

nuts?” He asked.

Pansy laughed and wiped at her eyes. Her tears were short lived. “No. It’s...fine. I just.” She sighed heavily. “I need to talk to him, like an adult and stop avoiding it, and it sucks. But I’m telling you that I did it. I put myself out there. And maybe it blew up a bit. But I’m happy that I did because I was agonizing about it for nearly a week. Instead, I told him how I feel. And honestly, at least I know where I stand. You need to do the same.”

“Pansy, that redhead is an idiot. How could he not—I’m going to talk to him.”

Pansy chuckled. “Don’t worry, I think your wife is already doing it.”

Draco looked up to see that Hermione was no longer playing with the kids, but was pointing at Ron menacingly, then pointing at Pansy. Potter was also there, shaking his head slowly. Draco could see Ron’s blush from where they were.

Pansy got to her feet as Ron started making his way toward them. “Listen, Draco. She’s not psychic. Tell her something, even if it’s not everything. Because she will probably never believe that you want a relationship with her unless you tell her.”

“But we’re...I mean we sleep together all the time.”

Pansy arched her eyebrow. “Fucking doesn’t mean a relationship and you know that. Talk to her, you fool.”

Ron was now much closer and Draco removed the silencing spell. He got to his feet and walked past the redhead, tossing him a glare, but refraining from saying anything. He joined his wife and Potter who watched from afar as the couple interacted awkwardly.

“Can you believe Ron?” Hermione asked, enraged.

“He can be pretty dense,” Potter agreed.

“Fucking idiot,” Draco muttered.

Hermione slapped his arm. “Hey! That’s my best friend.”

“But you just said—”

“You aren’t allowed to criticize him. Only we are,” she clarified.

Draco rolled his eyes. As the trio looked on, Ron approached Pansy and brought her into a kiss. Pansy pulled him closer. Quite suddenly their heartfelt reconnection turned indecent as the couple tumbled to the ground and began fondling one another.

Draco turned around quickly. “Holy hell!”

“I guess they made up,” Potter chuckled and walked back to the house.

Hermione walked back more slowly with Draco. “How has your day been with the Weasleys?”

Draco glanced around the messy yard. “Surprisingly nice. But far more chaotic than I was ready for. Not to mention my surprise cousin...”

Hermione nodded. “Yes, Teddy would like to spend more time with you. I told him to ask his grandmother to set up a date.”

“A date with my kid cousin?”

Hermione chuckled. “You know what I mean. Have you spoken to Andromeda at all recently?”

Draco shook his head. “I sent her an owl a few years ago and she responded, but not since then. My mother and her are still estranged.”

Hermione looked at the ground. “Well, I know Teddy would love to get to know you. And Andromeda would too.”

Draco nodded and changed the topic. “Should we compare our marriage law notes this evening?”

Hermione nodded. “Yes. That would be excellent, I have done so much reading since we talked last and I’d love to hear your thoughts on a passage that I keep re-reading.”

Draco smiled slowly. He liked to hear that she valued his opinion. His hand brushed hers gently. She looked up at him in question. Draco, remembering Pansy’s words, took her hand boldly, then continued walking to the cramped house.

Tuesday, April 26

‘Dinner out at our restaurant tonight?’ Draco texted.

Hermione took a minute to respond to his text, rather busy working on the logistical report for computers. ‘Which one?’ she asked cheekily.

‘Muggle or magical?’

‘magical?’

‘great.’

Hermione turned off her notifications and returned to her work.

Later that evening, Draco took her arm as they walked down Diagon Alley to their French restaurant. A few heads turned at the sight of the couple, but Hermione was used to it by now

and ignored it. The host sat them immediately, giving them the tasting menu so they knew what they would be eating that evening.

“Truly delicious,” Hermione groaned as she took a bite of the second dish. “I can’t believe we own this place. We should eat here every night.”

“This one seems to be your favourite so far. Even more so than the actual French restaurant in Paris.”

Hermione flushed. “Well. This chef knows what they’re doing.”

Draco flashed a grin her way and continued his meal.

“I was wondering something actually,” Hermione asked, then cast a privacy charm. This got him interested. “It’s not...it’s not sexual,” she said quietly.

“Oh.” He seemed disappointed.

“Can I ask about your Dark Mark?”

He blinked at her rapidly and she basically watched him build his walls before her eyes. “What would you like to know?”

“Just, the tattoos. Why did you get tattoos? What do they represent?”

He looked away from her, but responded neutrally. “I hated the Mark and it is impossible to get rid of, as I’m sure you know. It does fade, but it will always be there no matter what. Unless I cut off my arm. I’ve considered having the skin grafted, but it’s never been done and there’s a possibility that the Mark is cursed to not let me heal. So...I covered it as best as I could.”

“Why flowers?”

Draco took a bite of food before placing his fork down and thinking slowly. “I like flowers.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “If you don’t want to tell me yet, that’s fine. But don’t be a little shit.”

He chuckled. Their next course arrived before them magically. “I do like flowers. As a pureblood, you’re trained to know the significance of each flower. I chose ones that represent folly, remembrance, forgiveness, hope, and new beginnings. I wanted some colour too to help liven up my arm. I hated it for so long that I wanted to be able to look at something that I actually liked.”

She rested her head in her hand and gazed at him. “I love that.”

He looked uncomfortable. “Thanks.”

“Do you want other tattoos?” she asked.

He shrugged. "Probably not. I figure the first one was a terrible idea, the flowers were essentially a cover up. Now I should probably stop getting tattoos."

Hermione laughed at his casual tone.

"And you? You want tattoos?"

Hermione thought about that. "Maybe. I haven't given it much thought," she admitted. "I love them generally, but I find it hard to commit to something that will last forever." Her mind for some reason landed on their marriage and their impending divorce. Hermione changed the topic quickly, asking about his workday.

The night ended with them standing outside of their respective rooms leering at one another but not closing the distance. Hermione finally wished him goodnight and closed her door.

She got a text from him moments later. 'What are you up to?' he asked.

Hermione rolled her eyes. The man was insatiable. 'Getting ready for bed.'

'What're you wearing?' he asked cheekily.

'You've seen what I'm wearing.'

She could feel him rolling his eyes. He replied, 'I mean to bed.'

Hermione would be lying if she said that she didn't want to play his little game. She went searching for cute pyjamas and put them on. They weren't very sexy, so she undid the top button, then the second button to give some cleavage. Hermione felt foolish, but took a few photos in front of the mirror, excluding her face and sent him one that she felt okay about.

Draco responded quickly with a shockingly artful photo of his bare chest and the top of his briefs. Hermione bit her lip. *How was this man so sexy?* She sighed as she recognized that she wouldn't be falling asleep for a while and would instead be sending scandalous photos to the man across the hall from her.

Hermione rummaged through her underwear drawer and found a matching set and put it on. Her breasts ached and she wondered absently when she was supposed to be getting her period. Hermione laid in bed and took a few photos. One turned out decent, the rest she promptly deleted.

'I changed.' She texted along with her photo.

Draco sent her another photo where he was clearly now fully nude, but he was hiding everything she wanted to see again with an artful flair that surprised her. He must have been reading up on camera angles.

'Me too.'

Hermione laughed. She changed back into her pyjamas, in no way planning on sleeping in scandalous underthings. She picked back up her phone and typed out a message. 'What

would you be doing if I were there with you?’

Her heart pounded as she awaited his reply, the three dots taunting her.

Memorial Day

Chapter Notes

Things get a bit dicey here in terms of their relationship, but fear not, it is very short lived.

-

ALSO this chapter has a fair few TWs--I've updated the tags. See the end notes for a more detailed list, since it's kinda spoilers. I also wrote a summary of the chapter, since it's kind of hard to skip the triggers in this one.

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

Thursday, April 27

Draco was hovering around the front door when she got home. She had mentioned that she had got her period during the day and he was holding a pain potion in hand along with a hot water bottle. Hermione's heart warmed and she almost cried from all the emotions coursing through her. She was pissed and annoyed that her period had come almost a week early, but the contraceptive potion was known to mess with her cycle.

"Thank you," she said quietly and took the potion.

"Fresh Prince?" he asked.

Hermione nodded and headed to her room. Crookshanks jumped onto the far end of the bed and fell asleep, snoring. Draco set up her laptop, now familiar with how it worked and was even able to get Fresh Prince up and running without her help. Hermione gestured for him to join her on the bed and they descended into silence as Will Smith made a fool of himself on television. It was fantastic.

Hermione kept glancing at him to see his concerned look being thrown in her direction.

"Do you want another massage?" he asked when she doubled over slightly.

Hermione nodded. "Yes. Oh my god. That would be lovely."

Draco paused the show and instead put on some music.

"You've gotten very good at muggle tech, Malfoy," she said, impressed.

He smiled. "Yes, well, I have to attempt to keep up with my demanding wife."

He summoned some massage oil that he had apparently invested in at some point since the last time he massaged her and slathered it up and down her back and arms. Then he started

massaging her back, starting at her lower back and making his way up to her shoulders, then back down to her lower back. He boldly pulled down her pants and added some oil to her bottom and massaged there as well. It was both hot and extremely comforting. She had never noticed how much stress she carried in her buttocks. Draco returned to her lower back and made sure to pay attention to her hips as well. Hermione sighed in delight. At some point he removed her pants entirely and got to work on her legs. This had a surprising effect of making her pain melt away.

“I’ve been doing some reading,” Hermione groaned in response. “Massaging your calves can help relieve menstrual pain. Is it working?”

Hermione grunted in response.

“Good.”

Draco returned to work, his hands gliding over her sore muscles thanks to the oil. Hermione felt herself dozing off slowly as his hands continued their magic. He seemed completely content to massage her all night...

She awoke several hours later, clothed in pyjamas that she hadn’t been wearing before and alone in her room. Hermione shifted and fell back asleep with a smile on her face.

Friday, April 28

Draco and Hermione were drinking some water after coming home from some drinks with their mutual friend group. Hermione had complained about how much they were drinking and wanted to have fewer hangovers, so she insisted that they both hydrate so that they would wake up feeling refreshed. Draco agreed because he hated the taste of hangover cures and wanted as much energy as possible to fuck her the following day.

The conversation shifted to a topic he would rather avoid; Memorial Day.

“I think it’s utter tosh that we’re *expected* to be there. Poor Harry spends every Memorial Day down in the dumps cursing himself for all the people who ‘died for him’,” Hermione rolled her eyes. “They died for a better world. Harry was only ever just a symbol, y’know?” Her tone suggested she was a bit sloshed.

Draco grunted noncommittally, not wanting to discuss Memorial Day and hoping, rather foolishly, that she would not ask him about it.

“I mean, we all deal with the day in our own way,” Hermione continued on, not yet noticing his silence nor discomfort, “Harry gets all mopey and won’t talk to anyone, Ron drinks in the praise in the hopes that it will drown out the pain, Ginny works out obsessively, George alternates between doing far too many pranks and drinking himself blind, and Molly—she’s always a wreck. Poor dear.”

Draco clenched his fist. He rather liked the Weasley matriarch and felt horrible that George lost his brother. He felt horrible for everything; he was very much to blame.

How Draco handled his Memorial Day was a combination of George and Potter; drinking alone and moping around all day. Usually, his mother would try to cheer him up and they'd get in a fight over it.

"Draco?" Hermione asked suddenly.

The use of his first name startled him; she used it so rarely (outside of the bedroom). He realised that he had zoned out and missed what she said. Hermione looked at him intently, then frowned. She shuffled closer to him and pulled him into a tight hug. Draco remained rigid for a moment before melting into her.

"I'm so stupid," she muttered.

Her face felt warm against his, her arms reassuring.

"I'm sorry," she said finally.

"Why're you sorry? You saved the world from idiots like me."

Hermione sighed and pulled away from him. She looked into his eyes intently. "Stop beating yourself up. It accomplishes nothing."

"Granger, you have no idea how much more hatred I deserve from you." Draco pulled back.

He *loved* her. And that she deserved so much better than him. Way better, in fact. She didn't deserve to be saddled with Death Eater scum, a mindless bully with no talent. She was the epitome of perfection and intelligence and *goodness*. He was the exact opposite.

Draco felt the walls closing in and his breathing speed up.

He would never be good enough for her. He finally found someone who he loved and he could never tell her because she deserved so much more.

She grasped his hand. "You don't deserve my hatred, what on earth are you talking about?"

He pulled at his collar, his breath coming fast. His hands started to shake and he squeezed them tightly.

"Years. For *years*, Hermione, I bullied you. I was a racist, entitled prat. For *years*. I knew what I was doing was wrong and I kept doing it. My kind murdered your kind for merely existing. How on earth could you ever forgive me?" Draco's voiced cracked and his vision swam.

He shut his eyes while his breathing remained ragged. He tried counting to ten and breathing—this normally worked for him. Hermione's hand landed on his, but she remained quiet while he attempted to get himself under control.

It wasn't working, his hands shook worse. His chest felt like it had a hippogriff on it, squeezing out any attempts that he had to get a full breath. Tears were threatening to spill from his tightly shut eyes. There was a strange rushing sound in his ears.

Draco stood suddenly. She reached for his hand again, but he jerked away. His heart was hammering, head spinning. He could barely think straight, let alone see the world around him. Hermione's look of confusion and unmerited empathy was the only thing Draco could focus on, until that too blurred away.

"No. No. I have to—I have to go."

He would never be good enough for her.

"What?"

She deserved better.

Draco began backing away, trying to think of where he could disappear to that she wouldn't be able to find him. However, due to their rings and their vow, she would be able to find him no matter where he was, with enough effort. He just hoped she didn't know that.

"Draco, where are you going? Stay and talk to me," she said from somewhere before him. The world was blurry haze.

He shook his head and stumbled toward where he knew their apparition line was. "I'm sorry," his whispered, his voice cracking.

Draco spun on the spot and disappeared.

Sunday, April 30

"It's been two days!" Hermione practically shouted at Harry and Ron. "Flopsy won't tell me where he is. He's not answering his phone! I mean, what kind of immature *asshole* just disappears for two days without telling *his wife* where he's going?!" Harry went to say something, but she continued her angry pacing rant, "I mean, seriously! And right before Memorial Day. When I need some emotional support of my own. How am I supposed to explain my husband's absence from the event of the year? How will it look on *him* that he refuses to show up? How am I supposed to get through this alone?!"

Hermione was so angry there were tears welling up in her eyes. Well, maybe she was also worried about Draco and sad that he would just leave her.

"Hermione," Harry tried again. "Memorial Day is a nightmare for the best of us," he tried to reason. "We all hate it and the magical world loves and praises us every year. Imagine how he's feeling."

"Oh no you don't, Potter! You're supposed to be *my* friend. Enough with the siding with him business."

“He’s a right git,” Ron said flatly. “Who leaves his wife like that? You should hex him something fierce in retaliation. Oh!” Ron was excited thinking of possibilities, “Maybe you could do another one of those acne hexes, Marietta Edgecombe still has hers...”

Hermione wasn’t exactly proud of that and in reality, felt bad for Marietta, but not bad enough to reverse the spell entirely. Snitches get stitches.

“You could do something on his wanger so that women won’t want to sleep with him,” Ron suggested, leaning back as he really got into thinking about revenge. “Could just steal all his money, I’m sure that’d piss him off. Oooh! Burn down the Manor! Slip him a balding potion. Stupid ponce loves his hair too much.”

“What if he’s hurt somewhere?” Hermione asked suddenly, the worry overtaking her voice.

Ron and Harry glanced at one another. Harry was the first to respond. “I’m sure he’s fine, Hermione. You’d know if something was wrong.”

“Definitely. That slimy git is impossible to get rid of, he’s like dragon pox.”

Hermione shot Ron a look.

“The vow would make you feel something if he was in serious danger, hurt, or...dead,” Harry continued.

“Right.” Hermione frowned, then looked down at her phone. “Right! I can track him.”

“It’s complicated magic,” Ron started, “But if anyone can do it, it’s you, Hermione.”

“No, not through the vow, that’s ridiculous. No, on his phone. I turned on find my friends when he wasn’t looking last week. I totally forgot.” Hermione picked up her phone and opened the tracker app.

“Wait, you’re telling me that people can find my location based on my phone?” Ron said, paranoid.

“Yep,” Hermione responded as the screen loaded. “It’s a good feature for emergencies, but does pose a lot of privacy and security issues.”

Ron eyed his phone in distrust. “Can Pansy track me?” he whispered, hoping his wife wasn’t within hearing range.

“Yes,” Hermione responded as the screen continued to load. She huffed; the service was terrible in Diagon Alley, where she currently was in Pansy’s living room. “I showed her how to last week,” Hermione added on.

“Why would that matter, it’s not like you’re cheating on her,” Harry said. “You’re not cheating on her are you!?” Harry smacked Ron’s arm.

“What! No! Merlin.” Ron batted his hands away. “Not at all. I just bought her some jewelry last week and I wanted it to be a surprise for when she’s pregnant,” his ears were very red.

“But it will ruin the surprise if she already knows I’ve been to jewelry stores.”

“Ron, that’s really sweet,” Hermione said, “especially after how you botched the whole ‘I’m falling in love with you’ moment—” she cut herself off from adding anything else because Draco’s location was flashing before her eyes. He was at Theo and Astoria’s mansion. Hermione had been there once before when she was doing a house elf survey. “Right,” she stated and stood suddenly. “Found him. I have to be off. And you tell Pansy if she knew where he was this whole time, she’ll have to deal with me too!”

“Hermione, you know that we can’t condone violence, we’re both Aurors…” Harry was saying.

“But, off the record, teach that git a lesson,” Ron concluded.

Hermione left the large town home and found herself in the English countryside minutes later, walking up the long laneway to the Nott mansion. It was a chilly day again, despite it being the middle of spring and she adjusted her cloak around her, grateful for the weak sun as it poked its way through the lazy clouds.

By the time she had reached the heavy knocker on the massive oak double doors, she was positively fuming. Hermione banged on the door rashly, then regretted it when their soft-spoken house elf, Mimsy, opened the door with a deep bow.

“Mrs. Granger, it is my honour to see you again. How can Mimsy help Mrs. Granger today? Mimsy was not aware that Mrs. Granger would be joining the Notts today.”

Hermione took a deep breath and tried to reel in her anger. “Mrs. Granger was not aware she would be here today either. I am here to see my dear husband.”

Mimsy bowed and squeaked. “Of course, Mrs. Granger. Mr. Granger is in the office with Master Theo. They is having a tea.”

“Oh, how lovely. Mimsy, would you please lead the way?” Hermione requested with an edge to her voice.

The house elf had to have picked up on Hermione’s anger, but bless her heart, she said nothing and merely lead the angry brunette to her idiotic husband.

Mimsy opened the study door with a flourish and bowed deeply. “Mr. Granger and Master Theo, may I present—”

Hermione cut her off immediately. “How dare you!” she shrieked, zoning in on Draco.

“I’ll just leave you to it, then,” Theo mumbled, trying to edge his way from the room before Hermione got to his teacup.

“Oh no you don’t!” Hermione shrieked, feeling like a woman possessed. “What kind of man harbours cowardly husbands for *two days*? What kind of man leaves their friend’s poor wife in the dark, *worrying about their wellbeing FOR DAYS*? Imagine if I did that to you? Imagine. You have *no idea* where Astoria is and TURNS OUT—she was with her friend all

along. SIPPING ON TEA!” Sparks shot out from Hermione’s fingers and crackled along her body, frazzling her hair in its bun.

“Well, Theodore Nott, what do you have to say for yourself?” Hermione’s chest was heaving.

He looked at her fearfully, which given the fact that she had accosted her husband and had her wand pointed squarely at Theo’s chest, felt like an appropriate response.

“I made a huge mistake.”

“Like hell you did, you dirtbag.”

“Granger, maybe leave Theo out—” Draco was saying.

Hermione whirled around on him. “You shut your goddamn mouth, you slimy git.”

Draco looked at her wide-eyed, but closed his mouth as she requested. Hermione turned back to Theo.

“What else?”

“Huh?”

“What else do you have to say for yourself?” Hermione took a step toward him when he didn’t answer.

“I—I’m sorry. Terribly sorry. I’ll...I’ll never do that again. I cannot imagine what you’ve gone through. Poor—I mean...unfair...I was unfair. We were...uh...terrible. It was a mistake. Bad—decision.”

“Get out. I’ve had it with your babbling.”

“Good luck, mate,” Theo muttered as he hightailed it from his study.

Hermione turned back to Draco slowly, she was a bit calmer now, her anger simmering instead of bursting out in uncontrolled magic.

“Granger. I’m sorry, I—”

She cut him off by crossing the room and pulling him into a tight hug. He was clearly caught off guard, so was she. She had every intention of cursing him to next Tuesday. Instead, she was hugging him? It was infuriating.

“I was so worried,” she mumbled into his neck, feeling her heart race as her arms reassured her that he was fine, alive and well, drinking tea. *Drinking tea*. She pulled back and looked at his face for a moment before slapping him squarely across his perfect cheekbones.

“Ow! What the fuck!”

“What the fuck, indeed! How could you just leave me like that?” Hermione was tearing up again. Draco noticed and reached out for her. She jerked away from his comfort.

Draco tried to move toward her again, but she stepped away once more. He heaved a sigh and took a seat once more. Hermione remained standing several feet away. Draco waved his wand to clean up the mess from his tea.

“I’m sorry, Granger,” he finally said as the silence stretched on and on. “I just...I panicked. And I can’t—I don’t know how to explain it...the walls were closing in...I had to go.”

Her heart softened and some anger ebbed away. “I know. I could tell you were panicking. But I wanted to help.”

“I...” Draco seemed incapable of saying anything more.

Hermione was irritated again. “All you had to do was answer one text, Draco. And tell me that you were okay. Where you were. You ran out of the flat in a panic and left me completely and totally worried about you.”

“I’m sorry,” he said again after what felt like minutes. “I should have told you where I was.”

“No shit.”

More silence. It was so quiet she could hear the floorboards creaking outside the study where Theo was most definitely listening in.

“It’s just...Memorial Day. I can’t.”

“And you think I can?” Hermione laughed mirthlessly. “You think that *I’m* just fine and dandy reliving the worst parts of my life once a year. Having the *entire* magical world scrutinising my every move, my every word, my every emotion publicly? You think that I’m just ‘over it’? That I don’t grieve for my lost friends, my lost innocence?” Hermione stared at the floor, mute.

More creaking came from the hall.

“You know, I was beginning to really trust you,” she whispered. “I felt like I could...draw strength from you. Like you would be by my side, helping me get through it. And that I would help you too.” Tears were gently falling now. “I guess I was wrong. If this is how you’re going to react to anything uncomfortable, let’s not even bother being friends. It’ll be over in a few months anyway.” The tears were heavier now, her chest was burning.

“Hermione—” he was reaching for her now, some emotion on his face that she didn’t recognize through her steady stream of tears.

Hermione moved away quickly. “Don’t worry, I’ll relieve you from our contractual duties. No need to slum it with me anymore.”

She fled the study after that, running face first into Theo who was very much eavesdropping by the door. She pushed past him without apologizing and was apparating to her parents’

house in a matter of moments.

Tuesday, May 2

Draco had been a mess for days. First, he made his major mistake of abandoning his wife. Then, he made his next major mistake of not running after her. How could he have just let her go like that? She had effectively ended their entire relationship; she didn't want to be friends and she clearly didn't want to sleep with him anymore.

Theo had not been any help at all, unsurprisingly. The man just kept waffling between laughing about how angry she was and then frowning at Draco's obvious distress. Astoria had been telling Draco to return home as soon as he arrived at their manor, so she was likewise no help. Pansy had sent him a very loud voice note yelling about how angry Hermione was.

To make matters worse, it was now Memorial Day, so among all his general self-hatred circled his self-hatred for how much of fucking prat he was toward Hermione.

Draco knew now that even if he wasn't good enough for her, being away from her had made it abundantly clear that he couldn't fathom being without her. But it was more than that, he wanted to be good enough *for* her. She made him want to be better. And based on her admission and tears, before he went and fucked it all up, he was actually doing pretty well in the establishing a relationship with her department.

He *had* to find a way to rebuild their relationship.

She had called him a coward. It was true, he was. But he didn't want to be. He wished he was a stupid brave Gryffindor like she was, but it was so easy to just slink into the shadows and never confront anything. But he had to change, not just for her, for him. He wanted to be brave. He wanted to be better. He wanted to be worthy of her love.

That was why Draco was currently fixing his hair in the mirror at their home. He had been hoping that she would be there when he returned that morning, but she was not. Flopsy informed him that she had not returned home. Draco now understood her two-day panic. Although, he at least knew that she was fine because nothing in their bond had been disturbed.

Draco's all black outfit was an everyday to day look for him, but the textures were a little more elevated than usual. He held up his tie pin, hesitating for a long moment before pinning it on. Hopefully she'd like it.

He refrained from running his hands through his hair from the stress of the situation. Draco patted his pockets to make sure the tissues were there and went to the front foyer. The bouquet was sitting where he left it, ready to be laid over some graves.

Draco took a deep breath and steeled himself. He had only been to Memorial Day once and it had been a disastrous 60 seconds. He was spotted by a reporter who hounded him with

unthinkable questions until Draco was finally past the apparition point and disappeared into his own self-hatred.

Draco apparated to the Hogwarts gates to see a long procession of magical folk walking slowly toward the war memorial. He was immediately overwhelmed by the sheer number of people there. He assumed that over the years less and less people would attend this event, but if anything, it had grown. There were a myriad of faces and creatures. He saw a few giants, several centaurs, a merperson floating in an orb of water, a few Ministry regulars, then Minerva McGonagall. She spotted him and waved him over.

“Mr. Granger,” (*how was it that even McGonagall is calling me Granger now*, Draco wondered) she spoke fondly, pulling him in for a quick hug. “I’m so glad to see you. Albus has wanted to talk to you for years, you know. It didn’t feel right to mention it at your proposal, but today, after the ceremony, you must come see him, he’ll be so pleased.”

Draco looked at her in shock. In comparison to this revelation, the crowd was nothing. “Oh. Uh.”

“Excellent. I must be off. So many people to see, plus the elves were having some trouble with the seating. A lot more people made it out this year.” McGonagall nodded briskly, then walked off at a pace that most women her age could only dream of.

Draco glanced around him and saw people staring. He realised he ought to stop glancing around. He dipped his head downward and walked up the path behind a group of women who were bickering about the proper ingredients in hair removal paste. Draco agreed with the first woman about her use of bowtruckle eyes.

Draco wasn’t sure what he had expected, but he naively thought it would be easier to locate his wife. The hundreds, if not thousands of people were making that a rather hard feat to accomplish. He remembered his phone then, and pulled it out. It was a bit slow given how deeply rooted Hogwarts magic is, but he was able to fire off a text.

‘In the crowd. Looking for you.’

He didn’t really expect a response and as the minutes ticked on and he neared the massive war monument, a giant phoenix statue near the Black Lake, he began to worry.

‘Hey, Red, where are you guys? I’m trying to find Hermione.’ Draco figured Ginny had to be near Hermione since she would be near Harry and Harry would definitely be with Hermione. Ginny was his best bet since the redhead liked Draco well enough whereas Potter was too emotional when it came to Hermione’s well being.

Draco hovered near an empty seat for a few minutes as a plaintive melody floated through the air. He was somewhere near the middle of the seats and could see a bit of a commotion at the front as the Hogwarts choir tried to get in place. Draco’s anxiety was swirling in his stomach. The looks had only intensified, especially since he was standing alone, without his wife, at the war memorial. He could hear whispers too, but he tried his best to block them out. His occlumency walls were trembling with effort.

Finally, his phone buzzed. ‘We’re at the front, idiot. Where else would we be?’

Draco could hug her. He’d have to give the ginger a gift. He stuffed his phone into his pocket and took off at a brisk pace to the front of the seats. Sure enough, as he got closer, he recognized the telltale sea of redheads, Potter’s messy black hair, then Granger’s tamed curls. There was an empty seat beside her that read: ‘Mr. Granger’ which she was looking at. Draco stared at the line of Weasleys that he had to walk past in order to get to his wife. He was ready for them to spit at him, yell at him, call him names.

Instead, as he passed Mrs. Weasley, she said, “There you are, dear! You’ve almost missed the start. Hurry on now.”

Draco looked at her, confused by her kindness, but simply nodded in response before taking long strides to reach his wife. He didn’t say anything as he sat, didn’t even look at her. He merely took a seat beside her and stared straight ahead as the choir began its first song.

Draco felt the sweat pooling behind his knees as he tried to focus on the performers and not his wife beside him. He could feel a deep tension rising from her, or maybe he was just projecting, but it felt like a giant chasm was between them, eating him up inside. Draco cleared his throat and she glanced at him before returning her attention to the choir. Draco, heart pounding, reached for her hand with his own trembling one. She closed her hand around his and his heart soared. She didn’t look at him again for the rest of the ceremony, but the overwhelming chasm between them closed slowly.

After the choir, came Kingsley’s speech about change and what laws and actions were being instituted by the Ministry. This was followed by McGonagall talking about interhouse unity at Hogwarts. Last, but not least, was the ‘genius’ behind the marriage law, Egbert Scior. Draco heard Hermione grumble in anger and grunt under her breath as the man blathered on about a brighter future together. As he exited the stage, Hermione almost rose to her feet, but Draco tightened his hand on hers and she cleared her throat and stared diligently at the choir as they sang an outro song.

The crowd slowly began dispersing.

Draco now understood why so many people showed up to this thing in the first place; it was a place to socialize, not necessarily mourn. Many people were talking jovially and shouting between rows, the press were taking an unending number of photos and interviewing people. He did notice, however, that people were heading toward the memorial and placing wreaths and flowers, crying over it, smiling over it...Mrs. Weasley was one of those people, clutching her heart and her husband’s hand as she sobbed over the hundreds of names. Draco knew who she was crying about the most. He watched her for a long time, almost forgetting that he was still holding Hermione’s hand and that people were around them, watching them even.

Potter was sitting quietly staring at the memorial with a mix of emotions on his face. Red and Hermione were speaking quietly. Down the line, George was frozen in place, tears streaking his normally jovial face. Pansy and Ron were in front of some reporter talking about their recent marriage and the need for unity to maintain peace or some other tosh.

As Draco slowly zoned back in, he watched George pull a flask out of his pocket and slowly make his way to the memorial by his mother. Angelina followed him tentatively. George poured some of the flask's contents onto the memorial, then downed a large gulp. Arthur Weasley frowned at him, but said nothing. George pulled something out of his pocket and threw it into the air. Suddenly, a large firework display was lighting up the sky above the memorial statue. They were silent, probably because setting off a bunch of loud noises around a large group of traumatised people was a bad life choice. George didn't stay to watch the display, he took Angelina's hand and loped off toward the woods.

"Shall we?" Ginny asked, her eyes watching the end of the brilliant firework display.

Potter and Hermione nodded and stood. Draco stood with her and let himself be tugged gently toward the monument. Draco had never seen it from so close before. The crowd was thinner near the monument, most people giving those still grieving their space.

The phoenix was raising from flames that glinted in the summer sun. In the centre in large script read: 'In honour of those who fought against hatred, evil, and division in the Second Great War, 1995-1998. They were loved and they will be missed. Only through unity and diversity can we find peace and strength.'

Littered throughout the statue were the names of those who were killed or presumed dead from the final battle. They were more or less grouped by family, but not necessarily. The artwork was impressive, the names of the fallen were flames and feathers, part of the memorial itself, not just an after thought. Interestingly, all of the names of those present were the same size, no one was placed above anyone else, and unlike Draco had assumed, no one seemed to be prioritized. He was expecting to see Dumbledore's name front and centre, but it took him a long time of tracing names to even find it near the tip of the phoenix's wing.

The Potter-Weasley-Granger clan migrated toward the area where those that they knew were present. Potter touched Sirius Black's name, then Nymphadora Tonks, Remus Lupin, Fred Weasley, Severus Snape, Colin Creevey, and finally merely stared up at Albus Dumbledore for a long moment, since it was well out of reach.

Draco said nothing, just stared at the names for a long time as Ginny and Hermione repeated Potter's name touching. Draco followed after Hermione, but refrained from touching the monument. He gently laid down the flowers that he brought underneath Fred Weasley. This caused Molly to burst out into another round of sobs. She pulled Draco into an unexpected hug and sobbed loudly on his chest (being much shorter than he was). Hermione's hand finally left his, but she didn't disappear, merely joined in on their hug. Quite suddenly, Draco was part of his first group hug of his life. It was overwhelming.

Draco was not used to the touch of other people. Most people avoided touching him at all costs (outside of the bedroom). His mother rarely hugged him and his family was not affectionate in the least. His friends were all Slytherins and hid their emotions at all costs. This group of Gryffindors were so blasé about touching one another, it was bizarre.

Molly's sobs subsided slowly and the group pulled apart after nearly two minutes of hugging one another.

Draco saw Hermione brush at her eyes several times, so he pulled out his handkerchief and handed it to her. She smiled weakly and dried her red eyes. Potter pat Molly on the back, and still looking defeated, he took Ginny's hand and wandered away, but not toward the exit.

"Harry likes to walk to grounds. It calms him," Hermione explained.

Draco nodded awkwardly. They stared at one another for a moment. Draco tried to get the courage to hold her hand again.

"Hermione, I was wondering if we could have a word about the computer program?" asked a witch that Draco didn't recognize.

"Oh. Uh—" she glanced at him and seemed to notice his pin for the first time. A smile followed by a snort. "Jacinta, this is my husband, Draco *Granger*."

Draco's eyes shifted to the Black woman beside Hermione.

"Do you mind, Draco?" she asked, her eyes landing on his ornate 'G' pin again.

"No, of course not. I—er—McGonagall wanted to talk to me, so I might go find her. If that's alright with you? I've got my phone."

Hermione tipped her head. "Let me know when you're done."

She turned to Jacinta and led the woman away from the monument and into an in-depth conversation about computer technology. Draco glanced around the crowd, once again anxious about those around him. He steeled himself and took off toward the castle. He knew that regardless of if McGonagall was there, the office would let him in since Dumbledore had requested to see him, so he confidently wandered into the open castle doors and was immediately hit by a wave of nostalgia.

Hogwarts was truly Draco's home, especially during the dark years. It was his one place to escape the war, even if he never was truly able to escape it. The warmth of feeling safe overtook him as he slowly mounted the stairs to the headmaster's office. There were several students milling about, but refreshingly, none of them avoided him or seemed fazed by him at all; they were all too young to have known him on sight, for which Draco was thankful.

He stopped and stared out the window overlooking the crowded grounds and took in how many people there still were present. He could hear the buzz of their voices from where he was. It was...nice.

Draco turned toward the gold griffin statue and approached it. He scratched at his Dark Mark before speaking. "Professor Dumbledore wishes to see me," he said quietly.

The statue shimmered for a moment before opening to its spiral staircase. Draco rode the stairs to the top and entered the office. He had only been there once before, when his father had berated Dumbledore for letting Buckbeak attack his son. Draco entered the room slowly. It was different now. Much more 'no nonsense'—that is to say that McGonagall's influence

was clear. There were no floating baubles and everything was crisp and orderly, however, it felt homey despite its minimalism.

“Ah, there he is!” a voice exclaimed causing Draco to jump in fright. He spun around to the wall of previous headmasters and headmistresses. There, amongst a large group of snoring old witches and wizards, sat Albus Dumbledore smiling down at him with his twinkling eyes. Beside the old man sat none other than Draco’s godfather, Severus Snape. The man’s greasy hair hung in his face as always and his dark black eyes peered straight into Draco’s soul.

“Er—hi.”

Draco hadn’t beheld Dumbledore since the night he failed at killing him. It was extremely awkward and uncomfortable to be looking up into the man’s eyes. He wondered when the portrait had been painted—how much this painting knew about Draco’s role in Dumbledore’s demise. Though, he supposed, Snape probably told him everything.

“Draco,” Snape drawled.

“Mr. Malfoy, I was hoping to see you much earlier than this,” Dumbledore said jovially.

“I believe it’s Mr. Granger now, Albus,” Snape commented, eyeing Draco’s ornate Granger pin.

Draco touched his pin awkwardly. “You wanted to see me?”

“Severus and I were so happy to hear of your nuptials!” Dumbledore said. “It was no surprise to either of us. Severus informed me that you were rather smitten with Hermione during school, I must admit I thought so as well.” Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled again as he peered at Draco over his half moon glasses.

Draco flushed at this admission. He wasn’t aware that anyone noticed his fascination with Hermione. He didn’t think he was “smitten” with her though, merely annoyed by her, aware of her, drawn to her, intrigued by her, begrudgingly impressed by her. *And that Yule Ball gown*—perhaps he had been in denial.

“Oh?” was all he said in response.

“My godson usually has more words…” Snape replied, a greasy eyebrow raised.

Draco scratched at his Dark Mark and Snape followed his eyes.

“Well, let’s get to the point, then,” Snape said after a long moment. “I don’t think Draco’s going to reveal anything on the Granger front, Minerva will have to satisfy your curiosity, Albus.”

Dumbledore smiled. “Yes, of course.” Dumbledore paused. He leaned forward intently.

“Draco. I do not blame you. I only wish we had a few more minutes in the astronomy tower. I know you were going to join our side.”

Draco almost wished they would go back to questioning him about his feelings for Hermione. The reminder of the war made a pit take up residence in his already queasy stomach.

“You were young, Draco. You were used as a tool. You deserve to forgive yourself. And I forgive you,” Dumbledore continued intently.

Draco felt his anguish reappearing. He couldn’t forgive himself, it was impossible. He did nothing while she was tortured. *He did nothing.*

“You have to forgive yourself, Draco. You were a prisoner. You are doing better. You are atoning. Guilt is not productive.”

“I—I can’t.” His voice shook. Dumbledore nodded at him in understanding. “I...I can’t. I didn’t...” and quite suddenly, Draco was sobbing. It was all rather embarrassing. Crying in front of a bunch of dead people’s portraits.

“Perhaps we should have waited for Minerva,” Dumbledore said quietly to Snape.

Draco continued snivelling like a little idiot.

“Draco,” Snape said. “Shut up and listen.” Draco sniffed at looked at his godfather. “Stop blaming yourself. I tried to spare you from all of this, but your father would have none of it. You did the best you could.”

“No!” Draco rebuked. “I didn’t. I could have—I could have tried to stop her. She didn’t deserve...” he was crying again.

“Stop who?” Snape inquired, surprisingly gently.

“I should have stopped Bellatrix!” Draco admitted on a half-sob, half-shout.

“Draco, my dear boy, there was no way that you would have been able to stop Bellatrix Lestrange. She was a formidable opponent. You were unwell, being tortured, terrified. There was nothing that you could do,” Dumbledore stated softly but firmly.

“Don’t be an idiot,” Snape added on, unhelpfully. “What could you have done to help Granger? Bellatrix was insane. If you tried anything, she would have handed you to the Dark Lord himself, then you would have been rendered dead or worse. You did what you could. You bought them time.”

Draco felt the world slowly coming back to focus as he listened to Snape’s words. “I did summon Dobby...”

“That was you?” Snape asked sharply. He exchanged a look with Dumbledore.

“You saved their lives, then, Draco.”

“And killed Dobby in the process,” Draco commented bitterly.

“No,” Dumbledore replied firmly. “Bellatrix murdered Dobby, you did not.”

Draco cried silently for a long moment, staring at the floor, letting their words soak into him. "I can't...I can't forgive myself. I'm not there."

"But you'll get there," Dumbledore reassured him. "You have to know that you deserve it, Draco. You deserve to be happy. You deserve to move on and heal these wounds from the war."

"Was that all you wanted, sir?" Draco asked after another long moment.

"Just, promise me this, Draco," Snape said, "Don't live a life full of regret like I did. You have the object of your affections in your hands. Don't waste it."

Draco looked at Snape curiously. "Okay."

"And do visit again next year," Dumbledore intoned with a jovial smile. "We don't get enough visitors these days!"

"Have you seen the memorial?" Draco found himself asking.

"We were brought down the first year, but poor Minerva has so much to take care of, we haven't made it out in a long while."

"I'll make sure you make it down next year," Draco vowed.

"I knew you had it in you, Draco. And remember, you deserve to be forgiven. You deserve happiness," Dumbledore said again.

Draco didn't agree with them, but nodded nonetheless and made his way from the old dusty office, wiping tears from his face as he went.

*

When Draco found her again nearly an hour had passed. Hermione was desperately wondering what he was up to, but she hadn't forgiven him yet for his behaviour, so she resolutely refused to text him to find out. It was by chance that they literally ran into one another in the entrance hall. Hermione had decided to accompany Luna and Blaise into the castle. The couple wanted to go find their old haunts and reminisce about simpler times.

Draco looked like a bit of a mess. Nothing seriously stood out to her, but Hermione could tell something was wrong. His eyes shimmered slightly in the afternoon light and she realised he had a glamour on. He must have been really upset for his glamour to be so obvious—usually they were imperceptible to the eye.

Draco looked down at her and removed his arms from her shoulders where he had put them to steady her from their collision. He nodded at her, then seemed to blush before looking away. Hermione frowned—he almost never blushed.

"Blaise, Luna," he greeted quietly.

"Draco," Blaise nodded back while Luna pulled him into a tight hug.

Hermione watched on awkwardly. She was almost jealous of her friend, but knew that Luna was in no way making an advance on her husband, no matter how estranged he might currently be. Luna pulled from the hug after a long, awkward moment. Draco had kept his arms limply by his sides, but he looked slightly less...sad afterward.

“Draco, I’m very proud of you,” Luna said finally. “Well, we’re going to go make out in a broom cupboard,” Luna informed them and flounced off with Blaise. The latter shot them an apologetic look over his shoulder as he followed his flighty wife.

The couple stood in silence for a moment. Hermione wanted to ask him why he was so upset, but figured she knew the answer was along the lines of his self-hatred being stirred up by the memorial.

Finally, he broke the silence. “Sorry for being gone for so long...I got a bit carried away wandering through the castle.”

Hermione nodded. “So many memories.”

She eyed the four tables lining the great hall and was awash with all the memories, happy and sad that Hogwarts brought forth.

“Would you like to walk the castle, or head home?” Draco asked when Hermione again gave him nothing.

“Home. If I run into another person, we’ll be stuck here for another hour...”

Draco tilted his head toward the massive open double doors. Hermione began walking down the staircase. She felt Draco following a step behind her. They didn’t speak again as they made their way down the long path to the apparition point. It was not a comfortable silence. Hermione almost said something to him multiple times, but had no clue what to say.

Draco offered his arm to her once they were through the gates. Hermione was going to rebuff him, but in truth she wanted to touch him, craving physical comfort after an emotional day. So, she took his arm and he spun them home.

Flopsy greeted them almost immediately, making Hermione jump by her sudden appearance.

“Flopsy is so glad to see Mr. Draco and Mrs. Hermione are together again,” the elf beamed. “Flopsy has been worried sick that her humans were going to leave her!”

Hermione couldn’t help feeling her heart warm at the fact that Flopsy liked her so much, not to mention being called ‘her human’ brought a grin to Hermione’s face.

“We’ll never abandon you, Flopsy!” Hermione vowed.

Flopsy cried out in joy, pulled the two of them into a tight hug, then squeaked in delight and disappeared with a crack. This left Draco and Hermione very close to one another. Hermione took a step back and looked away from him. She turned to leave him alone, but his voice stopped her.

“Granger?”

Hermione turned and eyed him. “Talking to yourself, are you?”

“You like the pin, then?” Draco asked gesturing to it.

Hermione did like it. “I’m glad you’re embracing your real last name.”

Draco lips quirked before his face settled into a more serious expression. “Listen. I’m—I’m stupid. Okay? I’m really stupid. And I’m sure you know that by now, because you’re the bloody smartest witch of our age. But—” he began muttering to himself, “should have practiced this,” then he returned to his normal voice, “I’m sorry. I’m very sorry for leaving you like that. It was...it was unfair and stupid and rude. And—and I’m an asshole. And I understand if you don’t forgive me right away, but please...” he looked away for a long time, his grey eyes darting back and forth, looking at nothing. Eventually he took a deep breath and said, “I’d like to be worthy of you.” A deep blush was rising on his cheeks, it was a strange sight. He was usually so good at controlling his emotions. “I—I would like to—” his fingers were shaking and he pulled them into a tight fist, “—be with you.”

Hermione’s heart began to race. “Oh.” Her mind was racing through what he meant by that. Was it sexually? She already knew that. Was it a real relationship? What did she want? “Oh.”

“And I—I know that’s—it’s a lot to spring on you suddenly. But I—I. *Fuck*, this is not going well. Snape said something to me today—”

This snapped her out of her racing thoughts. “Snape? How on earth did you speak to Snape?”

“Dumbledore’s office. I mean, McGonagall’s office.”

“Yeah, what were you doing? You said you had to see McGonagall, but I saw her talking to Kingsley for most of the time that you were gone.”

“I wasn’t lying,” he said quickly. “McGonagall told me to go to her office to see Dumbledore. He—he wanted to talk to me.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. Er—” he leaned against the wall, seemingly just to have something to do instead of stumble awkwardly through his speech. “Anyway, Snape was...he just told me...” he cleared his throat. “I am shit at this.”

“That’s not a very nice thing of Snape to say,” she responded with a smirk.

Draco ran his hands through his hair. “What I’m trying to say is that I’m sorry. And that I know you’ve already given me more chances than I deserve, but can we at least try to go back to being friends? I just couldn’t handle everything in the moment. But I should have told you where I was—I shouldn’t have abandoned you like that.”

Hermione felt that he had sufficiently apologized by this point. Just seeing him struggle with what to say showed his sincerity and made her want to forgive him. She also acknowledged

that her reaction could have been a bit more...level-headed, considering she had slapped him across the face.

Hermione did want to be friends again, but she was a bit hung up on what he had said about 'being with her.' She desperately wanted to know what he meant, but she wasn't feeling all that brave after such an emotional day and decided to file that away for something to think about later.

"Fine," she replied, avoiding his piercing gaze. "Yeah. We can. And I'm sorry for—well, slapping you."

Draco let out a shaky laugh. "You're forgiven," he responded.

Hermione shifted uncomfortably. "It's been a long day. I think I just want to go have a lay down."

"Of course," he said.

"I don't know if I'll be out for dinner or not. Don't wait up."

"Okay," Draco responded quietly.

Hermione barricaded herself in her room and allowed herself to wallow about the war for a few hours. Then she had a long bath in which she pleased herself. She figured she deserved some cheering up after her stressful week.

As she fell asleep that night, Crookshanks wedged under her chin, her phone buzzed.

'Night, wife.'

Hermione smiled faintly. 'Night, husband,' she responded.

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Daily Prophet

Society Pages

MEMORIAL DAY HIGHLIGHTS: MR. GRANGER, GOLDEN TRIO, PREGNANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND MORE

Wednesday, May 3, 2015

By Lavender Brown

This year marks seven years since the final battle of the second wizarding war when Good triumphed over Evil thanks to the Chosen One, Harry Potter, his best friends Ronald Weasley (renowned Auror) and Hermione Granger (Brightest Witch of her Age), and the Order of the Phoenix. The annual celebration hosted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry was

packed full of society's best and brightest. Buckle in readers, I've got the scoop on everything that happened.

Perhaps the most interesting development from Memorial Day was the official announcement by Draco Malfoy of his new last name: Draco Granger-Malfoy. The illustrious billionaire was spotted sporting an ornate Granger heirloom pin on his immaculate robes. A source close to Mr. Granger-Malfoy explained that the heirloom is from Hermione Granger's great grandfather. When questioned about his new last name, his close friend, Ginevra Potter (Chaser for the Holyhead Harpies, wife of Harry Potter) was quoted saying, "Draco has been going by Mr. Granger since the wedding. He is absolutely thrilled to be taking on the Granger name and requests that everyone please adopt his new title."

Mr. Malfoy-Granger was seen seated with his wife throughout the duration of the ceremony (pictured on page 20), holding hands and whispering sweet nothings to one another. But why did he arrive alone? And why was his poor wife left to wander the grounds without him once the ceremony came to a close? Is there trouble in paradise? This reporter will get to the bottom of it.

Ginevra Potter was seen touching her stomach while holding Harry Potter's hand (pictured on page 21). Could this mean what we think it means, dear readers? I hope there is a baby room ready in the Potter household, because there might already be one on the way!

Pansy and Ronald Weasley are both fierce advocates for the marriage law, explaining how it has brought them into a loving relationship. Pansy said, "The law has made me get to know Ron, someone who I never would have given the time of day before. I've completely changed my views thanks to him." Ronald claimed, "The law is not all bad. I got to meet Pansy because of it." Curious that Hermione Granger's own best friend would support the marriage law that the witch is still actively trying to overturn. Could there be tension brewing between the former lovers?

Romilda and Seamus Finnegan (pictured bottom of page 21) happily announced at Memorial Day that they are expecting. They are the first to officially announce a pregnancy, though this reporter has already heard of many others who are less public with their information. Congratulations to the happy couple!

Minerva McGonagall, Headmistress, was seen talking to a tall, dark, and handsome wizard...

Chapter End Notes

TWs:

- Draco has a panic attack (described in detail) and leaves and won't contact her for a few days.
- AND, Hermione does not handle it as well as some of us (with anxiety) might hope. When she finds him, she verbally attacks him and slaps him across the face. She also threatens Theo Nott. Hermione has abandonment issues, so she doesn't handle Draco

leaving well. She definitely makes it all about herself too--so not aching it, Hermione.

- Draco has a lot of self worth/depression issues that manifest in this chapter. Also some general anxiety.

To skip the panic attack, don't read Friday, April 28. To skip Hermione's domestic assault ('cause really that's what it is), skip Sunday, April 30. To skip Draco being generally anxious/depressed, read Thursday April 27, then skip to the Daily Prophet (end of the chapter).

Brief summary if you skipped more or less the whole chapter due to TWs:

- Hermione gets her period. Draco massages her
- Hermione and Draco talk about memorial day and he has a panic attack and ghosts her for two days. Hermione finds him at Nott Manor, slaps him upside the head and says they won't bang anymore and she has no interest in being his friend since he did not contact her at all.
- Draco attends memorial day and sits beside Hermione. They all pay respects to the monument. There's a group hug. Draco goes to Dumbledore and Snape's portraits. They tell him to get over himself/forgive himself. Snape tells Draco to pursue Hermione. Snape thinks Draco had a crush on her in school.
- Draco and Hermione go home together. He apologizes for ghosting. Hermione apologizes for slapping him. Draco says that he wants to "be with her" and somehow Hermione does not know how to interpret that (DENIAL). they leave each other alone for the night.
- Daily prophet article where Ron and Pansy are pro-marriage law. Draco is spotted wearing a "G" pin for Granger and Ginny is quoted saying that it is his new last name.

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I do want to note that with Hermione's abandonment issues (which admittedly feel like they came out of left field, but I've always seen her as having them because of her parents and having to choose between a muggle and magical world and all the trauma that brings up) and also because not knowing where he was, if he was okay (which brings up her trauma around the War) is what made her have such a violent reaction to Draco leaving. If he had just sent a text, she would have been fine. I'm not excusing it, just trying to explain some more of her thought processes and extreme reaction. (Also, inappropriately, when writing this and Hermione says he should have just answered one text, I read it as Alexis Rose from Schitt's Creek -- "I'm sorry for not responding to like one text, David")

ALSO ALSO - as promised, Hermione is in extreme denial, like so unbelievably in denial it is annoying. She is not emotionally intelligent and is super out of touch with herself and perhaps reality. It's not really realistic, especially after Draco flat out says he wants her at the end of this chapter (and she clearly wants him). but her fundamental hatred of the human rights denying marriage law is a huge barrier for her. To her, admitting her feelings would be akin to her admitting that the marriage law is okay (at least at this point, that's how she feels)--and she will never be okay with a law like this one. So, it's not just denial (though it's a lot of that), it's also Hermione-I'm-permanently-on-a-soapbox-Granger refusing to back down against the Ministry. Anyway, this is all to say, even though there are only four chapters left...it's still a while

before she comes to grips with her feelings. Hang in there. Next chapter is happier, promise.

In-Laws

Chapter Notes

As promised, another chapter tonight to counteract the negativity of the last one.

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

Saturday, May 6

Hermione and Draco took a while to settle back into being comfortable around one another after Memorial Day. Their conversations were stilted for the rest of the week. In fact, the only thing that made them finally engage in a normal conversation at all was Draco offering Hermione some firewhiskey Friday night after a week of awkwardness. She had quickly become intoxicated and their conversation flowed easily after that.

When she woke up the following morning, she was unsurprised, but disappointed that Draco wasn't knocking on her door shortly afterward. He probably thought that she wanted space, wanted nothing to do with him. She had said that he was 'relieved' of his contractual duties, but she had hoped that they would resume their time together after their evening of getting along. Especially since he claimed he wanted to be with her. Hermione mulled that over endlessly.

Hermione eventually poked her head out of her room around noon and padded to the solarium in her fuzzy slippers looking for breakfast. She was unsure when she began to completely rely on Flopsy for meals, but she just assumed that there would be something made and delicious for her to eat.

She wasn't wrong. A plate of bacon and eggs with a steaming teacup of Earl Grey sat beside her seat in the solarium. Draco was nowhere in sight. Hermione felt a pang in her chest at his absence. She was no longer angry. Instead, she was now able to see his point of view; he had been panicking, he wasn't thinking straight, and she had literally and verbally attacked him in response. Probably not her best reaction. Apparently, she had abandonment issues. Who knew (it was her therapist, her therapist knew).

Hermione missed him. She missed the time that they spent together. The ease of it all.

Crookshanks hopped onto his chair with a meow and fell asleep. Hermione summoned a book to read and ate her meal in silence, enjoying the morning sun.

That evening she received a text from him while she sat in one of the armchairs in the library. She was working through another one of the books about citizen rights that she had found in their library.

'Did you want to have dinner together?' he asked.

Hermione looked at the message in surprise. ‘Can we talk during dinner?’

He took a while to respond. ‘Yes.’

‘See you in the dining room.’

Hermione placed her bookmark into her book and closed it swiftly. She left it on one of their study tables and went to the dining room. Flopsy was standing off to the side looking tense.

“Mrs. Hermione!” The elf squeaked. She bowed and disappeared.

“Malfoy,” she greeted gruffly.

He rose and pulled out her chair as he always did, then tucked it in as she sat. Draco went around the table and sat across from her. His eyes were distant, making Hermione wonder how long he had been occluding for that day. They dug into their meal in silence at first.

Then, “You want to talk,” he offered between bites.

Hermione nodded. “I...” she placed her fork down and tried to think about how she wanted to phrase this. “I would appreciate it if you could explain what happened last week.” After she had some time reflect, she realized her reaction to his evident panic attack had been far less than desirable.

Draco placed his fork on the table as well. He took a slow breath and looked at his hands. “The last time that I was at Memorial Day, I was immediately accosted by a reporter who asked me what I was doing there. I just wanted to come to pay my respects, maybe apologize to some people. But—I barely lasted 60 seconds before I was chased out of there by the press. As I’m sure you empathize with, I am hyper visible. People are always staring at me. Wishing me dead, like my father. Reminding me that I don’t deserve forgiveness.”

Hermione stared at him, shocked at his honesty and too afraid to say anything that might make him stop talking.

“I just want to get on with my life, but it’s hard to do that when I am constantly reminded of my mistakes. I just...” he sighed heavily. “Memorial Day brings up a lot for me. Like it does for you and everyone else. It is still an area that I need to work on...I have been getting a bit better, but...well. I panicked. I—” he cleared his throat and she saw his hand tremble slightly before he clenched it into a fist and hid it under the table. “I sometimes have panic attacks. They’re rare, especially when I notice them coming on because I am such a strong occlumens. But sometimes they sneak up on me and...that’s what happened last Friday. I fell into a panic and I had to run. I know that I’m a coward for not being able to face things head on...For what it’s worth, I’m sorry. I’m sorry that I did that to you.”

Hermione didn’t know how to respond, so she picked up her fork and kept eating slowly. “Thank you for telling me. I—I get them too sometimes. Panic attacks. They were really bad after the war, but I went to therapy and it’s a lot better now. Very rare. I get it—it doesn’t change how upset I was that you wouldn’t talk to me, but I understand. And I’m sorry for slapping you and kind of losing my shit. That shouldn’t have happened.”

“Apology unnecessary, but accepted.” He picked up his fork and continued eating as well.

“Can I add something to our boundaries?”

Draco looked her in the eyes. “Any time,” he responded.

“It’s not really a boundary, more like an...expectation.” He nodded. “Whenever we need to leave, or need alone time, we’ll tell each other where we are and be reachable in case of a true emergency.”

“Agreed.”

Silence descended on them again.

“I was worried about you,” Hermione admitted quietly. “And I was really angry that you didn’t answer my calls or texts.”

Draco looked at his plate and nodded ever so slightly. “I’m sorry.”

Hermione didn’t know what else she was expecting from him, but she thought talking about it would make things better, instead, the awkwardness was back. She sighed and kept eating.

“What’s wrong?” Draco asked when she huffed again.

Hermione placed her fork down and looked at him. “I just want things to go back to normal,” she admitted with a flush. She wasn’t just thinking of their weekly ritual, but more so how they interacted with one another.

His eyes darkened briefly, clearly also thinking about contract day. “I would also like that.”

Hermione smiled slowly. “Okay. Well. Then let’s stop being so weird.”

“That’s easier said than done,” he muttered.

She thought for a moment. “What did you get up to today?”

Draco shrugged. “I visited Blaise for a while. We played some chess and caught up. Then I was working on some potions in the lab. I have been brewing a contraception potion for you so that you don’t have to keep going to a public apothecary. I heard that they will stop giving them to people who are married.” Hermione’s stomach swooped. That was rather worrisome. “I was also working on your period potion. I’ve been doing some light reading and...”

Hermione really enjoyed listening to Draco talk about his academic pursuits. It did something for her. It was also beyond thoughtful that he was working on so many things for her benefit and without her asking him to do so. It was like he was anticipating her needs. She *really* liked that.

“...I think I’ve got the perfect level for your hormones now, but it will be somewhat experimental, so you’ll have to let me know.”

Hermione smiled at his serious tone. “Thank you.”

He shrugged it off. “Oh, and my mother owled today. She wants to start up our monthly tea again. If that’s okay with you?”

“Oh. Right. You said that.” Hermione was not sure if she wanted to deal with Narcissa Malfoy again, still annoyed with how the woman had treated her in the lead up to the wedding. But she did remember that they had agreed that her parents could do monthly visits as well and she thought it would be great to get that underway. “Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Yeah. Sure. I mean. Of course. It’s your home too and you’re welcome to have her over whenever, please just try to give me some notice.”

Draco nodded slowly. “You’re sure you don’t mind?” Crookshanks had somehow swindled his way onto Draco’s lap and the blond was begrudgingly petting the cat.

“It should be fine. Worst case scenario, I’ll just go to my room. It’s basically a hotel suite.”

Draco chuckled. “Alright. Well, she usually comes for tea the second Sunday of the month and for dinner the fourth Sunday.”

Hermione nodded. “So, she’ll be here next week?”

Draco hesitated. “If that’s okay.”

“Yes. Yes, that’s fine.”

They stared at one another for an extended moment.

“I would like to invite my parents for the following Sunday evening then, if that’s okay.”

He nodded quickly. “Of course! They can come over whenever you want. I’ll... I can make plans so that you have the place to yourself.”

“Oh.”

“Is that—do you not want that?”

Hermione considered her answer. “I just thought it might be nice for you to get to know them a bit, and for them to get to know you a bit.”

He clearly looked uncomfortable, but to Hermione’s surprise, he nodded. “Of course. Yes. I can—I’ll be here then.”

“Great.” Hermione fidgeted with her fork, her meal now done.

Silence reigned yet again and it was just as tense as before. Hermione felt like sighing in annoyance; one step forward, two steps back.

“I was wondering—” he started to say, then cut himself off, “Never mind. It’s—”

“What is it?” Hermione asked with interest.

She watched his face go completely neutral. “Am I to believe that we will no longer be participating in contract day?”

Hermione’s heart clenched and a heat rose slowly up her neck. She cleared her throat and traced the wallpaper in an attempt to calm herself down—this was an occlumency trick he had taught her a few weeks before. She still wanted to know what he meant when he said that he “wanted to be with her”, but Hermione was still too afraid to ask outright. And he thought he was the coward.

She could at least admit to herself that she would very much like to be sleeping with him. She thought it might also improve their tenuous relationship if only to release some tension around one another.

“I said that because I thought that you didn’t want anything to do with me.”

“You’re my wife.”

“Yeah, for another 4 months,” Hermione threw back. “Neither of us wanted this marriage, it’s not a far leap to conclude that you wouldn’t want to—well—” she cleared her throat, “—anymore because...”

He raised an eyebrow. “I will find it forever fascinating that you cannot speak about sex.”

Hermione could sense that he was going to start teasing her and she was looking forward to it. “I can too,” she protested weakly.

Draco placed Crookshanks on the floor—to the cat’s annoyance—and leaned toward her, his elbows on the table. “Why don’t you try that sentence again, then?” he asked deeply.

Hermione let out a slow breath. “I don’t think it was a far leap to conclude that you wouldn’t want to—have sex with me anymore,” she responded defiantly, only stumbling once.

“Well done, wife.”

Hermione bit her lip as a heat spread through her body.

“I must say, though. I have no clue where on earth you got that idea from. Did I not say how much I enjoy our Saturdays together?”

Hermione blinked at him, remembering their boundaries conversation in heady detail.

“I’m waiting on an answer, Granger.”

“Yes,” she replied quickly.

“If I recall, you also enjoy our time together.”

Hermione nodded watching as he stood and circled the table to come stand beside her. She gulped, feeling like she was his prey and also very much looking forward to it. Draco pulled her to her feet gently and held onto her hand.

“So, shall we continue our Saturday tête-à-tête?”

Hermione nodded quickly, staring into his grey eyes and noting that his pupils were no longer pinpricks. Draco pulled her down the hallway toward their rooms, she followed more than willingly, all of her suppressed feelings from the past week channelling themselves into her desire. To her surprise, Draco led her past both of their bedrooms and turned into the library. He closed the doors behind them and pushed her against one gently. Hermione stood, staring at him. Draco took out his wand and dimmed the lights then winked at her cheekily. Hermione smiled.

Draco took her hand again and brought her to one of the armchairs by the fireplace. He sat and pulled her across his lap fluidly. Within seconds their mouths were pressed against one another softly. Draco seemed happy to set a slow, but demanding pace. She felt her heart pounding against his. He pulled back suddenly and looked into her eyes.

“Want to try something new?” he asked gruffly.

Hermione nodded too quickly. He smirked at her eagerness.

“It’s not too intense, just something I’ve been thinking about...for a while.”

Her core clenched. She was always surprised when he was thinking about her, even though she thought about him near constantly. “What is it?”

“I thought you could choose a book you really like. Maybe *Hogwarts, A History*. Yes. Definitely *Hogwarts, A History*. And you will start reading a passage that you really like. One that you return to frequently.”

Hermione nodded slowly with a slight frown, not understanding how this would turn into something sexual.

“While you’re reading, I’ll...try to distract you. Every time you stop, I’ll stop.”

She bit her lip. “Distract me how?”

“Only things we’ve done before, but I’ll be touching you.”

He was being intentionally vague, probably to make her more on edge. She implicitly trusted him when it came to sex, so she nodded. He repositioned her so that she was sitting on his lap facing the London skyline instead of facing him. Draco reached into his pocket for his wand and summoned *Hogwarts, A History*. Hermione took it from him gingerly and flipped through the contents quickly, landing on the passage about the chamber of secrets. She had read the book so many times that she could probably recite it by heart.

Draco kissed her cheek. “May I record your voice?” he asked just before she started reading.

Hermione hesitated. She knew she had sent him a fair few dirty voice notes by that point, but the idea of him recording her was something she hadn't considered. He apparently liked the voice notes if he wanted more of them. She fidgeted.

"What will you do with it?"

He leaned into her ear. "I'm going to listen to it every day when I get up and when I go to bed. I might even change my ringtone to it."

Hermione heated in desire. "You—yeah, you can. But, don't change your ringtone. That could...I don't want anyone but you to hear it."

Draco grinned broadly. "Of course, wife. It will be for only my ears."

"Oh—before we...get started, let me show you how to make private folders. Because you could accidentally show our pictures to people otherwise."

He shifted her weight so he could pull his phone from his pocket, then handed it to her. "Show me."

Hermione launched into a quick explanation on how it worked, then, face flaming as she saw the evidence of their sexting, she moved their pictures and voice memos to a password-protected folder. "You just have to make sure you move them here and delete them from your messages so that you don't accidentally show them to someone."

"Only you look at my phone, Granger."

Hermione shrugged. "Well, you never know. What if you want to show Blaise a picture of a new broom and you click on our chat by mistake?"

He reflected on that. "Fair enough. There's a reason they call you the brightest witch of your age..." he navigated to his audio recording app and looked at her intently. "You may start when you are ready."

Hermione took a calming breath, not sure what was going to happen once she started reading. She looked into his open eyes and nodded. Her eyes returned to the page before her, her fingers tight on the edges of the book. She read:

"Chapter 8: The Chamber of Secrets." His hand wrapped around her hip after placing his phone on the armrest. Hermione continued reading. "The legend of the Chamber of Secrets is the most enigmatic of all tales concerning the establishing of Hogwarts."

Draco's hand moved downward to rest between her legs. Hermione gasped at the movement and squirmed slightly. He let go of her suddenly and she whipped her head around to look into his eyes, confused. Then she remembered: 'you stop, I stop.' She clutched her book and returned to reading aloud. Draco's hand rested back between her legs more firmly, spreading them apart.

"When the four greatest witches and wizards of their age—" she gasped as he moved his hand against her core, she hurriedly kept reading. "Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff!"

Hermione nearly shouted as Draco's hand delved into her lounge pants and beneath her cotton panties. He rested there, waiting for her to continue. She saw now how difficult this little game was going to be for her. As she started reading, he vanished her bottoms entirely, making her gasp again.

"Rowena Ravenclaw and Salazar Slytherin," she let out a whine as he moved against her now naked core, "came together to establish a school for those with magical abilities, it was—" He slid a finger into her and began moving it slowly. "—log—i—cal! That—that they chose a location fa—a—r away from the eyes of non-magical—" His thumb pressed on her clit too lightly. "Non-mag—non—" she stuttered and closed her eyes for a second. He pulled his hand away from her.

Hermione groaned in irritation and opened her eyes to restart her sentence. "It was logical that they—oh!" he entered her again and continued his tortuously slow pace. "That they chose a location far away—far away from—*oh God*." He added another finger. Hermione shifted her hips as she kept reading, encouraging him to go faster. "Far away! From the eyes of the non-magical *people*. Due to! Due to—to—to the—*Merlin*."

His thumb began rubbing at her clit with more conviction. Hermione tilted against his hand, her head falling back on his shoulder.

"Keep going, Hermione," he commanded, slowing his hand.

"Please just—" she begged softly, moving her hips against his hand. He pulled his fingers out of her. Hermione whined impatiently.

"Read," he instructed again.

She opened her eyes instead of hitting him. "...Far away from the eyes of the non-magical people due to—*yes*—" he returned to his previous position and moved even faster against her. "—the climate of per-se—*per-se*—per-se—cution. Prevalent." Her voice took on a high whining quality. "*At that time*."

Draco was really getting to work by that point, curling his fingers against her g-spot expertly and rubbing against her clit insistently. Hermione read brokenly, stuttering on words, skipping words, rushing out sentences, and moaning between breaths.

"Re—cords show. Show that the Hogwarts *worked*. No, the—*nngh*—the Hogwarts *founders*. It was the founder—*yes* the founders—oh gods—they worked. Mhm. *There*. Right there. They worked there. No. *Yes*. I mean—*together*. Mmm. TO-gether for sev—ral years. It was a lot of years—"

"You're repeating yourself," he purred in her ear. "Keep reading, or I stop."

Hermione clenched around his fingers. She nodded vaguely and was able to get almost a full sentence out before she was once again sidetracked by his excellent fingers. "Records show the Hogwarts founders worked. Together for. Several years."

"Good," he cooed, then his relentless fingers resumed their work and she was begging again.

“Please. Just let me—and then I’ll finish reading, I promise. Just—”

Draco started removing his fingers entirely and Hermione whimpered. She picked the book back up, unsure of when she had dropped it and continued to read choppily. His fingers continued their work without pause.

“How—ever, a rift grew, oh it grew, *yes!* Between Slyth—Slytherin... and—and—and the others. Draco! Can I—*please!*”

“Read,” he growled, more forcefully this time.

Hermione was near delirious with desire by this point. Her need was too strong. But she knew he would remove his hand again if she didn’t keep reading, and experience had taught her that if she followed Draco’s orders, she would never be disappointed. So, she brought the book as close to her face as she could and picked up where she left off. Her voice was high, plaintive and breathy as his fingers curled within her again and again.

“—when he—criticized the number.” Hermione’s fingers shook, her knuckles white on her both sides of the book. “*Draco—please—I’m reading, I’m—oh god—when he critici—*” Her walls started fluttering as she teetered on the precipice of her orgasm.

“He criti—” she tried again, but her head fell back onto his shoulder. This time he didn’t stop his fingers when she stopped reading. Hermione’s breath stuttered, then she was coming undone. She burrowed her head into his neck and moaned as her walls clenched around his fingers, pulling him in deeper. He massaged her firmly as she jerked against him muttering a strange assortment of words that she had just been reading from the textbook.

He removed his hand, but kept it possessively between her legs as her breath evened out. Hermione blinked slowly as she became more aware of her surroundings. The book was in a heap on the floor. She pulled back from his neck and looked into Draco’s eyes briefly. His pupils were round with desire. Hermione flushed. She looked away, trying to find a distraction. Her eyes landed on the window before them. She could see a faint outline of their reflections. The image was rather enticing of his hand between her legs with stacks of books in the background.

Draco turned off the recording and she watched him save it to his newly established private folder. He named it “Chapter 8: The Chamber of Secrets.” Then, he licked his fingers clean while looking into her eyes. Hermione flushed hotly and turned to face the windows again.

“That was very well done, wife,” he murmured into her ear. “Very good.”

Hermione grinned. She wiggled slightly against his waist feeling his desire. Draco let out a deep breath. “Is it your turn?” she asked coyly.

Draco chuckled. “That would be lovely, but I have a question for you first.”

Hermione stopped her slow grind against him and turned to look into his eyes. “Yes?” she cleared her throat, which was a bit scratchy from his earlier ministrations.

“Did you enjoy that?” he asked huskily.

Hermione bit her lip and nodded. “Yes. I—I don’t think I’ll be able to read this book again without—”

He chuckled darkly. “That’s the idea, Granger. But that wasn’t my real question.” She tilted her head, waiting. “Would you be open to fucking against the stacks, or is that reserved for your roleplay fantasy?”

Hermione flushed in desire. “No. It’s not limited to—er—roleplaying. Anything in a library really...it’s...” she cleared her throat. “I like libraries.”

Draco smirked. He kissed her lightly. “Perfect. Because I’m going to fuck you in the stacks now.”

Hermione gulped. He pushed her to her feet softly and stood behind her.

“Remove the rest of your clothing.”

Hermione pulled her oversized t-shirt over her head and placed it on the armchair. She saw her naked form in the reflection in the windows. Her core throbbed. She turned to Draco. His eyes traced her, leaving a trail of heat over her skin.

Draco took her hand and led her into the centre of the library so that they were truly surrounded by books. He pushed her against a shelf softly. He had a way of being possessive and soft at the same time. He was only ever rough how she liked—which she wondered idly how he knew exactly what she wanted and what she wanted him to avoid.

Draco removed his clothing with a swish of his hand, clearly beyond the teasing phase after their little stint on the armchair. She noticed that even though he liked to tease her, he had his limits before he needed to have some gratification. He seemed more impatient than normal, making her glow with pride again at her earlier performance.

Draco approached her smoothly, placing a hand by her head and attaching their lips. He brought a building passion to their kiss so that they ended up at the point where Hermione had to pull away just to breathe. He attached himself to her neck and nipped and sucked at it possessively. She sighed in pleasure, encouraging him with quiet ‘yes’es. Draco lifted one of her legs and wrapped it around his waist. Hermione groaned loudly at the contact and rocked against him. Draco picked up her other leg easily and she hooked her legs at the ankles around his waist. He slid into her smoothly, exhaling heavily when he was fully seated.

Hermione sighed. She adjusted her legs for a better angle. It had been far too long. Her arms were wrapped around his neck and tangled in his hair. Draco began rolling into her at a medium pace. Hermione’s lower back ached as it bounced off the shelf behind her but she didn’t care. She heard the books behind her shifting as Draco’s pace sped up. Hermione dug her nails into his neck and encouraged him with a muttered, “harder.”

Draco threw her a haughty smirk and instead of speeding up, pulled out entirely. Hermione was seconds from protesting, when he turned her around and spread her legs out.

“Hands on the shelf,” he instructed.

Hermione felt a surge of heat between her legs. She gripped the shelf before her tightly. She noted that the books on the level below were at an odd angle because of her back smashing into them moments before. Hermione glanced over her shoulder as Draco arched her back for her, gripped her hips punishingly, and slammed into her. Hermione cried out. He pulled out and slammed back in again. Her knuckles cracked as she gripped the shelf tighter to help her keep her balance. Draco set a punishing pace, railing her from behind.

Hermione gasped and groaned, her body heating deliciously with every stroke. One of his hands left her hip and pulled her head back by her hair. He grabbed her in a way that added a delicious tension, but didn't actually risk pulling her hair out. Her mouth dropped open and she panted unattractively. Draco turned her head slightly so that she was looking into his eyes as he rammed into her from behind.

“Fuck,” he grunted, his hips snapping erratically now.

“You feel so good, Draco,” she moaned in encouragement.

He let out a half whimper half groan as she said his name and she suddenly understood his desire to record her. She wanted to replay that sound for the rest of her life. She needed to hear it again. He let go of her hair and took his now free hand and used it to rub against her clit fervently. She almost told him not to bother, knowing they could just join vow hands. Staring straight ahead reminded her that they were in their library, shamelessly fucking one another.

Hermione clenched around him and whispered his name throatily into the books before her. “*Draco!* Fuck me,” she pleaded. When he heard his name, he let loose that noise again and Hermione's toes curled involuntarily. She was definitely going to record him at a later date.

Draco's pace was even more erratic now, his hips bruising against her backside as they slammed against her. She found that not being able to see him increased her awareness of him. She also paid more attention to the sounds that he was making. It was phenomenal.

“Mine,” he muttered between thrusts. “You're mine.”

“Yours, Draco.” Hermione's eyes were squeezed tight as her release trembled on the horizon. “I'm yours.”

Then she was tumbling over, her legs giving out as her weak arms shook in their death grip of the shelves. Hermione did her best to remain upright, but only succeeded thanks to Draco's hands now on both of her hips holding her up. He continued his relentless thrusting as she clenched and moaned around him, screaming into the books before her. Draco's hips stuttered then jerked wildly as he came.

“Mine,” he whimpered.

Hermione spasmed when his hand landed on her clit once more. Her eyes rolled back and her toes curled as she came again in his arms. He stayed within her until her second orgasm

subsided and her hips stopped twitching. Hermione's legs were even weaker now. In fear of collapsing, she kept her death grip on the shelf before her.

Draco's hot breath spread across her back for a few moments. He pulled out of her slowly and helped her stand fully upright. Hermione unclenched her fingers and felt like they would be sore for a few days after first holding her book so tightly earlier, then the bookshelf. Her back was pulsing with a dull pain. She would definitely need some pain potion tomorrow...

Draco turned her around and kissed her softly. Hermione returned his kiss lazily, her mind fuzzy and empty. Draco ran his hands over her body and palmed her butt cheek.

"You are positively sinful, Hermione," he muttered between his languid kisses.

Hermione's legs trembled. "What do you mean?"

"You knew what you were doing...when you said my name."

She leaned back to look into his wide eyes and smirked. "You liked it, why would I stop?"

Draco chuckled darkly and kissed her again instead of replying. Hermione held herself up by wrapping her arms around his neck. Draco pulled away a few minutes later.

"Having trouble staying upright?" he asked cheekily.

Hermione nodded. He picked her up easily and brought her back to their earlier armchair. Draco placed her in it with a certain reverence that surprised her. He sat across from her and stared at her body openly. Hermione squirmed under his gaze. Her body was getting cold from the lack of clothing and cool leather, plus she needed to clean up.

Draco, as if reading her thoughts, snapped his fingers and she was wearing her too large t-shirt again, her legs no longer sticky. He was wearing his boxer briefs. His wand was in his hand suddenly and conjured them both some water.

Draco said nothing, content to stare at her body until she finished the glass of water.

"I can help with the bruising if you want."

Hermione looked up at him. "Huh?"

"I have a paste for you. It will help with the bruises. I'm sure your hips are aching right now."

"That would be wonderful."

Draco stood and tugged her to her room. Hermione unwarded the door and he walked inside. He went to her bathroom, where the paste had apparently been that whole time, then told her to get on the bed. Draco raised her shirt, under which she was very much naked, and began applying the soothing paste to her hips, bum, neck, and fingers. She instantly felt relief in all the places he put it.

"Did you not notice this paste earlier?" he asked.

Hermione shrugged. “No...”

Draco chuckled. “Well, I have a matching one in my room...if we ever end up there.”

“Does it bother you that we’re always in my room?” Hermione asked.

Draco thought about that. “Not necessarily.” His response felt like he was leaving something out, but she didn’t feel like pushing and really just felt like sleeping.

“We can do your room next week, if you prefer.”

“I might keep the curtains open.”

Hermione chuckled. “Fine.”

To her surprise, he didn’t get into bed with her, didn’t try to make any more moves on her, merely kissed her hand, then stood.

“Night, wife,” Draco said, then left her room without looking back.

Hermione was left with a swirl of emotions. For one, she was somewhat disappointed that he had ended their contract day so early. For two, he had retreated a bit before leaving, and she wanted to know what was going on in his mind. For three, she was once again replaying his words, “I want to be with you.” Is that really what he meant? He wanted her? He wanted a relationship? Hermione heaved a sigh, then got out of bed to brush and floss.

Thursday, May 11

By the following Tuesday, they had returned to a tenuous normalcy. Things were only ever awkward for the first couple of minutes they were together, then, they would settle back into one another, exchanging deep thoughts or making flirty jokes. Hermione finally felt like she could relax again.

She was shocked on Thursday evening when she received a text from Pansy asking if she wanted to hang out for a “girls’ night.” Hermione agreed eventually, but only after Draco assured her that Pansy meant no harm and that she actually wanted to be Hermione’s “friend.” So, she agreed.

Pansy had invited herself over to their flat and Draco made himself scarce, citing a need to see Blaise.

“Did you eat?” she asked Pansy.

Pansy nodded. “Yes, Ron and I had an early dinner. It was exquisite. Did you eat?”

“Oh, yes. Draco and I also had an early dinner...”

“Draco...yes...”

Hermione felt like groaning. It was incredibly weird to be alone with Pansy. She wondered what on earth Ron saw in the woman. Hermione didn't mind her in large group settings, but she felt intimidated one-on-one.

"So, wine?" Pansy asked, pulling a bottle from nowhere. She snapped her fingers and was pouring the bottle into two glasses that Draco definitely did not own.

Hermione greedily took the glass and chugged a liberal amount. Pansy led them to the solarium, apparently very familiar with this apartment and took Hermione's seat. Hermione frowned, but instead of saying something, took Draco's.

"So..." Pansy started. Hermione blinked at her expectantly. Pansy downed her glass in one go. "I'm in love with your best friend," she declared.

"Ah. I see."

Pansy nodded and poured herself another glass. "I know that I've already told him I'm nearing there and falling in love or whatever," she said airily, but the tension in her body revealed her discomfort, "but admitting that it's actually happened is a bit more difficult. I'm terrible with emotions. Draco and I are similar that way."

Hermione nodded. Not that Hermione was much better.

"I've never been in love," Pansy said just as suddenly. "It's utter nonsense. Or. I thought it was. But now. I'm...I mean. I love him. I love Ron Weasley. Me! Pansy Parkinson."

"I mean. I'm sure that's not such a bad thing," she said to Pansy.

Pansy drained her second glass and poured a third. Hermione was still on her first. The woman looked completely unaffected by the amount of alcohol she had imbibed. "Isn't it, though? How am I supposed to know I can trust that little shit with my heart. I can barely trust him with my laundry!"

Hermione laughed along with Pansy. "I would never trust him with your laundry," she countered. "But in all seriousness. Ron loves you. I have no doubt. He's just a bit of an idiot. It will take him a while to get there unless you prompt him."

"Prompt him?"

"Well, ask him how he feels about you. Or tell him you love him. He'll definitely say it back. Just last week he said—well actually that is supposed to be a surprise, so I shouldn't tell you that..."

Pansy stared at her intently.

"Are you trying to use legilimency? Because Draco's been teaching me occlumency and you will not be able to penetrate this mind."

Pansy rolled her eyes. "As if I know legilimency! Draco's the one with his weird ancestral Veela blood or whatever. All Parkinsons have are a big noses and stunted emotions."

“Veela blood? Pardon me?”

Pansy blinked at her. Then she poured herself another glass of wine and inexpertly changed the subject. “So, what do you do for fun?”

“No, no. You answer my question. What do you mean Veela blood? Draco’s a Veela? Our children could be Veela?”

“I thought you weren’t planning on having children.”

“I—I mean...well. No, we’re not. But...”

Pansy raised an eyebrow. “I’m happy to change the subject. Can you please show me how to send a voice note?”

Hermione blinked at her. She wanted her answers, but knew Pansy would say nothing more on the subject. So, instead, she trained Pansy on how to use her phone. After about a half an hour of trial and error—Pansy was not a quick learner—they sent a voice note to Ron of the two of them.

“Excellent,” Pansy proclaimed, visibly drunk by this point. “Now I can get in on your dirty sex texting.”

Hermione flushed and stuttered. “P-pardon?”

Pansy waved her off. “Oh, don’t worry, Draco hasn’t shared anything salacious. Blaise was just able to pull it out of him that voice notes were a favourite sex text of his and that had us all wondering how to do that. Draco of course refused to answer because he is such a ‘gentleman’ and won’t to talk about your sex life.” Pansy rolled her eyes. “We all know you two are fucking like rabbits, so just tell us the details!”

Hermione was beyond embarrassed. “We don’t...I mean...not like rabbits.”

Pansy shot her a look. “Listen, it’s a shame you’re not doing it every day. Because let me telllllllll you! Ron and I fuck *at least* two times a day. It is...*phenomenal*. I love it. I love him,” she sighed.

Hermione, who was tipsy, but not Pansy’s level of drunk, found herself admitting, “We only sleep together on Saturdays.”

“Yes, Hermione. I know.”

Hermione bristled. “Well, you’re not supposed to know. I swear if he violated our contract, I will cut his fucking balls off.”

“You’re telling me that Ginny doesn’t know?”

Hermione frowned.

“So, what’s the difference? I’m his best mate. I know the most about his life. And I’ll have you know that is basically all he’s told me. Which is incredibly rude. I mean, the man is obsessed with you, worships you, I’m sure, and he won’t give any little details.”

“Obsessed with me?”

“Please, Hermione, you’re not blind, are you?”

“I don’t...what?”

Pansy stared at her. “Denial.”

“I am so lost.”

“Draco. Draco...how can I say this? You’re all that matters to him.”

Hermione felt her heart clench. “What...what do you mean by that?”

Pansy rolled her eyes. “What else could I mean by that? The man is obsessed with you. He wants you. Stop denying it. Sleep together more.”

“Oh. You mean sexually. Yes. That’s fair. I mean...the compatibility. Sometimes I wonder how it’s even possible,” she admitted. “How can we go for twelve hours straight? It’s—”

“Twelve hours! Wow,” Pansy teased and Hermione flushed deeply.

“I mean—”

“No wonder it’s only once a week. You wouldn’t be able to get to work if it was more often.”

“No, I was just—don’t tell anyone!”

Pansy laughed heartily. “I’ll only tell Draco,” she promised.

“No.”

“Why not? Men love to hear how much women want to fuck them.”

“I just. I mean. I don’t want him to feel betrayed or whatever.”

“Interesting...”

Hermione didn’t like this conversation.

“Worried about ickle Drakie’s feelings?”

“Well, he is my husband.”

“More like your fuck buddy.”

“I care about him,” she admitted rashly, then wanted to take it back.

Pansy grinned triumphantly. Hermione felt horribly like this had been her plan all along. “So why don’t you tell him that?”

“Tell him? I mean. We’re friends. He knows.”

“Denial,” Pansy muttered again. “Fine. Live in denial. But now you’ve just confirmed you have feelings for him. And perhaps you should follow your own advice, and just admit how you’re feeling. Hm?”

Hermione just stared off into space blankly.

“Okay, Hermione. I’m going to go shag Ron. This was nice. We should do it again.” And the woman left.

Hermione blinked after her in confusion.

As she got ready for bed, she texted Draco, needing to know what Pansy was talking about when it came to his “Veela blood.” However, she was immediately distracted when she opened their chat and read their last messages where Draco commented on how he was going to “feast on her” all morning come Saturday. Hermione’s body heated.

A text from him jolted her out of her horny haze.

‘How was Pansy?’

Hermione rolled onto her stomach. ‘Fine. She wanted to talk about Ron.’

‘What’s he done this time?’

Hermione rolled her eyes. ‘Nothing. She’s just feeling a bit overwhelmed with her emotions.’

Draco took a moment to respond. ‘I thought they already said I love you’

‘Technically they didn’t. But they probably have since she left here. I’m sure they’re both... celebrating their love.’

Draco sent her an eggplant emoji and she laughed out loud.

Hermione typed out, ‘What does Pansy mean by you having Veela blood?’ Hermione waited impatiently for his response, the three dots taunting her. He took so long to respond, she readied herself for bed while waiting. When she returned to her phone, he barely gave an answer.

‘About that...’

Hermione’s eyes widened. ‘You’re not a Veela. Are you??’

Draco was taking too long to respond, so she decided to confront him. She stomped over to his bedroom door and hammered on it a tad aggressively. She waited, her robe cinched tight around her waist. She knocked again.

‘Why aren’t you answering?’ she demanded. ‘I’ve been knocking for almost a minute now.’

Her phone starting ringing. She picked it up immediately.

“I’m not home, Granger,” Draco said smoothly, the sounds of a pub around him. “I told you I was going out.”

Hermione sighed. “I assumed you were lying and you were just hiding in your room.”

“When would I have snuck past you to get to my room?”

Hermione shrugged. She made her way back to her room and plopped onto her bed. “Doesn’t matter anyway. Answer my question.” The bar broke out into a loud roar of cheers.

“Can it wait until tomorrow?” Draco asked, the sound slowly diminishing behind him as he moved away from the noise.

“No. I need to know if you’re bewitching me.”

“Bewitching—” Draco started laughing. “I don’t think it would be called that.”

“Stop distracting me,” Hermione huffed. “Are you a Veela or what?”

Draco paused. “Not technically.”

“Husband,” she said sternly, “give me a straight answer.”

“There are rumours of Veela blood in the family a long, long time ago. It’s mostly a joke we throw around, I’m not sure if it was ever true.”

“Oh. So why did Pansy say you have Veela blood when I asked her about legilimency?”

His tone was suspicious. “Why were you asking about legilimency?”

“Hey, I’m the one asking questions here.”

Draco replied, “Like I said, it’s a joke. The Malfoys are rumoured to have Veela blood, legilimency is powerful magic, so the connection to a magical creature is an easy leap to make. Whenever I do anything remotely impressive, my friends are known to blame it on my supposed Veela blood. When I got an O in care of magical creatures,” Hermione was unaware he had passed that class at all, “they said it was because my Veela magic connected me to the other magical creatures. It’s just a silly joke.”

“Hmm.” Hermione paused.

“Are you disappointed?” Draco asked.

Hermione hesitated. She was unsure. She *was* a bit disappointed, but she wasn’t sure why.

“No—no, I don’t think so.”

“Why, did you want me to use my Veela wiles on your willing body?” he asked huskily.

Hermione flushed, even though it was hardly suggestive compared to what they texted one another on the daily. “I—uh—no.”

“You’re a terrible liar, wife. Don’t worry, I don’t need magic to seduce you. I already make you come so hard you shake the paintings on the walls.”

Hermione’s core clenched. “I—um—that—”

There was a pause, then Draco said, presumably to Blaise, “Just give me a minute.”

Faintly, Hermione heard Blaise respond, “You’re missing the whole match!”

“Well, my wife called,” Draco called back.

“Well, text her or bring her next time,” Blaise replied.

“Listen, darling, Blaise is throwing a fit that I’m missing this muggle sports game.”

“Wait, you’re out watching muggle sports with him?” Hermione asked, somehow more turned on.

“Yes.”

“You like muggle sports?”

“Wife, you’re missing the point here, I have to go. I’ll text you.”

“So, you’re not a Veela?”

“As far as I know, no. It’s just a rumour based on blond hair.”

“And so, you’re so good at occlumency because you’re just lucky?”

“Occlumency and legilimency run in my mother’s family. Many of them are natural occlumens, myself included.”

Hermione bit her lip. She asked quietly, aware that she was provoking his unquenchable desire, “And you’re so good in bed just by chance? You’re not using Veela persuasion to soak my panties?”

“Granger, I’m in public,” he warned.

“But I’m not,” she responded huskily.

Draco let loose a heavy breath. She heard loud banging coming from his end of the phone.

“What was that?” she asked.

“Blaise banging on the window trying to get me back inside.”

“Well would you rather be in a sweaty pub with a bunch of men or on the phone with your wife, who just happens to be wearing your favourite green negligée?” Hermione had been planning on sending him some photos, hence her sexy choice in underwear.

“Fuck me,” he groaned softly.

“I would...but you’re not here. I guess I’ll have to make do without you.”

Draco swore again. “Tell me what you’re doing,” he ordered darkly, the sounds of the pub fading farther into the background.

Hermione had not necessarily expected their phone call to go this way. She was tipsy from Pansy’s visit and she had wanted to tease him a little with some photos, but they had yet to have true phone sex, having only sent texts, photos and voice notes before. The idea that he was somewhere out in public was oddly thrilling to her. She now understood his desire to fuck her in public.

Hermione put him on speaker phone. “Nothing yet. What would you do if you were here instead of watching muggle sports?” she asked coyly.

Draco didn’t hesitate. “I’d be running my hands over your breasts. Dragging the mesh fabric against your nipples.” Hermione’s breathing hitched as she did as he described. “I’d pull down the right cup and circle your nipple—” she did—“with my tongue.”

Hermione licked her finger, then brought it back to her nipple. She gasped.

“I’d be biting at your neck and leaving bruises to remind everyone who you belong to.”

Hermione clenched in desire. “Who do I belong to?” she asked breathily, her fingers and hands working her breasts still.

“Me. You’re mine,” he growled. “My perfect wife.”

Hermione moaned softly. “What else?”

“I’d trail my hands down your body and I’d rub that little lace thong. Dragging the lace over your clit again and again.”

Hermione whimpered at the fabric scraping against her. She was very close to the edge, shockingly fast. She rubbed at herself, shuddering.

“How does that feel?” he asked deeply.

Hermione sighed. “Good. It feels so good.” She breathed heavily. “I wish it was you.”

“Have you soaked through your thong yet?” he asked.

“I—*oh*—I haven’t come yet,” she clarified. His hips tilted against her hand, increasing the friction.

“How wet are your panties. Feel them from the outside,” he ordered.

Hermione moved her hand lower, spreading her legs further apart. Her thong was already completely ruined. It was barely a scrap of fabric to start off with. “They’re wet,” she admitted, her face flushed.

“Keep them on. I want you to finger yourself for me now, darling.”

Hermione clenched her legs together in want, the heat coiled tight in her core. She gasped as she slid her fingers into her slick heat. “Okay,” she groaned.

“If I were there, I would take my sweet time making you fall apart so hard that the paintings shook in the flat *beneath* ours,” he purred through the phone.

Hermione whimpered, her fingers plunging in and out of her.

“But I know you’re not taking your time, are you darling?”

“I—no—”

“That’s okay, I’ll just have to punish you this Saturday for your bad behaviour.”

Hermione moaned. Her hips rocked against her hand, her eyes screwed shut. “I can’t—fuck. Draco. *Draco*. I’m—”

“Are you going to come? My little sex fiend of a wife, calling me up while I’m out at a muggle pub. Can’t even handle one night without touching herself to the sound of my voice. Well, why don’t you come for me, darling. Soak that thong for me.”

Hermione threw her head back. “I—nngh. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.” She came, clenching on her fingers as her orgasm washed over her.

Draco kept talking while she did. “That’s my girl,” he cooed. “Well done.”

Hermione heated at his words. She panted, lying on her bed in a daze.

“Fuck,” Draco groaned. “You’re such a tease.” He huffed. “Here comes Blaise to yell at me again. Do me a favour, wife, take those panties off and put them on my doorknob. I think I’ve earned them. I’ll talk to you soon,” he murmured, then the line went dead.

Hermione took several more moments to herself to calm down. She wasn’t lying, her thong was drenched. She shuffled out of it after only a moment’s hesitation. Before she could lose her nerve, she hung them from his door knob and took a photo.

She sent it to him, hoping that he had the sense to not open it around Blaise.

‘Thanks for the gift,’ Draco texted back. ‘I look forward to adding it to my collection.’

Hermione flushed and wondered how many pairs of her underwear he had at the point. She had noticed that whenever he undressed her, the lingerie she had been wearing disappeared,

never to be seen again. Hermione changed into practical sleeping clothes and got into bed.

‘Night, husband. Try to be quiet when you come home. It is a work night.’

Draco sent her back a kissing emoji.

Hermione smiled. She lost consciousness shortly afterward.

Sunday, May 14

Draco was beyond nervous for his mother’s visit. She had not yet warmed up to Hermione and still was bereft about Draco’s lost pureblood heir. He had been owling back and forth with her for the past few months trying to get her to accept the marriage and hoping to make things easier for when his mother realized that Draco actually liked Hermione.

He knew that Narcissa wouldn’t do anything overtly offensive toward Hermione, particularly if Draco was in the room, but he was worried about what she might do or say if she happened to spend time alone with his wife. Things had been awkward enough since Memorial Day. He didn’t need his mom to come along and mess things up.

Draco fixed his hair in the mirror in his en suite again before decisively exiting his room. She would be there in three minutes. Narcissa was always punctual. Draco crossed the hall to knock on Hermione’s door to warn her that his mother would shortly be gracing their halls with her judgemental presence.

To his surprise, she answered the door dressed in a lovely soft looking lilac dress. Draco stuttered for a moment, unsure of what to say to the vision before him. She had this ability to look beautiful no matter what she wore and it almost always took his breath away the first time he saw her in the day.

“Morning,” she greeted neutrally.

“Yes. Good morning,” Draco tried to recover. He placed a hand in his pocket and leaned against her door, his occlumency walls making him less awkward. “Mother will be here presently,” he said snobbishly.

Hermione’s lip twitched. They hadn’t done their snob voices in a while. “Ooooh?” Hermione responded in a ridiculous accent.

Draco stared at her for a second too long and the air got thick. “I just wanted to warn you, in case you wanted to hide out,” he clarified in a cracking voice.

“Right. I was planning on attending tea...I thought it might be a good idea to get more comfortable around your mother.”

Draco blinked at her dress again. “Of course.”

The stilted silence was broken by a soft chiming from the foyer, signalling that someone had just arrived beyond their wards.

“Shall we?” he asked, holding out his arm.

Hermione slowly took his arm and let him lead her down the hall to their entranceway. His mother stood on the threshold of the wards looking annoyed. He understood why; she usually didn’t have to wait to enter their home, but since Hermione moved in, Draco had changed the wards so that no one could just walk into their home. This had been mainly because he had been hopeful they might be shagging anywhere and everywhere, but it was also a bonus level to their privacy and security.

He knew his mother couldn’t see them clearly through the wards he had installed and instead saw their blurry shapes approaching. Draco pulled Hermione into their entrance way and watched as Narcissa’s eyes narrowed on their joined arms.

Fuck, Draco thought to himself.

A tight smile graced his mother’s face as she took in Draco’s body anxiously. Draco doubted Hermione would notice his mother’s furtive exploration of his body. This is something that she did since the war. Every time she saw Draco, she would examine him for wounds. It was morbid, but something that Draco also did for those he cared about.

Seemingly satisfied with her quick perusal, Narcissa held out her hand to Draco with a small, genuine smile.

“Darling,” she greeted softly.

Draco softly dropped Hermione’s arm and pulled his mother into a brief hug. He pulled back and kissed her hand gently. Narcissa eyed Hermione critically, but finally decided on a head nod as greeting. Narcissa captured Draco’s arm in the crook of her own and started leading him to the solarium.

Draco glanced back at Hermione in apology. So far things were not off to a great start. But there was no rushing Narcissa Malfoy. She would get ready in her own damn time.

“Tell me dear, how have you been? It has been far too long,” Narcissa asked as they made their way to the solarium.

Draco glanced behind him again to make sure that Hermione was still following, which she was.

“Oh, fine, mother,” he responded.

Narcissa stopped their casual stroll and turned to him. She looked over her shoulder at Hermione with distaste. “Is that really how I taught my son to speak to me?” she wondered quietly, the acid of her tone barely there. “Or has married life changed you so?”

Draco bristled. “I apologize, mother, but if anything married life has made me more polite. Granger wouldn’t let me be anything but polite. And I don’t appreciate your insinuation.”

Narcissa eyed her, but kept walking before responding. “And how have you been, Ms. Granger?” she asked slowly.

“It’s *Mrs.* Granger, actually,” Hermione responded from behind them with a surprising cheer in her voice. Draco could feel the tension settle in his mother at her remark. They had reached the solarium where Flopsy greeted them.

“Mrs. Malfoy is most welcome in our humble home,” Flopsy declared dramatically, holding out a chair for his mother.

She barely acknowledged the elf.

“But,” Hermione continued, unperturbed by Narcissa’s ire, “Please call me Hermione.”

His mother smiled tightly. “Of course.”

The solarium was gloriously warm that morning, the weak sun amplified by the glass ceiling. Flopsy had laid out an expansive breakfast of tea, scones, sandwiches, fruits, and vegetables, and even some bacon and eggs for him and Hermione—their preferred breakfast.

Narcissa poured them all tea silently. Just when Draco feared what might come out of her mouth next, Hermione spoke.

“To answer your question, I am quite well,” Hermione began, sipping her tea and slowly loading her plate with an obscene amount of food. Mother watched in horror at the sight. “Work had been rather frustrating for several weeks, I’m afraid, but I finally figured out the charm I was trying to develop to help integrate computers into the wizarding world,” she recounted cheerily. “Draco actually helped with it quite a bit,” she smiled at him.

Draco had to remind himself to breathe.

Narcissa almost frowned, but refrained from wrinkling her face fully. “Are you not busy with your own work, Draco dear?”

How to tell her that Granger made my workload much smaller while securing a raise...

“Oh, hardly,” Hermione supplied for him. “He’s far too qualified to be a paralegal. Besides, his boss gave him a raise and cut down on his hours because he realized he had been overworking Draco. More like taking advantage of him,” Hermione harrumphed.

Narcissa openly frowned now. “Why is this the first I am hearing about this, Draco?” she asked calmly, but Draco knew that beneath that façade she was both hurt and angry.

“It’s not—she’s exaggerating, mother,” he tried to explain.

“I most certainly am not,” Hermione continued, undeterred.

Draco realized then that he ought to have requested that Hermione *not* join them for Sunday tea because he often forgot how socially unaware she could be.

“Honestly, the first week we were married he was leaving the flat at 6 am and coming home at 10 pm. It was just unreasonable. And I am a workaholic generally speaking, but my word! He really needed some time off. So, I’m glad his boss came to his senses.”

Narcissa quirked an eyebrow. Draco fully expected to get an owl from her later demanding more details.

Hermione continued eating and chatting, either oblivious to the tension between the two or not caring. “Anyway, I’m glad because I think that he should be spending time on prepping for the law exam. He really ought to be a lawyer. He’s overqualified as a paralegal. Malfoy, have you given any thought to what type of law you would like to practice?”

Draco blinked at her absently. “What type of...?”

“Yes. What type of law? There are so many branches. I was doing some reading and—”

Draco cut her off, desperately needing a distraction. “One step at a time, Granger.”

“Right,” she responded, finally picking up on his tension. She shoved some more food in her mouth.

Narcissa spoke, almost against her will, “And so, what is a *computer*?” she pronounced the foreign word slowly.

Draco looked at her in genuine surprise. “It’s a...well it’s like a box that...”

Hermione chuckled. “It is hard to explain. A computer is a muggle device that you can use for many things,” she started to explain. “For instance, we send out mail by owl, but owls take time, they are messy, and expensive. A computer can send mail from one computer to the next one instantly.” Narcissa frowned, but looked intrigued. “You can also use it to write, instead of using a quill and parchment. And there is the internet where you can look up almost any information in the world. It’s like a library.”

“I see,” Narcissa responded. She clearly did not see.

Hermione was undeterred. “It is confusing if you’ve never seen one work before. I am hoping to implement them into the Ministry to help with paperwork and memos. Honestly, it would be so much faster and better to be digital.”

Draco tried to think of a way out of this conversation without his mother saying something insulting.

“They’re like larger smart phones,” Hermione tried.

Narcissa looked at Draco at a loss.

“You haven’t gotten her a phone yet, Malfoy?” Hermione half-accused.

Draco shrugged. “It doesn’t seem like something that would interest my mother, Granger,” he responded stiffly.

“Yeah, but you love your phone,” she responded earnestly.

Draco was internally freaking out. He knew his mother was hiding her shock and outrage at how much Hermione spoke in general, let alone how muggle she was and how muggle she was making him.

“Oh, I have my laptop here. I will go get it, and my phone. Honestly, Mrs. Malfoy, you need to get a phone. That way you can call Draco whenever you want. You can even track his whereabouts.”

“Granger,” Draco warned, but she was already up and flouncing off down the hallway to her room.

“Chatty,” Narcissa said when she had left the room.

“Sorry mother—”

“You got a promotion and did not tell me?”

“It was—it was more like...” he sighed. “I apologize.”

“How did I not know you wanted to practice law?”

Draco shrugged, refusing to meet her eyes.

“Draco, that is an admirable goal,” she responded softly.

He looked at her intense grey eyes. “You—really?”

She nodded slowly. “Of course. An advocate is far more respectable than a simple paralegal. Besides, you could open your own practice. Malfoy and Sons.”

Draco blanched. “Sons?”

Narcissa smiled. “Yes, of course dear.”

“So, you’re...” Draco glanced at the open door to make sure Hermione was still far from earshot, he lowered his voice anyway “you’re okay with us having children?”

Narcissa tensed. “Was that not the point of the marriage law? To force our poor children into having children of their own, even if they preferred an entirely different spouse.” Narcissa paused and drank some tea. “I have accepted my fate, Draco.”

He nearly smiled. “But you know she wants a divorce. She is finding a way out of this marriage.”

Narcissa nodded. “Yes, I am aware. I do not think she will be successful though, so I must accept your fate, and mine, and the bloodline’s. I—”

“Okay!” Hermione declared, bounding back into the room with her phone and laptop in hand. “You’re going to be blown away by this, Mrs. Malfoy,” Hermione vowed with a genuine smile.

While it was clear that Hermione was becoming more comfortable with his mother, he could not say the same for Narcissa who looked momentarily afraid of the silver contraption in Hermione’s hand.

Hermione dragged her armchair right up to Narcissa’s and plunked down beside her. She opened her laptop and patiently explained the different functions. She barely even laughed when Narcissa cringed away a few times or let out words of shock and surprise. By the end of her demonstration, Narcissa did seem intrigued to learn more about the Muggle technology.

“Draco, where’s your phone?” Hermione asked impatiently.

“Oh.” Draco patted himself down. “I must have left it in my room.”

She looked at him pointedly.

“I’ll...I’ll go get it.” Draco’s heart was in his throat. Exactly what he didn’t want to happen was happening: he was leaving Hermione alone with his mother. There was nothing for it, though, so he calmly left the room and hurried to his own. The technology could not be summoned because of the magic-dampening charm Hermione had developed.

He was gone for a maximum of 1 minute, but he still almost wept in relief when he saw that the two women were not hexing one another. In fact, Hermione was pointing out the different functions of the phone.

“Come here,” she demanded when she saw he had returned. “Stand behind us, I’m going to show her how to take a selfie!”

Draco listened to her and crouched down behind the two most important women in his life. Hermione showed how to turn the camera around and his mother gasped, ‘it’s a mirror!’ Finally, when his legs were aching from the angle, Hermione instructed them to smile, her own large and bright, his and his mother’s tight.

The camera clicked and Hermione showed Narcissa how to get to the photo gallery. His mother nodded along, a pair of glasses had somehow found their way onto her nose to help with her squinting. Narcissa smiled at the photo.

“Why, it’s lovely!” she exclaimed. “And so much easier than getting one of those annoying photographers to come to the house.”

Hermione smirked. “Exactly. But the best part is that you can text or call Draco whenever you want. Look.” Hermione showed her how to navigate to the text screen, and opened his contact. His mother shot him a glance, probably after reading his contact name. Hermione sent him a text. Draco’s phone chimed and he looked down at it.

‘I think I’ve converted her to Muggle technology,’ the text proclaimed.

Draco snorted. ‘I doubt it.’

Narcissa gasped. “Draco, you just sent that message? From across the room? But it arrived immediately!”

“Muggle magic,” Draco responded.

“Now, if you click this button, you can call someone. That means you can hear their voice. If you click this button, you can video call someone. That means you can see their face. Malfoy leave the room. I want to show her.”

Draco wanted to complain, but knew his mother was actually enjoying herself, so he complied and lumbered off to his bedroom. A moment later, his phone rang. He picked it up.

“Yes?”

“Draco?” his mother asked hesitantly.

“Yes, mother.”

“Wait,” he heard some shuffling and the line cut. Then it rang again and this time it was a video chat.

He picked up.

“Hello.”

“My word. It’s like a Floo call, except far more convenient,” Narcissa declared. She looked to her side, presumably at Hermione. “And how do I acquire one of these…”

“Smart phones. I’m glad you asked.”

The call ended abruptly. Draco rolled his eyes and made his way back to the solarium. Hermione was talking about the charm she would need to place on Narcissa’s future phone so that it would work. When Narcissa had asked her fill of questions, the room lapsed into silence. Hermione dragged her chair back to its original spot.

“I will leave you two to have some mother-son time,” Hermione declared suddenly, a slight glint in her eyes. “Please let me know before you leave so that I may say goodbye,” she said sincerely to Narcissa, then left the room with her phone and laptop in tow.

Narcissa turned her attention to Draco. “I see why you’ve become so muggle,” she stated calmly, then poured herself more tea. “She’s rather outspoken, isn’t she?”

Draco felt the need to defend his wife. “She means well.”

Narcissa waved him off. “Yes. I must say, I am quite shocked by the ingenuity of these muggles.”

Draco's jaw dropped.

Narcissa nearly rolled her eyes (but did not because rolling her eyes was beneath her). "Yes, Draco. I told you I have accepted my fate. I have been doing some research the past two months. Trying to inform myself. Anyway, enough about that. I must tell you about the Greengrass luncheon I attended last week, it was absolutely atrocious. They have new curtains that are just..."

Draco lapsed back into familiar and comfortable territory with his mother, which involved them both gossiping horribly about the pureblood aristocracy. Before he knew it, several hours had passed and Hermione was rejoining them in the solarium. She suspiciously had a gift bag with her. Both Narcissa's and Draco's eyes narrowed in on it.

"What's that?" Draco asked first.

His mother admonished him. "Manners, Draco."

Hermione smiled shyly. "Well, I just thought that you seemed to enjoy using the phone and my laptop so much...that I well..." she abruptly handed the bag to Narcissa and sat down.

The older woman tried to hand it back. "This is far more than I can accept, Hermione."

"No, I insist. It's...like a peace offering. Besides, technically your son paid for it." Draco grinned at that.

Narcissa smiled. "Your wife is very kind, Draco," she offered, before primly removing the tissue paper and placing it gently in neat piles on the floor.

Draco tried not to fixate on his mother calling Hermione his wife. It was an approval he didn't know he was desperately waiting for.

Narcissa removed the sleek laptop and smiled brightly. It was the same model as Hermione's. Next, she unboxed her new phone.

"I already opened them to set everything up for you," Hermione explained. "I even added some contacts of people who have phones, just so you have them."

"Ronald Weasley?" Narcissa asked, the judgement not quite out of her voice.

Hermione shrugged. "Don't worry, they don't have your number unless you give it to them. I just thought it would be good for you to have as many numbers as possible, in case of an emergency."

Narcissa raised an eyebrow. "Indeed," she responded diplomatically.

A moment later there was a chiming noise from Hermione's phone. She glanced at it and smiled brightly. "You're very welcome! I hope you've had a nice visit today. Sorry for keeping you away for so long. Anyway, I'll leave you two again, I know I can tend to take things over without meaning to and I know how important these visits are for you. So, have a great day, Mrs. Malfoy, and see you soon!"

Hermione stood and waved before making her way back down the hallway.

“Walk me out, Draco.”

At the door, his mother hugged him tightly, now that they didn’t have an audience.

“I must say, this visit went very different than what I expected,” Draco admitted.

“I agree. It was quite enjoyable.”

Draco smiled.

“I see why you love her.”

Draco’s heart clenched and he glanced over his shoulder quickly, hoping Hermione was safely in her room. He didn’t see her anywhere. “Where on earth did you get that idea?”

“A mother always knows, Draco. I do love you dear, and I will try. I will try to get there with Ms. Granger—with Hermione. I need time.”

“Mother, she wants to end the marriage. We won’t be—in 4 months we will no longer be together.”

Narcissa’s eyes twinkled. “If you say so, dear. I shall see you in two weeks for dinner, if not before then.”

“Have a lovely evening, mother,” Draco kissed her cheek.

Narcissa gave him a genuine smile, then turned on the spot and disappeared.

Sunday, May 21

Draco was dreading the visit from Hermione’s parents because her father clearly wasn’t a fan of him and Draco did not know a lot about muggle life. He had done some cursory reading on dentists since the wedding to try to brush up on the little knowledge that he had so that he could hold a conversation with the two teeth healers, but he would hardly classify himself as an expert.

Draco was perched stiffly on the sofa in the living room awaiting Hermione and her parents to walk through the fireplace. The muggles apparently preferred to travel via Floo instead of apparition, which Draco simply could not understand—Floos were filthy. Further, they gave him motion sickness a fair amount of the time. Truly terrible.

Draco unfocused his eyes and imagined the solarium at morning time on a sunny day. Several slow breaths later, the fireplace chimed and Draco stood. Hermione walked out with her soot covered parents a moment later, their hands in hers. Her father was beaming while her mother had a frown on her face.

Draco cleared his throat. "Welcome," he greeted cordially.

Greg nodded his head in greeting. Linda actually said hello, but her voice was tight. Draco wondered what Hermione has told them before they got here. They were standoffish. He reconsidered spending the afternoon with them, but then Hermione beamed at him with a smudge of soot on her nose and knew he would do anything she asked. *Damn woman.*

"May I rid you of soot?" Draco asked kindly.

Her parents bristled and looked to Hermione. She nodded. "Do me first, so they understand," she suggested.

Draco hesitated slightly at her use of the phrase "do me", but soldiered on and rid the ash from her skin. Linda raised an eyebrow, impressed. She stepped forward and held out her arms widely. Draco's lip quirked at her level of drama, but diligently cleaned her of soot. Greg followed much more reluctantly, but he too was cleaned up quickly.

"Thanks, Malfoy," Hermione said with a smile. "To the solarium?"

"Yes, right this way Mr. and Mrs. Granger. I don't believe you saw this portion of the flat the last time that you were here."

"Oh, please, call us by our first names," Linda insisted, trailing after him.

Hermione fell in step beside Draco, making his body heat slightly. The woman was killing him more and more with each passing day. They made it to the solarium with little incident. Draco held the door for the others and allowed them to choose their preferred seats. Greg predictably took Draco's seat, but he let it go and sat in another wicker armchair.

Flopsy appeared with a crack, scaring the Grangers. She laid out the tea service and disappeared with a bow.

"Hard to get used to that," Greg muttered.

Hermione laughed. "Tell me about it. Draco is all, 'get used to it, Granger, we're rich,'" she mocked with a smile.

Draco rolled his eyes. "Flopsy is more family than servant," he insisted.

Hermione waved him off and changed the topic quickly, pouring her parents their preferred tea and then making Draco his. She began asking her parents about their latest client who was causing them hell because of a fake insurance claim. The Grangers launched into a long-winded conversation that Draco was proud to say he understood most of. He did not join, but merely sipped his tea and reacted at appropriate times.

Once this topic was exhausted, they switched to Hermione's struggles with the internet.

"This one keeps trying to get me to become an Unspeakable," she grumbled, shocking Draco by including him in the conversation.

“What’s an unspeakable?” Greg asked curiously, on his second tea.

“Someone who works in the Department of Mysteries,” Hermione supplied.

“Which is…” Linda asked.

“It is much like a secret government research department combined with MI5,” Hermione explained.

“It is prestigious to make it into their ranks, they only accept the most talented witches and wizards,” Draco added.

Hermione flushed and Draco had to build up his walls quickly or he might do or say something rather inappropriate around her parents.

“Well, that’s our Hermione!” Greg declared. “Why haven’t you told us about this mystery department, Hermione?”

“There’s just too much to do in the Muggle Liaison office!” she repeated for the nth time.

“It seems like something you would enjoy,” her mother supplied.

Draco fought back a grin.

“Oh, don’t you two start on me too,” she complained.

“It seems like I’m not the only one who thinks that it would be a good career choice, Granger.”

“Oh, you confused me for a moment there, Draco,” Linda said, “Why is it that you still call Hermione ‘Granger?’”

Draco blinked at the woman who looked like Hermione’s older twin. “Habit, I suppose.”

“She does still call him Malfoy,” Greg commented to his wife. “Sometimes.”

“Well, that’s his name,” Hermione grumbled.

“Seems odd since you’ve been married for two months at this point,” Linda continued.

Hermione had been calling him Draco more and more, especially when she was talking to other people about him. When she addressed him directly, she tended to still call him Malfoy most often—unless it was contract day and she was in the throes of passion.

“Yes, well…” she responded.

Linda remained confused, but let the subject drop. Greg asked for a tour of the flowers and the unlikely couple gave a tour of the solarium, pointing out all the different magical plants. By the time they wrapped up, dinner was ready.

Her parents were less awkward in his company by the end of the meal. Draco had spoken to Flopsy about making the meal as simple as the elf dared: merely 3 courses—something unheard of for when company was around. The muggles appeared to appreciate the delicious and uncomplicated meal. Draco left the family to themselves after dessert to give them time together to gossip about him if they wanted to. He wished them a good night and retired to his potion lab.

Draco checked on all his potions and bottled her period one. He glanced at his calendar and realized that her period should be arriving soon. Draco took the vial and thought it was a good excuse to see her one last time that night, so he made his way to her room and knocked on the door.

She answered in her shorter robe. Draco tried not to trace her body with his eyes, but failed miserably. She smiled at him.

“Yes?” she asked finally.

“I have your period potion.”

“Oh, thank you.” She took the vials gingerly.

“It’s one a day. It should help even out your hormones which will in turn make the cramps less painful. There is also some light pain medication in there in case they get really bad.”

“One sec.”

She disappeared into her bathroom then came back empty handed. Hermione pulled him into a tight hug, then pulled back and planted a kiss on his cheek. He was not expecting that. Draco blushed embarrassingly. She stepped away.

“Thank you so much,” she said sincerely.

“It’s, yeah—no problem.”

“Being married to you is very different than I imagined it would be,” she mused.

They lapsed into silence. “Did you want to compare notes over lunch tomorrow? It seems our Sunday study sessions have been monopolized by our parents.”

Hermione smiled at him broadly. “Oh yes. And I was hoping to run some ideas by you as well.”

“Great. We’ll do lunch then.”

“I mean, we do lunch most days anyway,” she said with a smile.

“A working lunch,” Draco amended.

Draco looked over her shoulder to see a set of lingerie sitting on her bed. She followed his line of sight and flushed deeply. Draco raised an eyebrow.

“I might have been...getting ready to send you something private...” she admitted without looking him in the eye.

Draco flexed his hand to stop himself from grabbing her. “Oh?”

She met his eyes briefly, then looked away. “A sort of thank you for being so good with my parents today.”

Draco leaned on her doorframe again. He had noticed that she seemed to like when he leaned on things and wanted nothing more than to rile her up before she sent him her dirty photos.

“That’s very good of you, Hermione,” he purred.

Her eyes pooled and she shifted her weight rather tellingly. Hermione cleared her throat. “Right. So. We should maybe...say good night?”

“I’ll see you soon,” he promised, his eyes landing on her underthings.

Draco backed out of her doorframe reluctantly, then went back to his room.

He loved muggle inventions.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I know nothing about making private folders in phones but i assume that you can do it? and if not, then I guess this is just creative licence.

Denial is a River in Egypt

Chapter Notes

Bit of peer pressure in this one, but it's all in good fun. (see end notes for skipping details)

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

Friday, May 26

Hermione found herself in Pansy and Ron's large Diagon Alley home for the second time. This time, Pansy had decided to host a true Girls Night and had invited several other women for a night of what promised to be excessive drinking, since no one was pregnant yet.

Hermione had no plans to attend, but when Ron whined at her several times over the week that Pansy would be devastated if Hermione was not there, Hermione finally relented. She had even spoken to Draco about how odd it was that Pansy kept insisting that Hermione was her friend. Draco did not seem phased by it, though he was distracted by the television when Hermione brought up the Girls Night, so it was entirely possible that he was not really listening to her. Introducing him to muggle inventions wasn't always to her benefit.

Several women were present, apparently having nothing better to do on a Friday night. Luna was swaying with Ginny to a magical pop band that was playing from Pansy's music box; Astoria and Daphne were having a quiet conversation on one of the loveseats; even Angelina was there, casually talking with Hermione and Pansy about a recently dislocated shoulder. Hermione was surprised that Pansy considered Ginny and Angelina friends—but then again, Pansy attended almost every Weasley event because of Ron, so she supposed the women must spend a lot of time together.

With a start, Hermione realized that her two-month anniversary had just passed.

"Oh, sorry, Hermione. Are the details too grisly?" Angelina asked, rolling her shoulder.

"Huh? No. I was just..."

"Probably thinking about her husband," Pansy crooned with an eyebrow waggle.

Hermione blushed and moved her eyes away from Pansy's perfect eye liner. She sipped on her mystery punch. She was already pretty drunk. "I mean. Kind of—"

"She finally admits it," Pansy grumbled.

"I just realized, yesterday was our two-month anniversary. I can't believe how little time has passed. But also, so much time has passed."

Angelina nodded. “It’s weird for me and I wasn’t even part of the marriage program. George and I are going on three years now and it surprises me every time I remember.”

“Two months of wedded bliss?” Pansy asked with a teasing smile.

Hermione shrugged and looked away. “I don’t know about ‘bliss’, but—”

“Come off it, we all know what Draco’s like in bed.”

Angelina laughed loudly. “I don’t know about *all* of us. But do tell, Pansy. Hermione would never give up any details.”

And somehow, everyone’s attention had been pulled to the trio. Ginny and Luna jiggled over and sat unceremoniously on Pansy’s coffee table. Astoria and Daphne turned their bodies toward Pansy and Hermione. Hermione flushed deeply at the attention.

“We’re not talking about that,” Hermione grumbled, mortified. “It’s weird enough that you two have shagged.”

Pansy shot her a haughty look. “It’s not weird. We were childhood sweethearts, Granger.”

Daphne surprised Hermione by barking out a laugh. “Childhood sweethearts?! As if.” She cackled some more. “You two hated each other.” Astoria was laughing beside her.

“Back on topic,” Ginny pressed, all business. “What’s he like, then, Pansy?”

Pansy rubbed her hands together.

“Can we not,” Hermione pleaded.

“Shush, Granger,” Pansy responded. “The people need to know the truth.” Then, Pansy unabashedly dove in. “The first time was disappointing to be honest. But most are. Young, unable to control himself, lasted maybe a minute—and let me tell you, it *hurt*,” Pansy declared. She brought her hands up and spread them out. “*Big time*,” she added on for emphasis looking at what Hermione recognized as an accurate rendition of Draco’s length—in fact, he might have even gotten larger.

The women giggled and sipped their drinks.

“I think it is a Slytherin trait,” Luna commented dreamily. “Blaise has a very large penis. I had to take two days to recover after the first time. And he was so gentle too...”

Hermione’s jaw dropped.

“You’re joking?” Ginny whirled on Luna. “Show me.”

Luna began fishing out her phone.

“You have a picture of his penis on there?” Daphne asked, scandalized. She was the least familiar with muggle technology.

Luna smiled. "I have at least fifty. Blaise likes to look at himself in the mirror and he has too much time on his hands. I keep telling him he should get a job, or join me on an expedition. But he likes laying about...and taking pictures instead."

Luna was casually showing Blaise's penis to Ginny who was covering her mouth in shock.

"Luna, surely he doesn't want you to share these photos?" Hermione asked, feeling like the only sane one present.

"Oh, Blaise has nudes up all over our mansion," Luna replied serenely. "Anyone who visits sees him naked. He's very comfortable with his body. My dad had quite the shock when he visited last month." Luna chuckled.

Angelina snorted, the phone now in her hand. "I can see why. *Merlin*."

Hermione was distinctly uncomfortable, so she decided to finish her drink and avoid looking at the phone mere inches from her. This valiant effort of respecting Blaise's privacy was destroyed when Pansy, who was seated beside Hermione, took the phone and shoved it in her face. Hermione spat the rest of her drink out and onto Luna's white dress.

The women descended into raucous laughter. Hermione did her best to banish the mess she made.

Hermione's eyes were wide as saucers. Blaise was...overwhelmingly large.

"It only took you two days to recover?" Hermione asked incredulously. "I think I'd be split in half."

The women all lost it again. Pansy snatched the phone back, placed it on her crotch and began walking around like she had Blaise's dick swinging between her legs. The women absolutely lost the plot, squealing in delight while Pansy pretended to be Blaise, making comments about how difficult it was being rich and how his dick was so heavy it gave him back problems.

It took a long time for the party to calm down after that.

Pansy returned Luna's phone to her eventually. "So, what's he like in bed, then?" Pansy asked cheekily. "I always thought he'd be a bit of a romantic. Talks a big game and all, but..."

Luna smiled down at her husband's penis as if it were completely normal to be staring at his naked body while surrounded by her friends. "Oh, he's a worshipper. Generally, likes to take his time. Every once in a while, things get rougher, or faster. Usually if I've been gone for a work trip and he can't contain himself."

"Romantic?" Pansy quizzed again.

Luna nodded, smiling widely. "Very. I didn't expect it with his reputation. Very caring. Makes me orgasm at least twice before he lets me even touch him."

"It *must* be a Slytherin trait," Hermione mumbled in agreeance. As everyone's eyes snapped on hers, she realized that she had vocalized her thought. She refilled her drink with a flick of her wand to distract herself from the attention, hoping they'd return to Luna and Blaise.

"Do tell, Hermione," Astoria goaded her.

Pansy's eyes gleamed.

"I—uh—we're...not supposed to talk about it," she said quickly.

Pansy raised her eyebrows.

"What do you mean?" Daphne asked, surprising Hermione again, since the woman rarely spoke to her directly.

"Must be in their contract," Pansy sing-songed. "Very interesting contract, they have."

Hermione crossed her arms. "You don't even know what's in it."

"Why can't you talk about it?" Daphne asked again.

"Uh..." Hermione ought to stop talking. She drank some more. Technically there was nothing in their contract forbidding talking about their sex life, just about sharing photos they had taken. But Hermione had expressed her preference for privacy and Draco had agreed to it.

"Go on, Hermione," Ginny practically begged. "Give us something."

Hermione's face was flaming. "He's..." she cleared her throat. "I mean...we're...I—he's good," is what she managed to say.

Pansy rolled her eyes. "Draco is large and in charge," she supplied for the gossiping women. "Possessive, for sure. He never really was of me. But it just takes a glance at the two of you in a room together to see it."

Angelina and Astoria were nodding. Hermione frowned. "What do you mean?"

"How many times do I need to say this? The man's obsessed with you, Granger," Pansy replied as if Hermione were stupid.

"Obsessed with...I don't think that's true."

She looked around the room and all the women seemed to be agreeing with Pansy's assessment.

"Can't keep away from you," Ginny observed.

"Caught him staring at you the entire time we were out last week, didn't look away once," Angelina said.

“Didn’t he plan a whole proposal for you?” Daphne inquired. To which Astoria replied, “At Hogwarts.”

“Checks his phone for messages from you so frequently we had to take it away last time our friend group met,” Pansy commented.

Hermione’s head was spinning. She drank more (another Good Choice.)

“I…” she tried to say something but had no response.

“Complains like no tomorrow when you have lunch with the Golden Trio without him,” Pansy added on again.

“He seems happy around you,” Luna commented breezily, her phone finally put away and not on the obnoxious photo of her husband’s junk.

Hermione blinked rapidly. She made eye contact with Pansy who seemed on the verge of saying something else, her mouth open. Then she snapped it shut. “Anyway,” Pansy said, “He enjoyed exploring the female form when we were together. I’m sure he’s also a worshipper still.”

Hermione fidgeted and looked at the ground. Ginny jumped up and down in her seat. “That means ‘yes,’” she translated for the others who weren’t as good at guessing Hermione’s body language. “What else?”

“He likes to be in charge?” Pansy asked/confirmed. Hermione bit her lip. “I’m guessing you two have a bit of a dom/sub thing going on.” Hermione pointedly looked away and drank more of Pansy’s cocktail.

“That’s another yes,” Ginny informed them.

“I think Blaise told me that you two sext a lot,” Luna commented.

“Sext?” Daphne asked in confusion.

Luna pulled her phone back out, to Hermione’s horror. Luckily, this time she didn’t actually unlock the phone, she just used it to illustrate her point. “Send dirty messages and texts to each other on their phones. Like the photo I just showed you.”

Daphne smiled slowly. “I might need to acquire one of these muggle devices.”

Pansy nodded enthusiastically. “They’re a game changer. Let me tell you, Ron—”

Ginny starting shouting, “DO NOT FINISH THAT SENTENCE! HE’S MY BROTHER!”

Pansy cackled. “Well. We use our phones a lot, that’s all I’ll say, Ginny.” The group laughed at Ginny’s look of disgust. “See, the problem with being friends with you, Ginny, is that I can’t talk about fucking Ron. And, truly, it’s not fair that you all are deprived of this knowledge. He is soooo—”

“LA LA LA!” Ginny screamed. “Here, I’ll just go to the kitchen for five minutes and you can talk all about your husband while I am not in the vicinity.”

Hermione jumped up quickly to join Ginny. “I’ll keep you company.”

Pansy shrugged and wasted no time in diving into her latest sex adventure with Ron, the beginning of which Hermione and Ginny unfortunately heard involved a series of increasingly large dildos. Hermione hastily cast a sound barrier between the kitchen and living room.

Ginny hoisted herself onto the counter dramatically (and drunkenly). Hermione leaned on the island across from her. They both looked at each other, then broke out laughing.

“So...” Ginny said when their laughs subsided. “Will you tell me more?” she asked with an eyebrow raise.

Hermione rolled her eyes. “What is there to tell? Pansy basically said it all.”

Ginny leaned back on her hands. “Mr. Granger’s possessive then?” Hermione sighed and nodded. “What does that even mean?”

Giving up on escaping this conversation, Hermione decided to give in. The alcohol was definitely helping. “He like to stake his claim.”

“Listen, Hermione, Harry is shockingly (or perhaps not so shockingly) a bit vanilla in the sack. He’s good, he’s dependable. He gets the job done—if you know what I mean. But seeing as I’ve only slept with him, I’m going to need some better descriptions for me to understand what you mean by ‘stake his claim.’”

Hermione instead latched on to what Ginny said, a bit worried. “Are you guys having sex problems?” she asked seriously.

Ginny pulled a face. “No. I don’t think so. But sometimes I regret not sowing my wild oats before getting with Harry. I feel like I would have gotten up to some naughty shit.”

“Why don’t you talk to him about it?”

“That feels like it will make him panic that I’m not satisfied. I am satisfied. He makes me come—a *lot*. And he’s so loving...” Ginny sighed. “But sometimes I wonder what it would be like to be really wild—almost like Pansy.” She pulled a face. “Not that I like to imagine what she’s getting up to with my brother, but you know what I mean. She’s just so free.”

Hermione drank some more. “Draco and I had a talk a few weeks ago,” she admitted.

“Oh?” Ginny was immediately intrigued.

“It was about our sex life...”

“C’mon, Hermione spit it out,” Ginny demanded.

“Basically, we talked about everything that we like doing, what we don’t like, and what we’d be interested in trying.” Ginny smiled deviously. “And then, he gave me some kink books to read. And he watched me read them—it was oddly a turn on for him apparently and he right about lost it in our library and we—” Hermione cleared her throat. “Anyway.”

“You just got to the good part, Granger,” Ginny grumbled. “What happened in the library?”

Hermione picked at her nail bed. “He took me against the stacks,” she murmured softly.

“Hard. Pulled my hair, rammed me into the book shelves. Made me read *Hogwarts: A History* while he—gods this is embarrassing—while he touched me.” Ginny’s jaw dropped. “He recorded it too and told me he listens to it every night before bed.”

“No. Fucking. Way.”

Hermione nodded, embarrassed but oddly proud of herself for her adventurous sex life. Once Ginny did not seem to be judging her, the rest just started spilling out: “I tied him up to my bed posts and edged him. He edged me for hours one day. He’s tied me up and spanked me a few times now. He wants to try some toys on me next. We sext almost constantly. Last week I called him while he was out with Blaise and he got me off over the phone from the alleyway beside the pub.”

“Merlin!” Ginny fanned her face. “You have been holding out on me, Hermione!”

Hermione laughed, then shrugged. “I kind of like keeping it between just the two of us... makes it feel special.”

Ginny’s eyes glittered. “Special?”

Hermione’s chest burned. “Yeah, I dunno. Sounds stupid to say it out loud.”

Ginny leaned forward on her thighs. “Mrs. Hermione Granger, are you developing feelings for your husband?”

Hermione bit her lip. “No. I mean. I don’t think so.” Ginny raised a judgmental brow. “Maybe,” Hermione admitted quietly. “I don’t know. It’s so confusing, Gin!” she bemoaned. “I’m obviously so attracted to him and the sex...it is wow. Almost indescribably good. He *really* likes to worship me. He’s spent hours with his head between my legs at this point. I mean it. *Hours*.”

“Good for Mr. Granger,” Ginny commented with a smirk. “And apart from the sex?” she prompted.

“Ugh. I mean. Yeah. It’s good. We’ve really settled into married life. It’s hard to remember what life was like before him. But it’s only been two months. How is that possible?”

“When you’re spending two months straight of getting the best sex of your life, anyone would fall in love with whoever is giving that to them.”

“L-love? I don’t—that feels a bit extreme.”

Ginny frowned. “Was that not what we were talking about this whole time? Your infatuation with your fit husband.”

“Infatuation—sure... I mean, maybe I have an infatuation. But love. Love is... I mean. Well, I loved Ron and it didn’t feel like this.”

“*Did* you love Ron? Did you *really*?”

Hermione huffed. “Why has this evening turned into the Inquisition of Hermione?”

Ginny chuckled. “Sorry. Not trying to bust your balls, Hermione. Just saying, you loved Ron as a friend. You broke up because you were not romantically compatible. You loved him. But maybe you weren’t *in* love with him. Maybe you’ve never been *in* love in your life. Maybe you don’t know what it’s like.”

Hermione crossed her arms defensively. “Tell me then, oh wise woman.”

“Love is different for everyone. For me. With Harry, it’s felt like home. He’s the person I want to talk to first, who I want to share everything with, who I want to fuck endlessly. I can’t imagine life without him and I just want him to be happy.”

Hermione nodded, trying to think clearly, but the alcohol wasn’t helping. Did she feel that way about Draco? She wasn’t sure. She definitely felt comfortable around him. She liked spending time with him. She liked sharing her life with him...

“But you never told me,” Ginny continued on, “What about him is possessive?”

“Oh.” Hermione smirked. “Everything.” Then she laughed. “He doesn’t like when I speak to other men. He doesn’t want anyone to think that I am available. He likes to have a hold on me as frequently as possible. He really likes to say things in bed that are possessive.”

“Like?”

Hermione hesitated.

“Oh, come off it, Hermione. You just told me all the dirty shit you get up to. Give me this! My sex life is so vanilla.”

“It’s less about not wanting to share at this point and more that I can barely talk about it in general.” She was blushing again. “It’s something that he likes,” she admitted, “that I can’t talk about sex,” Hermione did her best to imitate him, ““Granger, you can barely admit how much you like to get fucked by me but you’re constantly begging for it.””

Ginny joined Hermione in laughing at her bad Draco imitation.

“It’s mostly obvious stuff. Like, saying ‘you’re mine’, ‘my darling wife’, ‘be a good girl’, ‘that’s my girl’—you know, that kind of thing.”

Ginny seemed intrigued. “Hmm.”

“And he absolutely loves to mark up my skin with his teeth and his lips. I have at least five hickeys on my neck right now from last Saturday.”

Ginny stared at Hermione’s blemish free neck. Hermione waved her wand and cancelled the glamour. Ginny gasped and jumped off the counter to examine Hermione’s neck closer.

“Merlin, Hermione. He is *feral*.”

Hermione laughed whole heartedly. “That’s a very good description of him: feral. You could probably add unhinged to that.” Hermione sloppily redid her glamour.

“And so, the dom/sub thing? Is that...” Ginny trailed off, curious.

Hermione blinked at her. “I can lend you our kink books if you want. Actually. Yes. Let me. Then you can talk to Harry. And you two can try some things that are less vanilla.”

“Would you? I would really love that. I’ve always had this fantasy of being a dominatrix,” Ginny admitted. “Making Harry just beg for me. Wearing too much leather—or not enough...”

Hermione smirked. “It’s fun.”

“You did not!”

Hermione nodded. “I told you I tied him up. We’ve done it a few times now...it’s such a thrill. But I like it better when he does it to me...he’s so...” Hermione sighed.

“Okay. I know that I’m wasted right now. But—would it be really weird if we did a photoshoot and I sent some pictures to Harry?”

Hermione, thinking it would be incredibly weird, was saved from answering because Pansy had just walked into the kitchen, crossing Hermione’s sound barrier.

“This is why I love you, Ginny!” Pansy declared. “We are mostly definitely having a photoshoot. What are you wearing under that boring outfit?” Pansy obnoxiously pulled Ginny’s casual t-shirt forward and stared directly down the ginger’s top. Pansy tutted. “*That* will not do. Please tell me you have lingerie at home?”

Ginny nodded, her face finally a bit pink with embarrassment. “I have some.”

Pansy clapped her hands in delight. She ended Hermione’s sound barrier and shouted into the living room, “We’re going on a field trip!”

The girls somehow found themselves at Grimmauld Place. Harry was out with their respective husbands, so the townhome was empty. The rowdy, drunken, and bawdy women tromped through the Floo, up the stairs and began raiding Ginny’s lingerie. Angelina and Luna were hopping up and down on Ginny and Harry’s bed for some reason, squealing about who knows what, while Astoria, Pansy, and Daphne absolutely destroyed Ginny’s taste in lingerie.

“This is absolutely unacceptable, Potter,” Pansy declared, levelling a drunk glare at Ginny. “You are married to the saviour of the magical world. You should be gifting him with good lingerie in thanks for saving us all.”

“What is this?” Daphne groaned, holding up a truly granny pair of panties, frills and all.

Ginny snatched the panties. “Hey! I am a quidditch player. It’s not like I want floss up my ass while I’m riding a broom.”

“You’ll want some while you’re riding Harry’s broom though!” Angelina shouted from the bed making the room laugh.

Astoria found a black lace set that seemed to pass everyone’s inspection. The room went into a flurry. Pansy began ordering everyone to *tidy this corner, adjust the lighting that way, no put on sensual music it would help with the atmosphere!* While Ginny changed in her bathroom.

“Okay, Ginny, we’re ready,” Pansy declared, the bedroom looking like a boudoir shoot with the help of a few drunken spells.

“Uh—maybe this was a bad idea,” Ginny called from the other side of the door.

“No backing out, Potter,” Angelina shouted. “That’s an order from your captain.”

Ginny continued, hesitant, “Maybe it is a bit weird. I mean. I’m practically naked and you’ll all be watching.”

That was when Pansy started chanting Ginny’s name. The other women joined in, cheering and screaming for her. Ginny finally opened the bathroom door tentatively, to the women’s screams of delight. Pansy fluttered over to her with Astoria and the two of them were a flurry of motion, dabbing makeup onto the redhead (*where had they even found makeup*) and styling her hair in a strange sexy mussed up way that Hermione could not dream of replicating.

“Ginny, you look like a super model,” Luna declared with a grin. “Harry will love this.”

Ginny grinned; her confidence was successfully bolstered.

The photoshoot proceeded with Pansy taking charge and everyone else fluttering about offering encouragement, charms to help with lighting and wardrobe, and drinks and laughter. The ladies gathered around Ginny’s phone to determine which pictures were the best and deleted the ones that were less than flattering. Pansy had done a good job—there were at least twenty excellent photos.

“Wow. Thank you, everyone,” Ginny gushed, water brimming in her eyes. “I—I can’t believe how good I look.”

Praise was shouted down at her, then the women fell into a group hug. Ginny changed back into her regular clothing, then smiled deviously at Hermione.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Hermione asked in concern.

“It’s your turn, Granger.”

“Oh no—” Hermione said as Pansy said, “Hell yes!”

The women, far drunker than before, were collapsed on Harry and Ginny’s bed. But upon hearing Pansy declare that it was now time for Hermione’s photoshoot, the group bustled into action, dragging Hermione down the stairs and to the Floo. They forced her to bring them to her flat and immediately began parading about it like drunken loons.

Ginny and Luna were now the ones dancing in the living room, except there was no music playing. Angelina had somehow discovered a bottle of wine that she was pouring into glasses and Astoria, Daphne, and Pansy were making their way with determination to Hermione’s room.

“Be a dear and open the door, love,” Pansy demanded, trying to open Hermione’s door with no success.

“I think I already have enough photos—” she tried to say.

“Uh-uh. It’s photoshoot time, Granger. Open up.”

The group started chanting Hermione’s name. Much to her combined annoyance and amusement. Hermione unwarded her door and the women descended upon her room like unhinged harpies.

“Why do people keep bouncing on beds?” she wondered as Angelina and Luna were at it again.

“Ouch!” Daphne declared when she tried to open Hermione’s underwear drawer. “Unward this.”

Hermione heaved a sigh. “Fine...” she grumbled.

Astoria let loose a low whistle as she pulled out one of Hermione’s barely there bodysuits. “I would have never pegged you as a lingerie connoisseur, Hermione.”

“I’d peg you,” Pansy commented crudely.

The women cackled in delight. Hermione let them rummage about and instead located Draco’s kink books and handed them to Ginny. Ginny, Luna, and Angelina immediately began flicking through them and making noises of interest or disgust.

“Have you worn this one yet?” Astoria asked, holding up a lace set that she had recently purchased. It came with garters and stockings. She had not yet worked up the nerve.

“No,” she admitted.

Pansy squealed. “Go change. And take your hair out of that ridiculous braid. We all know he wants your hair wild.”

Hermione patted at her braid self consciously. She had thought she had done a nice job with the braid. When she returned from the loo decked in her entirely too scandalous outfit—she had had to banish her pubic hair almost entirely and wondered idly what Draco would say the following day about it—Pansy, Astoria and Daphne fluttered about her like impatient butterflies, fixing her hair, adding makeup, adjusting her straps.

Angelina wolf whistled from the bed. “Damn, Hermione, you look good!”

Pansy smirked. “Just saying, Ron and I would have you any night you’re interested.”

Hermione’s jaw dropped. “That’s—erm...no thanks?”

The room descended into peals of laughter.

“Draco wouldn’t let you anyway,” Pansy said with regret. “Not good at sharing, that one.”

“No, he’s not,” Hermione agreed.

“Okay enough talking, it’s photo time!” Daphne declared impatiently.

More alcohol made it around the room as they adjusted the lights, moved her bed curtains, added candles, played a sensual beat on Hermione’s mp3 player...

Pansy had Hermione in a truly ridiculous series of poses. Her photoshoot felt much longer than Ginny’s had, but that might have just been because Hermione hated being the centre of attention. Hermione posed on the bed, off the bed, toward the camera, away from the camera, ass up, tits first, in the loo, in her reading nook, in the library (“Merlin, Hermione, this library is huge!” “Is this where he—?”)—even outside of Draco’s door. Pansy, finally satisfied, let Hermione put back on normal clothing and the women collapsed onto the couch in the large living room to sort through Hermione’s photos.

As they deleted the laughable ones and hailed the truly sinful ones, Hermione had a thought. “I hope this isn’t a breach of contract.”

Astoria’s eyes flicked to hers. “Breach?”

Hermione, well and truly sloshed by that point, continued on easily, “We agreed not to share our sexy photos with anyone else.”

Pansy waved her away, favouriting a photo of Hermione bent over her loo counter, looking into the mirror in the candlelight. “This does not qualify, you can share your own photos with whoever you want. It’s his photos that you’re not allowed to share. Which feels very cruel. We’ll just have to convince Draco to show us the photos he sends you.”

“Oh, that one is excellent!” Angelina declared, looking at a photo of Hermione draped artfully across a lounge chair in the library, the books towering behind her and her body bathed in firelight.

“We should start a sexy photo business,” Pansy commented offhand. “We’d be very good at it. Empower women to feel good about themselves. Get smashed. Hang out with friends. It’s a good time.”

Daphne and Astoria looked at one another in deep thought. “Not a bad idea, Pans,” Astoria said.

“You’re not actually going to start a boudoir business on a whim, are you?” Angelina asked.

Pansy shrugged and finished her wine. “Astoria and Daphne both need something to fill their days with anyway.”

“Okay, send that one right now. I want to know what Draco says,” Ginny interrupted as they looked at the one of Hermione laying on her back, legs crossed straight up in the air, hands trailing her body.

Hermione grabbed her phone and drunkenly sent the photo. She pulled her phone away. “But you can’t see the response. That’s the contract,” she explained again. “Gin, send yours to Harry!”

“Yes!” Daphne declared. “Send it!”

The women debated for a while on which one to send Harry and decided on the one where Ginny was draped across the bed trailing a long ostrich feather up the side of her body, boldly staring down the camera. Ginny sent the text and they all squealed.

“Has Draco responded yet?” Astoria asked.

Hermione checked. “No. But he’s seen it...”

‘When will you be home?’ Hermione texted him, staring at the screen and willing him to answer.

Ginny’s phone buzzed in her hand and the women shrieked. She dropped it and had to pick it up again. Ginny read Harry’s response: “I’m on my way home right now. Please tell me you haven’t changed.” Ginny’s face was red.

Angelina was shoving Ginny to the Floo hurriedly while Hermione kept trying to make Ginny take the kink books into her drunken arms, which kept dropping them.

“Tell him to give you ten minutes,” Pansy ordered through the chaos.

Ginny fumbled the phone and was able to get a text message off to Harry. Astoria and Daphne fluffed her hair and double checked her makeup was still fantastic.

“Go get him, Gin,” Hermione declared drunkenly.

Ginny giggled, held her new books against her chest and stumbled toward the Floo—which just happened to light up. Draco arrived in a hurry, slamming into Ginny’s body, clearly not expecting her to be there. The duo crumpled to the floor. There was a beat of silence, Draco

took in Ginny's flushed face, the many women in their living room, and then landed on his kink books.

"Right, no time to explain, Draco," Pansy muttered. She pulled Ginny to her feet and Hermione shoved the books back into Ginny's arms. "Off you pop, Ginny."

Ginny stammered out a goodbye and disappeared in a whirl of green flames.

Draco looked up at them dazedly. Pansy helped him to his feet next.

"I thought you were at your place?" Draco asked, looking at the evidently very drunk women before him. His eyes fell on Hermione in her altogether boring clothing and not in her beyond sexy lingerie. Despite her over-abundance of clothing, she felt the heat in his eyes.

"I wonder why you were rushing home, Draco," Pansy teased.

Draco straightened his robes. "Have a nice evening, ladies?" he asked, his eyes still glued to Hermione's.

The women broke into laughter again.

"I guess I'll leave you all to it then..." Draco said. "I have some...things to attend to in my room anyway." The women roared with laughter and Draco took it surprisingly in stride, smiling at them before sweeping from the room.

The women retired to their own homes shortly after Draco's arrival, Pansy promising that the next week they would get to more of the women's houses so that everyone got their chance at a sexy photoshoot.

Hermione was still smiling broadly when she headed to her room, exhausted, drunk, and a little turned on. She was excited to see what Draco had sent her in response. As she reached her door, however, she heard his open. He walked the short distance to her door and calmly pressed her against it, his hands boxing her in.

Hermione looked up at him coyly.

"What on earth did you women get up to tonight?" Draco asked in his deep sexy voice, his hips pressing against her.

She placed her hands on his chest and pulled him closer. "Did you not get my photo?"

Draco dropped his head into the crook of her neck and bit her. Hermione groaned.

"Oh, I got your photo, you little minx."

"Did you like it?"

Draco pressed into her harder, wrapping one hand on her ass and pulling her up his thigh deliciously. Hermione's head fell back against the door.

“I loved it, wife.” He dragged her hips up and down his thigh slowly. Hermione gasped. “You look absolutely delectable, darling.” Draco kissed her neck torturously slowly.

Something in Hermione’s mind wondered if she should be stopping this—another something reminded her that it was after midnight, so it was not crossing her barely in place boundary. So, she canted her hips against his thigh, her hands scrabbling up and down his body in want.

“I took more,” she breathed out raggedly. Draco grabbed her breast.

“Show me,” he demanded.

“Were you good tonight?” she groaned. Her back arched, her breasts shoved into him as he kissed his way across her neck and jaw.

Draco bit her neck again. “Yes, wife,” he cooed in her ear.

Hermione was trembling in desire by this point, her clit being dragged against him ceaselessly for the last minute, her panties rubbing against her aggressively. “*Draco*,” she whined, close to the edge.

“Do I get my reward?” he asked, his hand now in her shirt, massaging her nipple.

Hermione pawed at his crotch uselessly—the angle was bad and she was too close to be able to concentrate. “Yes. Soon,” she managed to say.

“When did you buy that lingerie?” he asked gruffly.

“This week. A surprise. For tomorrow.”

“But you couldn’t wait until tomorrow, could you?” he questioned.

Hermione’s arms wrapped around his neck and clung on for dear life as she reached and reached—

“My wife, the horny little slut,” he purred. “Buying dirty lingerie, riding my thigh until she comes...are you going to come all over my trousers, my sweet?”

“Mmm—yes-yes—I—oh God—”

“Then come for me, my darling wife. You deserve it after that photo. Come all over my trousers.” He vanished her bottoms and panties in an impressive bit of wandless magic and Hermione was suddenly raking her core against his soft, expensive fabric. Her fingers curled in his hair and pulled on it.

“Draco—”

“Come, wife. Embed your smell into these trousers so that everyone knows you’re mine.”

“You—oh you—*fuck!*” Hermione came, her hips stuttering, her legs going weak as she rode out her pleasure on his thigh.

Hermione was in a daze when she finally stopped bucking against him. She leaned up and kissed him weakly.

"I love watching you come undone," he grumbled into her ear, planting kisses along her neck again.

Hermione, finally recovered, shoved her hand down his pants and gripped him without further ado. Draco dropped his head against her shoulder and groaned.

"You were good?" she asked again.

"Yes, wife," he groaned. "For you."

"Tell me."

"I got along with your friends." Hermione twisted her hand and he fell forward for a half second. "I asked them questions." She did it again and he moaned. "I laughed at their jokes."

Hermione kissed his neck. "Even the ones that weren't funny?"

"Yes, wife. *Yes.*" Draco panted, his hips jerking against her hand. Hermione worked her hand up and down his length quickly, wanting to reward him. "I barely called them any names," he continued in a breathless voice.

"So good, husband," she murmured into ear.

Draco shuddered.

"You're such a good husband," she repeated, her hand firm on him.

"For you—" he grunted. "I'm—oh—I'll do anything for you," he vowed, then he came all over the both of them.

Hermione flushed in desire and butterflies took up residence in her stomach. His words repeated themselves in her mind over and over again while he trembled against her and struggled to remain upright. *I'll do anything for you.*

Maybe Pansy was right...maybe he did...like her? It just seemed so odd. Draco Malfoy...liking her.

He distracted her from her thoughts by pulling Hermione into a deep kiss. He cleaned them up with a wave of his wand.

Both of them momentarily sated, Draco pulled back. "You had a fun night?" he asked, eyes lazily searching her face.

Hermione grinned. "I did."

"How on earth did you end up taking sexy photos?"

Hermione shrugged. "A lot of alcohol was involved. But to be honest, I'm still not entirely sure how we got there!" she laughed.

They remained pressed together against her bedroom door. Draco played with her hair. "I assume Ginny also participated in this photoshoot, given Potter's sudden disappearance from our outing."

"She did. Though we didn't take any photos together." His eyes flashed. "Would you...be into that?" she asked, remembering Pansy's offer.

Draco eyed her neck, probably seeing the newly formed bruises. He kissed her for good measure. "I wouldn't see much point of having another woman in the picture when you're already perfection," he murmured. "But if *you* wanted..."

Hermione frowned. "Well no. I don't think so. Especially not with Ginny. That would be weird."

Draco raised an eyebrow. "But with someone else?"

Hermione shook her head. "No. I don't think so. I think...I'm a one-person gal. Though the idea of a threesome is not repulsive. I just have no idea who on earth could be our third. Pansy actually asked if I would join her and Ron."

Draco almost laughed, then frowned deeply. He pulled her closer to him. "No."

Hermione laughed at his possessive reaction. "So, threesomes are out then."

Draco nipped at her neck. "Sorry, wife. I would have to say they're a 'no' for me. Unless you can clone yourself. Then, it would be an absolute 'yes!'" He palmed her breast. "Just think, two sets of perfect tits."

"What about a clone of you?" she suggested cheekily.

"But then how would I hear you moan my name if you were stuffed from both ends by me?"

Hermione bit her lip. Heat pooled between her legs again. Draco kissed her, but pulled away. He adjusted his trousers and his eyes landed on her decidedly naked lower half with a smirk.

"Where are my clothes?" Hermione asked, tugging her shirt lower, with little success.

"How long will it take you to learn this lesson, wife? If I take your clothing off of you, it becomes mine."

Hermione crossed her arms, but her anger was undercut by her yawning loudly.

"Go to bed, love," he directed. "You have to get your rest for tomorrow morning. It's nearly 2 am."

Hermione groaned. "I drank too much." She yawned again. "But thanks for a great start to contract day," she said coyly.

Draco twitched toward her, but instead of closing the distance, he stepped back dramatically. "I'll see you in the morning."

"Can we do your room tomorrow?" she asked.

Draco's eyes glittered in the dark. "I'd love to."

They stared at one another in the dark hallway, neither quite ready to separate.

"You still up for some toys tomorrow?"

Hermione nodded, remembering the pictures he had sent her of his purchases two days previous. She swallowed. "I leant your books to Ginny. I hope that's okay. I've already read them so..."

Draco nodded. "I guess Potter isn't perfect after all," was Draco's response.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "He never claimed to be."

"Could have fooled me," Draco grumbled.

"Draco," Hermione warned, her tone of voice immediately shifting the power dynamic between them. "What did I say about my friends?"

Draco bowed his head. "Sorry, wife," he responded, like a good little boy. The fact that she had any power over him in this situation where she was quite literally pants-less in hallway was interesting.

Hermione crossed to him, placed a finger under his chin and kissed him, then pulled back and stared into his eyes. "Be nice, or I'll have to punish you."

Draco's eyes flickered to her lips. "Do you promise?"

Hermione smacked his chest lightly, but was grinning. "Don't say anything to Harry."

"Whatever you want, wife."

"Good," she praised. "Now it's bed time."

Draco picked her up and walked her into her room. Hermione was drunk and tired, but were she more coherent, she might have been surprised at the tenderness that overcame him as he brought her into her room, laid her on her bed reverently, then kissed his way up her arm and to her mouth. He kissed her sweetly, magically put her in cozy pyjamas, and tucked her into bed.

"Goodnight, my lo—" Draco cleared his raspy throat. "—my darling."

Hermione was asleep in seconds.

Saturday, May 27

Their debaucherous Saturday proceeded as normal, only this time, they were in Draco's room.

Hermione thoroughly enjoyed being tied to his bed while he tortured her with a vibrator. He was relentless, whipping her into a frenzy and demanding that she not come. Hermione was struggling against the silk ties begging for all she was worth to let her finish—but he would not. Every time she got close, he would pull the vibrator away and mutter something about needing to “be patient” or “not yet, wife”, or “that pretty little cunt is mine, and you can only come when I say so”.

He switched toys while she was cooling off—she had been so close, *so close*, but he stopped her. Hermione weakly lifted her head to see what toy he was using now. She didn't recognize it. It looked like a long wand with an egg on the end.

“What's that?” she asked, panting.

“G-spot stimulator,” he replied.

Draco wasted no time in sliding it into her, adjusting the angle to somehow know *exactly* where it needed to be, and turned the wand on at what appeared to be full blast. Hermione keened, her body heavy and curling. She tried to snap her knees together, but the ties kept them apart. She felt something in her—something different. It felt—“*Oh god!*” she moaned, her back arched.

He clicked the vibrator off. “What did I say, wife?”

Hermione whimpered, an overstimulated mess.

“Answer me.”

“I can only come when you tell me,” she shuddered out, her walls clenched tight around the vibrator that was not moving. “Please. Please. Draco. Just let—”

He slid the stimulator out of her. “And why should you deserve to come?”

“I've been good, I promise. I-I'll send you more photos. I'll show you all of them. I promise. Please,” she whined. Hermione looked down and saw his look of intrigue.

“Now that is interesting...”

Draco trailed a hand so softly up her leg that she whimpered. A second later he had slid the stimulator back inside her. Hermione clenched around it involuntarily. He turned it on. It was not at its highest setting before—it was even stronger now. Now, the vibrations felt like they were travelling up her entire body, shaking up her brain. Hermione threw her head back. It was going to happen...so close...

Her eyes flew back open when the first vibrator was suddenly pressed against her clit again, rumbling against her as loud as a train. It was balancing on her clit with magic. Draco looked

down at her with a fire in his eyes. He adjusted the stimulator slightly and Hermione's eyes rolled back.

"Please. Please. Please. I need to—oh Merlin. Please let me."

Her core was so tense it felt like she had been holding in a pee for hours.

Draco dragged the stimulator back and forth inside her. Hermione was going to come. She couldn't stop herself. She knew it would hit in a matter of seconds. Her hips jerked erratically as she pulled against her ties.

"Draco," she begged. "Husband. Oh—fuck—I—"

"Come now darling, you've earned it."

Hermione looked at him in disbelief, her body still fighting with all its might against its impending climax. It had been so long. How long had it been? It had to have been at least an hour of him edging her.

"I—I can't—can I?"

Draco rubbed the stimulator more insistently. "You've been so good," he purred. "It's time now, darling. Come all over this vibrator. Soak my sheets."

Hermione squeezed her eyes shut and clutched her ties in a death grip. She threw her head back and let go. Her orgasm nearly knocked her out. She moaned loudly, thinking it might have echoed off the ceiling. Her body convulsed and she clamped down so hard on the thin vibrator it hurt. She was practically seizing in pleasure. Hot liquid surged from her. It took her a few minutes to come back to reality to realize that she was far wetter than she had ever been.

Hermione tried to look down, but found she couldn't quite lift her head. Draco removed the stimulator and she came again, less powerfully, this time clamping down harshly around nothing. The second vibrator still worked at her clit, buzzing away loudly. Hermione was begging for more, for less, for what she didn't know. She came again, her body freezing before jerking against her ties even more violently than the first time.

The room went quiet as he removed the second vibrator from her clit.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck, holy, fuck," she mumbled, her brain blissfully empty of anything beside the pleasure radiating through her body. Her clit felt like it had electrical currents running through it.

Sometime later, after Draco had delicately untied her and kissed at her forming bruises, he helped her sit up. She looked down at the bed and felt a ting of embarrassment. There was a puddle.

"Did I—omigod. Did I piss myself?"

Draco was holding her in his arms and applied bruise paste to her wrists and ankles. He glanced at the puddle with a gleam in his eyes. “No, but you are a squirter.”

“Ew.”

Draco chuckled darkly. “You’ve done it before, just never with so much volume...” He kissed the top of her head. “It’s not pee—it’s from your g-spot.” Hermione leaned her head against his chest and looked away from her mess. She was exhausted. “I quite like the new decoration on my bed sheets. I don’t know if I’ll ever wash them.”

Hermione laughed weakly. “You’re gross.”

“You’re sexy,” he returned, kissing her hair again. “How are you feeling?” he asked. “I really put you through the ringer just now.”

“How long was that?” Hermione asked in her hoarse voice. “That felt like...days...”

Draco pulled back and looked into her eyes seriously. “Too much?”

Hermione shook her head. “No. No. It was...I can’t even think, let alone talk.”

Draco held her gaze, uncertain. “You can always use your safe words.”

Hermione dropped his gaze, returning her head to his chest. She kissed his bare skin and snuggled in more securely now that he was done rubbing bruise paste on her. “I know,” she said. “I didn’t see a reason to use them. It felt...” she hummed against his chest.

He pulled her into a tighter hug. “Good?”

“Like nothing before.”

“But was it good, Granger?” he asked, annoyed with her lack of clear response.

“Yes, husband. It was amazing. Please relax. I just need a quick 1-2 hour nap after you wrung me out so thoroughly, then I’ll return the favour.”

Draco chuckled against her head. “Okay, darling. Do you want me to put on some of your muggle movies?”

Hermione shook her head, already falling into sleep. “Just hold me,” she murmured against his chest, her breathing evening out.

“Always,” he murmured back.

*

After Draco had thoroughly destroyed Hermione that morning, he spent the rest of the day making tender love to her. She seemed more than amenable, not once trying to speed things up or request that they delve into more kinky experiences. They were almost never so gentle and slow with one another. They explored each other’s bodies leisurely, bringing each other

to orgasm again and again over the course of the day, shooting each other longing looks, staring into each other's souls.

Draco nearly told her he loved her a minimum of six times—he counted. She would look at him just so and it was on the tip of his lips. He would connect their bodies so close it felt like their souls were touching and he had to force the words to stay in his traitorous mouth. She would whisper about how good he made her feel and he would say everything but I love you —“this is all for you, only you”, “you are mine, forever”, “no one else—only you”, “I love what you do to me”, “you're perfect”. She would play with his hair, look into his soul, clench around him and scream to anyone listening that she was his.

Draco left her in his room around 4 in the morning after one last round of soft lovemaking where they didn't speak, could scarcely see one another. They were joined together, barely pushing toward any sort of end, just languishing in being connected, being together.

He knew that waking up beside her would breach whatever strange equilibrium they had achieved. He knew that. But he desperately wanted to stay with her. Instead, he heaved himself from his bedroom and went to sleep on the couch in the TV room. He could have brought her to her room—since she had finally added him to her wards—but he wanted her to wake in his sheets. He wanted her scent to linger there for even longer. And he didn't want to disturb her.

Draco passed out on the couch immediately, a blanket haphazardly thrown on him and her cat obnoxiously deciding to sleep on his chest.

Sunday, May 28

Dinner with his mother that evening was strangely smooth. Now that Narcissa seemed to enjoy muggle technology (she texted him constantly, so thanks for that one, Hermione), she was far more amicable to Hermione. The women chatted cordially over the food Flopsy had prepared and Draco contributed here and there. He was far too distracted to contribute much though. He kept staring at her body, running his eyes over every visible inch of her. He was desperate to hold her in his arms again. Desperate to kiss her once more. Make love to her until the sun rose. Make her laugh. Fulfill her every desire.

“Draco, dear, are you quite alright?” Narcissa asked.

Draco turned to her, caught in his fantasy of showering Hermione in rare books, a look of delight on her face. “Sorry, mother, what did you say?” he barely glanced at her, his eyes back on Hermione's neck, wishing he could see his claim to her through her glamour.

“What are you plans for your birthday, dear?”

Hermione looked flustered when his eyes moved up to her face. He knew staring was riling her up; his ring was hot. He smirked at her. “No idea,” Draco replied.

“Did you want any gift in particular?” Narcissa prompted again when Draco returned to devouring Hermione with his eyes.

“I have everything I want,” Draco responded, very obviously raking his eyes over Hermione. She flushed even deeper red. She tore her eyes from his.

“Perhaps a new broom? Have you been flying much recently?”

“Oh, Harry was saying you should join their recreational quidditch team.”

“And play on Potter’s team. That feels...strange.”

Hermione laughed.

“Oh, Draco, you must move past these petty schoolyard rivalries,” Narcissa scolded. “Mr. Potter is an upstanding gentleman.”

Draco rolled his eyes, finally paying attention to his mother. “He is not.”

Narcissa shot him a look. “Far more decent than you,” she responded curtly.

Draco had the decency to be chastised for his obvious rakish behaviour toward his wife. For the rest of the dinner, Draco did his best to not be distracted by Hermione and actually pay attention. It was difficult when she smiled like that though.

“Hermione, dear,” Narcissa said at the end of the meal, “Do you mind terribly if I have some time with my son?”

Hermione rose quickly and stumbled over her feet. “My goodness. I am so sorry. I am completely monopolizing your time. I didn’t mean—I’ll leave you two. Please enjoy your evening. I am so—I should have—”

“Nonsense, dear,” Narcissa reassured her. “Your company has been enlightening. Thank you for hosting me so graciously. Have a lovely evening,” Narcissa dismissed Hermione in her own home. Draco frowned in annoyance.

Hermione did a strange half curtsy, tripped over her feet and fled the room. The sound of her bedroom door closing could be heard a few moments later.

Draco turned to his mother expectantly. “Why did you kick my wife out of her own dining room?” he asked testily.

Narcissa raised an eyebrow at him. “Don’t take that tone with me.”

Draco’s eye twitched, but he did not back down. “It was rather rude, mother. This is her home.”

“Draco, when are you going to tell her you love her? Because your behaviour is borderline lecherous.”

Draco leaned back. “Lecherous?”

“You were ogling her the entire meal. Indecently.”

Draco cleared his throat and looked away from his mother’s piercing eyes. “She does not feel the same.”

“You cannot know until you tell her.”

Draco did not respond.

“Well, is she pregnant yet?” Narcissa asked abruptly. “You two are...ahem. Participating in the marital act, aren’t you?”

“Mother!” Draco squawked, mortified.

“Draco, why be shy about it? We all know that everyone is trying to get pregnant.”

“I am not discussing that with you, mother.”

She sighed. “Not pregnant, then,” she muttered in disappointment.

“It’s only been two months.”

“Well, have you been tracking her cycle and making sure you spend time together on the correct days?” Narcissa inquired primly.

“Tracking her—mother, why on earth would I be tracking her cycle? She’s on the potion.”

Narcissa was speechless for a moment. “On the potion?” she declared. “Why on earth—? Does she not think the law applies to her? She would deprive me of grandchildren?”

Draco heaved a sigh. “Mother, I already told you, she wishes to get a divorce at the end of the six months.”

“Divorce? But Draco—no. She does not want that. Look at her,” Narcissa gestured at Hermione’s vacated seat. “She does not want to divorce you. She’s all smiles and red cheeks.”

Draco’s heart stuttered before he told it to shut up, his mother didn’t know anything. “Mother, you don’t know that—”

“Yes, I do. I have eyes, Draco.” She was indignant. “She feels for you. Perhaps not as intensely as you do for her...but she feels for you.”

Draco’s heart raced at the possibility that it was true. He wanted to question his mother more about why she thought Hermione liked him. “Can we not talk about this?” he said instead.

Narcissa huffed. “Fine. But you need to tell her how you feel. Secondly, I will pop by next Sunday for some birthday tea to celebrate with you. Will you be out celebrating the night

before? Should I come later in the afternoon?”

Draco had no birthday plans. His plans consisted of shagging Hermione for every second he physically could the day before, then trying to recover the day of his birthday. “Uh, yes. Perhaps 2:30 or 3?” he suggested.

Narcissa nodded. “I’ll see you then.” She stood elegantly. “Walk me out, dear.”

Draco took his mother’s arm and saw her to the apparition point. He helped her into her cloak like a good son. Narcissa wished him a good evening and disappeared with a pop.

Draco retired to his room, showering and readying himself for bed. He was exhausted after the full day of shagging. In bed, he picked up his phone to wish her a good night.

She had written, ‘I hope I didn’t ruin your visit.’

‘Nonsense. You made it far more bearable. Mother has warmed up to you quickly.’

‘Oh good. I was worried...’ Then, ‘We got on well, I thought—before she asked me to leave...’

‘She just wanted to scold me for undressing you with my eyes.’

Hermione’s reply was delayed and Draco considered sending of a good night, but she finally responded, ‘You were very distracting. I’m still a bit wrecked from yesterday’

‘I’ll go easier on you next time.’

‘No,’ she replied. Draco smirked. ‘I don’t want you to go easier,’ she wrote.

‘Okay.’ Then, because he was insatiable, Draco wrote, ‘the sounds of you begging are like music to my ears.’

‘Know that I’m biting my lip. But I really don’t know if I can do another round tonight.’

Draco chuckled. ‘Don’t you owe me a photoshoot?’

Hermione replied, ‘I don’t remember agreeing to that. Must have been out of my mind.’

‘You cheeky little...fine. I’ll wait. But you are showing me those photos one day.’

‘Only if you earn it.’

Draco sighed. He should end this conversation before his cock fully woke up and he’d have to deal with it.

‘Stop teasing me, wife. It’s sleep time. You can tease me tomorrow instead.’

‘Promise?’

She is killing me. His cock twitched. ‘Promise.’

‘Night, husband.’

‘Night, wife.’

Wednesday, June 1

“I have no idea what to get him,” Hermione was complaining over the phone to Ginny.

“Well, I would say some kink books, since they have already completely rocked my world. *Rocked my world*, Hermione. Harry let me tie him up.”

“Really?”

“Oh yes, really. My god. I felt like a goddess or something. He said he really liked it too. He especially liked the outfit I bought. I’ll have to show you. It’s a lot of PVC—whatever that is.”

Hermione laughed. “I’m glad there was such an immediate return on my gift to you.”

“Anyway, just sleep with him, I’m sure that’s all Mr. Granger wants anyways—what I mean to say is, all he wants is you.”

Hermione rolled her eyes. She double checked that her muffliato was still in place. She was at home in the library, and Draco could ostensibly walk in at any moment. “I mean, he gets to sleep with me anyway. I need to get him something nice. Something that says...”

“I want to be with you?”

Hermione groaned. “What did he mean when he said it?” she asked for the nth time.

“I think it’s pretty straight forward, Hermione. He wants to be with you. Romantically. Sexually. Financially, I’m sure, since he like spoiling you with gifts.”

Hermione looked over her shoulder again. “But does he want me romantically? I just—it seems a bit unbelievable.”

Hermione’s eyes landed on the climate-controlled bookcase in the library. Draco had had to install another one to make room for the ten new rare first editions that he had purchased her since their wedding. He kept showing up with them on random days and handing her the books with a smile. Stopping herself from jumping his bones had been nigh impossible.

Ginny sighed heavily. “Not this again. You said yourself that he hasn’t been able to take his eyes off of you since this past Saturday. He wants you. You know it. Stop living in denial.”

“I—I’m not. It’s more that. Well...I know he wants me sexually. I know that. It’s obvious. And I want him like that too. I mean. Look at him. And he just knows, somehow, he knows everything I want more than I even know. This past Saturday, my god. I thought I was going to die. He—three in a row. Like in a five-minute span. Three of the most powerful orgasms of

my life. In a row. And I—came all over his bed. It was...” Since Hermione had spoken to Ginny the week before, she felt more empowered than embarrassed when it came to discussing her sex life (though she was still a bit embarrassed).

She could practically hear Ginny’s jaw drop. “Your sexual compatibility is off the charts.”

“It is.”

“So why wouldn’t your romantic compatibility be too? Didn’t you score really high in that as well?”

Hermione thought back. “I’m pretty sure we’re 98% compatible.”

“Merlin. *Hermione*. He wants you romantically. That’s what he meant. He wants to be with you in every capacity. 98%?! That is insane. No way other people’s computability is that high. 98%!?”

Hermione laughed. “Our sexual compatibility is 99%.”

“99?!” Ginny screeched. “No wonder—99? Holy hell. March your ass up to him right now and make it official. What on earth are you two trying to fight this for? 99 and 98 %. That’s just inevitable at this point. Get on board, Granger, because this man will be your husband for the rest of your life.”

Hermione shifted uncomfortably. “But what if he doesn’t want that. What if—”

“Hermione. Shut up. He wants you.”

She twisted her fingers in her lap. “Maybe.”

“I am going to slap some sense into that brain of yours,” Ginny threatened. “Do you not want to be with him?”

Hermione shrugged, then remembered Ginny couldn’t see her. “I mean...I don’t know. I... like him. I do. I definitely like him beyond sexually. I’m just not sure if...it’s more than that yet.”

“That’s okay, love grows,” Ginny encouraged softly. “But, Hermione, if you get divorced in four months, won’t they just match you with some new idiot who will most definitely be less compatible? They found you your perfect match right here. The next guy is going to be at best, your second best. But now, the only eligible bachelors will be those who turn 20 in September,” Ginny was reasoning, exploring a line of inquiry that had completely slipped Hermione’s mind. “Or it will be other people who got divorced, I guess. And you’ll never find someone who will make you feel how Malfoy does. Just statistically speaking, it will not be possible. 99%!”

Hermione sat in silence for a while. “I didn’t think about what would happen after we got divorced...” she admitted. “And I can’t really imagine getting married to someone else.”

“Or sleeping with someone else,” Ginny added on helpfully. She was 100% correct. The thought was extremely unappealing.

Hermione valiantly changed the topic. “But what should I get him for his birthday?”

“Oh—I have a good idea!”

Hermione listened to Ginny’s idea raptly, weighing the pros and cons. She would need to get him an actual gift in case she chickened out.

Draco found her later that evening and asked if she wanted to watch a muggle movie with him. They curled up in the TV room, cuddled close to one another and watched *The Princess Bride*. Draco actually seemed to enjoy the movie.

“You know, you kind of look like Westley,” Hermione commented near the end of the film.

Draco looked down at her. “Granger, I am far more attractive than that man.”

Hermione laughed. She found herself planting a chaste kiss on his lips. They both froze. They almost never kissed outside of contract day. Hermione pulled away and dropped her head back on his chest, pretending everything was normal, despite her racing heart.

“Oh, indeed, far more attractive,” she replied in a poor attempt at her snobbish voice.

“Thank you, wife,” he murmured back and kissed the top of her head.

Hermione refrained from pushing him fully onto his back and having her way with him. Draco pulled her tighter against him and returned his attention to the screen, as if they both hadn’t just kissed the other. As if they weren’t snuggled so close they could feel each other’s heart beats. As if there wasn’t a palpable tension in the air, begging them both to break it.

Thursday, June 2

Hermione had finally plucked up the courage and told Narcissa that she was going to be changing the estate’s donations. She had called the woman over the phone and Draco’s mother seemed pleased to hear from her. Hermione thought the call would go terribly, but it shockingly went well. Narcissa basically said that she was happy Hermione was taking an active role in the estate, and left it at that. It baffled her that the matriarch was not upset.

Phone call out of the way, Draco and Hermione settled into an evening of research in the library, though neither got much done because they kept making eyes at one another across the room.

Hermione stopped pretending to read. “Can we move on in my occlumency lessons?” she asked.

Draco quirked a brow at her. “Have you been meditating?”

“Yes.”

“And you finished the book?”

“Yes.”

“Good girl,” he purred in response.

Hermione bit her lip.

“We can start on walls, then.”

She leaned toward him, trying to push away her desire, actually interested in the lesson he was going to give her. Draco leaned back in his chair casually. He lectured her for a while about various walling techniques and their tolls on the mind. He cautioned that walling oneself off always led to mental or physical consequences and drained one’s magic heavily, especially in the beginning. Then he explained that over time it would get a lot easier.

Hermione started choosing a memory she wanted to wall off: getting a tooth pulled out as a child. Draco seemed horrified by the prospect. She practiced building up her brick wall around the memory, locking it away in a bricked in house. She envisioned laying the bricks one by one around her younger self squirming in her parents’ dental office. Draco watched on, encouraging her softly, reminding her not to over-exert herself. Hermione managed to completely brick in the memory.

Draco explained that as they practiced more over time, he would attempt to access the memories she bricked off, but for now, he simply congratulated her on her success, then explained the important process of lowering the walls around memories so that they didn’t become damaged. Hermione painstakingly unbricked her little brick house and let her memory float back into her subconsciousness.

She was sweating by the time she was done. Draco kissed her temple and gave her some chamomile tea and a headache potion—her head was absolutely pounding. He promised to keep working with her, but insisted it be at most once a week, so that she didn’t over-exert herself. Hermione begrudgingly agreed, her head throbbing.

Draco unnecessarily lifted her into his arms and carried her into her room. He set her on her bed and tucked her in gently. “Don’t over-exert yourself, Granger. I mean it,” he rumbled at her, seated on the edge of the bed. “No practicing without me. I don’t want you to hurt yourself.”

Hermione gripped his hand tightly. “I won’t,” she promised. And she meant it. There was no way she would attempt occlumency without him nearby, that evening had really exhausted her. “Thank you for teaching me.” Hermione closed her eyes and felt herself drifting off.

“Anything for you, wife,” he murmured.

Then she was unconscious.

Chapter End Notes

Peer pressure skipping: basically don't read any of Friday until, "As they deleted the laughable ones and hailed the truly sinful ones, Hermione had a thought." Maybe I'm going over board with the trigger warnings, but better safe than sorry?

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I'm a bit willy-nilly with when people are ovulating (except for Hermione. I track her cycle 'cause I'm a psycho). But just pretend no one is ovulating right now and so it makes sense that they're up to drunken shenanigans. Writing the girls night was so much fun for me. I love their ridiculous antics and gossiping about their husbands. Delightful.

I love the Princess Bride. Shot for shot, an amazing movie. Also the book is funny! And no offense to Cary Elwes. That man is my original Draco. He is hot, Draco just does not like being compared to others.

Hermione has self-confidence issues, if you recall, so it is hard for her to believe the evidence before her that Draco wants more. She also (as previously stated) refuses to accept the possibility of a real relationship because it means accepting the marriage law as a good thing. The Denial continues...but not for long! We're very near the end now.

Breaching the Contract

Chapter Notes

The penultimate chapter (I like that word too much, I blame Lemony Snicket)! Lots of fluffy fluff fluff.

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

Friday, June 3

Draco sipped at his firewhiskey while Harry prattled on about some auror case that he most definitely should not have been sharing the details of with the varied men gathered. The scar head never seemed concerned about breaking the law, though—he had shared countless stories, including people’s confidential information in them without batting an eye.

Draco was having a hard time concentrating, not just because Potter was generally speaking boring, but because he knew what his wife was getting up to with Pansy’s ridiculous new photoshoot idea. While he knew Hermione was not partaking in the photos that evening, and was just “moral support”, his mind still wandered to the five photos she had shared with him so far. Draco had to admit that Pansy, Astoria, and Daphne had a skill for it.

Draco joined Blaise at the bar, getting the next round.

“Weird to think that three months ago I was trying to get into your wife’s pants at this very bar,” Blaise commented offhandedly.

Draco shot him a look. “It was weird then, Blaise.”

Blaise chuckled. “You’ve been obsessed with her since forever.”

Draco narrowed his eyes. “No, I have not.”

Blaise rolled his eyes. “Sure. Whatever you, say, *Granger*. I’m just saying, it’s weird that today I have absolutely zero interest in other women, including your wife.”

“You better have zero interest in her.”

“Salazar, Drake, I’m just making casual conversation. I’m not trying to make a move here.”

Draco raised an eyebrow. “Fine. You make a fair enough point. Things have changed so much in so little time.”

Blaise sipped on his glass while the bartender prepared the rest of their drinks. “You tell her you love her yet?” Blaise asked, innocently.

Draco grumbled unintelligibly and scooped up half the drinks. He made his way back to the table, uninterested in continuing this probing conversation with Blaise.

Blaise laughed behind him and rejoined their table.

As the night wore on, the men got progressively more drunk and began wondering what illicit photos they would be receiving on their muggle devices from their devious wives. Draco sincerely hoped Hermione sent him another from her photoshoot the previous week, but she had been completely silent all evening.

‘Having fun?’ he texted her.

A few minutes later she responded, ‘Yes. You?’

Draco glanced around the table. He hesitated to say that he was having fun, but it was not a terrible time all around.

‘As good as can be expected,’ Draco wrote back.

The men were swapping crude bedroom stories at that point in the night, and Draco had little interest in sharing any details about him and Hermione. She had confessed earlier that week that she had told Ginny some general ideas of what they got up to, but that Ginny had promised not to tell. Apparently, all the women enjoyed trying to guess what Draco was like in bed and Pansy combined with Hermione’s reactions gave them a pretty good idea.

Draco never shared what he was like with his friends. He didn’t want to appear vulnerable, and knowing someone’s sexual desires is definitely one way to be very vulnerable. He also liked to maintain an air of mystery which was hard to do when people knew your every proclivity. He was known to be good in bed, he had no desire for anything beyond that.

That being said, he did enjoy hearing the ridiculous shenanigans that his (dare I say it) friends got up to. At one point in the evening, Harry cornered Draco by the loos and started interrogating him about ropes and bondage and how to be a good sub. Draco was beyond disturbed by the interaction, and Potter was beyond sauced.

“Being a sub is easy, Potter—which I cannot believe you are—just do what your dom says. Whatever Ginny can think up in that Slytherin mind of hers.”

Harry’s glazed eyes zoned out even further. “She’s so beautiful. And sexy. Should I get a leather harness?”

Draco tried to exit the hallway. Potter blocked him. Draco sighed heavily. “I don’t know, Potter. Do you want one?”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know.”

Draco repressed his eye roll. “Well. I don’t know what to say then. Does Ginny want you to wear one?”

“I don’t know.”

“Why don’t you discuss this with your wife? Instead of your former enemy,” Draco suggested.

Harry clapped Draco on the shoulder. “We’re mates now, Malfoy—sorry, Granger. Don’t tell Ginny I slipped up, she’ll punish me.” Harry thought for a moment. “Maybe you *should* tell her.”

Draco ducked under Harry’s arms and all but fled the hallway. “Please do not talk to me about your sex life again,” Draco said over his shoulder.

Draco glanced at his phone and eagerly opened a message from Hermione from ten minutes ago.

‘It’s after midnight...’ she wrote.

Draco glanced at the men guffawing at the table around him. ‘Are you done your photoshoots?’

‘The results should have been sent out a few minutes ago.’

Draco glanced at Blaise. “You get a photo from Luna?”

Blaise fumbled with his phone and pulled it out. He smiled broadly. “Well, chaps, our wives appear to be done with their fun for the evening, and I have a wife that needs some ravishing.” Blaise downed his whiskey without reflection and swept from the pub.

The other men began fumbling with their phones with various exclamations and stumbling to get to the Floo and home as soon physically possible. Draco chuckled wryly.

‘See you soon, wife.’

‘I’m in the library.’

Draco barely held his groan in.

Sunday, June 5

Draco’s was doing a surprisingly excellent job at paying attention to his mother talk when he knew exactly what Hermione was wearing under her modest summer dress. She had ever so kindly sent him a text of her outrageous undergarments as soon as she woke that morning and wished him a happy birthday.

Draco had pressed her against the hallway wall for her behaviour, calling her a tease. Hermione didn’t deny it, but she did pull him into her arms for a tight hug and wished him a happy birthday. The hug had made his heart race.

He almost said it then too.

It was only a matter of time before he slipped up. The amount of times those three little words were milliseconds from falling from his lips were countless. Yesterday, when he had thoroughly fucked her within an inch of her life, he had almost said it 12 times. Twelve. He admitted to himself that he'd have to actually tell her soon or it would come at an inopportune moment.

"Are you ready for your gift, Draco?" Narcissa asked demurely from her perch in the solarium.

"Yes, mother, but I told you that I don't need anything."

Narcissa pursed her lips. She pulled out a large gift. Draco took it with trepidation. It was surprisingly heavy. Draco glanced at her. He opened it primly, folding the tissue paper and glancing at the side of a box.

"Your wife helped me," Narcissa explained.

Draco pulled out what was called a PlayStation and a box titled Fallout 4. Hermione had taken him to the mall a few times since they had been married and had explained video games to him when they returned the electronics store. Draco had played a few games in the store, but hadn't bought anything yet. He had been eyeing Fallout last time they visited the mall.

"Thank you, mother," Draco said, and brought her into a hug.

Narcissa hugged him back. "Of course, my darling. It will help with your muggle education, as well."

Draco looked at Hermione who just shrugged. He highly doubted that playing a video game set in a post-apocalyptic world would help him understand muggles, but he was excited to try out the game.

"Thank you, Hermione," Draco said deeply, pulling her into a hug as well.

Hermione returned the hug awkwardly. He wondered if it was because it was not contract day or if it was because his mother was right there.

"Actually," she said, seated again. "I got you a different present. And I barely helped Narcissa. She really chose everything herself. I just provided a bit of guidance on gaming consoles, and debit machines."

"Nonsense, you were invaluable, dear," Narcissa said back.

"You got me a different gift?" Draco asked, intrigued.

Hermione fidgeted with her fingers. "Uh. Yeah." She waved her wand and a heavy green and silver package appeared in her lap.

Draco raised his eye at the packaging. She smiled back, then averted her eyes. He was surprised she got him anything, if he were honest.

Draco opened the wrapping delicately. He assumed it was a book, and he was correct. The heavy tome declared in large font: Magical Law Exam Preparation Book.

Draco froze. His eyes darted up to hers.

“Happy birthday,” she murmured. “Do you hate it?” Hermione glanced at Narcissa who was smiling broadly. “I thought—you know, because you want to practice law. I got you this to help prepare you for the exam. And if you open it—” Draco did. “There’s a study schedule that I made up for you and I thought that we could you know—or I could help you study. And then you should be able to sit the exam in the winter. And—oh god. You hate it, don’t you?”

Draco put her out of her misery and pulled her back into a crushing hug. Hermione *eep*-ed in surprise as he pulled her close to him.

“I love it,” he murmured into her ear. Draco pulled back and looked into her eyes. She blinked up at him, face open, wide smile dazzling him. Draco dropped a kiss on her lips. He pulled back quickly, cognizant of his mother in the room. “Thank you,” he said huskily.

Hermione fidgeted in his embrace, but he couldn’t bring himself to let her go yet. “You like it? You’re not just saying that? Because, I know most people wouldn’t be thrilled about receiving a book, let alone a study plan—”

“Hermione,” Draco cut her off. “I really appreciate the thought that went into this. It’s wonderful.” He kissed her again, unable to stop himself. “I can’t wait to study with you,” he said darkly.

“Isn’t it such a wonderful gift!” Narcissa commented, effectively throwing a bucket of water on Draco’s rising desire.

Draco pulled away from her, reluctantly, and returned to his seat. He skimmed her study schedule rapidly. She wanted to spend two nights a week with him.

“Hermione was very worried, Draco, but I told her, ‘he needs the push or he won’t ever do it.’ And to think, Draco, in a few short years, you could be a solicitor!”

Hermione grinned at him slyly. “Thank you both,” Draco beamed at the two most important women in his life, his heart full.

Narcissa stayed for a while longer, chatting about her upcoming trip to France and asking Hermione about video game systems. Draco successfully pretended to be listening to the conversation while letting his mind wander to all the things he wanted to do to Hermione in thanks for her gift.

He had already kissed her twice today—and she had let him, she even seemed like she liked it. Maybe he could convince her to give him a birthday kiss before bed. If they were snuggled up watching a movie again, he was sure he would succeed.

Hermione had tossed on her pink silk pyjama set that Draco had purchased her a few weeks previous when they were at the mall together. He told her he liked how it felt against her skin and how it always made her nipples hard. Hermione had blushed in response. Over her sexy jammies, she tied her robe.

They were once again cuddling on the sofa in the TV room, this time they were watching Shrek 2. Hermione had made him watch the first one and he begrudgingly admitted that it was good, so it was about time they continued the series. She had asked if he wanted help setting up his new gaming system instead, but Draco was oddly adamant that they watch a movie. So, there they were, snuggled beneath a cozy throw blanket, Draco enthralled in the story.

Hermione shifted closer to him, her head coming to lie on his chest, feeling immensely comforted by his beating heart. She was so comfortable...

Draco shifting woke her from her nap. She blinked groggily as the credits rolled. He planted a kiss on the top of her head. Hermione tilted her head up to him.

"Sorry. I fell asleep," she grumbled.

Draco eyed her. He didn't seem upset. His hand trailed over her side comfortingly. "Thank you for such a nice day," he murmured instead.

Hermione blinked at him in confusion. "I barely did anything. We had tea with your mother and Flopsy made your favourite dinner...I didn't even set up your present for you."

Draco leaned forward and kissed her forehead again. "It's been one of the best birthdays I've had in over a decade."

Hermione fidgeted against him. He pulled away, clearly ready to amble off to bed. It was now or never.

She pushed herself up and pressed her lips to his softly. Draco melted into her, pulling her more fully onto his body and pushing their hips together while he returned her romantic kiss. Hermione slid her hands into his hair. He sighed and kissed her deeper. Her breath hitched as her hips began to cant against his.

"You're the best wife," he groaned into her mouth as she ground down on him.

Hermione pulled away and untied her robe, revealing her skimpy outfit. Draco's eyes darkened. He sat up and ran his hands over her clothing, his thumbs circling her pert nipples. "I have another gift for you," she panted as his mouth descended on her neck.

"Oh? Do tell, wife," he grumbled into her ear.

Hermione forced herself to pull her body fully off of his. He frowned, but seemed to accept that nothing more would happen—it wasn't contract day after all. Hermione took his hand and led him to his room. She looked up at him expectantly.

"You hid it in my room?" he asked. Hermione was shocked by how dense he was being.

“No. Unward your room.”

“I gave you access to my room eons ago.”

“You did?”

“Obviously. Just in case you had a nightmare and needed to crawl into my bed in the night and be cheered up by me.” He winked at her.

Hermione rolled her eyes. She tugged him into his room and laid back on his bed in what she hoped was a very sexy fashion. Draco looked down at her, seemingly still uncomprehending.

“Aren’t you going to unwrap your present?” she asked, trailing her hands up her sides and hoping it was doing something for him.

Draco seemed at a loss for words. “But—you—we—”

Hermione started to lose her nerve. Maybe she was wrong. Maybe he didn’t want more. Maybe contract day was all he wanted. One day a week for a reason. Maybe—

Draco slid onto the bed and crawled up her body. “This is the best present,” he declared, then reconnected their lips.

Much like the latter half of most of their contract days, Draco took his sweet time. He trailed his hands up and down her silk covered body, teasing her and making her groan. He undressed her achingly slowly, pulling her top off and flinging it behind him. He laved at her breasts and made her heart flutter at his gentleness. He slid his hand into her bottoms, rubbing against her like he had all the time in the world. Hermione writhed beneath him, calling his name. He made her shatter once, then returned to kissing her languidly.

Then he just as slowly and lovingly pulled off her bottoms to reveal her green g-string. Draco pulled the band from her skin, then let it snap against her hips a few times. Hermione jolted in response, her core clenching. Then he was tugging her thong off too, exposing her completely to him.

Draco descended between her legs and lapped at her for what felt like hours. His tongue slid across her folds, into her, around and around and *around* her clit, over and *over* again. Her hips jerked against his face, their eyes connecting for as long as Hermione could keep her head up before dropping to the pillow again. Her legs trembled as she smothered him between her thighs. He hummed against her core, he told her to “come for me, darling. Come all over my face.” And she listened, whimpering and spasming and sobbing his name.

While Hermione lay boneless, her walls still clenching and unclenching, Draco slowly removed his clothing. He watched her hungrily as his pyjama shirt, then trousers were thrown onto the pile of her clothing. Hermione followed his hands as they removed his briefs. She felt like she needed to go down on him or something—it was his birthday. But when she tried to sit up, he gently pushed her back.

Draco slid into her with little fuss, letting out a soft groan on his first stroke. He remained still within her, staring into her eyes heatedly. Hermione kissed him. He remained still in her for a long time, kissing her, trailing his arms everywhere he could reach. She shifted her hips, and he canted against her, his pelvis dragging across her clit with each deep, intimate stroke.

Hermione was trembling. Her legs found themselves around his lower back. His mouth was determinedly leaving bruises on her neck. Draco pushed into her gently, barely speeding up, but she could feel herself reaching a climax anyway. They held their vow hands tightly. As Draco neared his end, he predictably began muttering praises into her ear.

“You’re perfect. You feel so good, Hermione. I love—how you take me. I lo—you take me so well. Perfect, perfect, *perfect*.”

Hermione gently took his hands in hers while he thrust into her. She looked into his wide pupils as she came, head thrown back, moan long and low. Draco joined her in orgasm moments later, jerking against her erratically, then stilling. He didn’t stop chanting “perfect” for a long time.

Hermione brought his lips to hers and kissed him lazily until he softened and rolled off of her. Draco stared at the ceiling, breathing heavily. Hermione shuffled closer to him. He pulled her into a snuggle without further question.

Hermione breathed into his chest, her body still coming down from the intensity of their coupling.

“Happy birthday,” she murmured against his pale skin.

Draco kissed the top of her head. “Thank you, wife.”

Hermione smiled and closed her eyes. While she assumed staying the night with him would necessarily lead to complications, she decided to deal with those when she was less blissed out on endorphins. Hermione pulled the covers over them and felt herself drifting off to sleep.

At some point, she wasn’t sure how long she had been asleep, Draco shifted and woke her up. Hermione blinked groggily trying to remember where she was. Draco pulled her into a little spoon and snuggled his head into her hair (Hermione would regret sleeping with it down in the morning).

“I love you,” he whispered into the night.

Hermione somehow succeeded in not immediately freezing up and giving away that she was awake. He pulled her closer and was snoring softly within moments. Hermione breathed evenly trying to calm her heart. Maybe she had misheard. Maybe...

He loves me.

Her heart stuttered and a whole horde of butterflies began flurrying in her stomach.

She was...elated. *He loves me!*

Hermione settled further into his arms and let herself be lulled back to sleep by her smoking hot, caring husband—who loved her!

Monday, June 6

Things were awkward the next morning. Draco awoke with a very obvious erection pressed against her juicy ass and it seemed like Hermione regretted spending the night—or maybe she regretted breaching the contract. He wasn't sure. But as soon as she woke, her body stiffened and she practically sprang from the bed. She threw her clothing on and left Draco's room with an unintelligible mumble.

Draco tried not to be devastated. But it was rather hard (and so was he!). Last night, when she had fallen asleep, he had stayed awake waiting for her to wake up and exit his bed. Instead, she stayed and almost two hours passed before Draco finally believed that she wanted to spend the night with him. Perhaps that was his gift too. Rather than question it, he had repositioned them and held her close.

In the dark, when he knew she was sleeping, he finally admitted the truth out loud to her. She wouldn't know, of course. She would probably never know. But it felt so freeing to just say the words.

Draco decided he should do some damage control so that Hermione didn't panic about breaching the contract (not that they were technically breaching anything because their sex clause only stipulated a minimum amount of sexual contact, not a maximum).

'Thank you for that surprise last night,' he texted.

Hermione didn't respond until midway through the work day, much to Draco's anxiety.

'I know it wasn't a diamond, but I thought you might like the extra gift.'

Draco smiled. It would seem things were back to normal. 'I loved it. Far better than a diamond.'

She took a while to respond. 'Want me to set up your console tonight?'

'I was thinking we could go out for dinner.'

Almost two hours went by. The end of the day was approaching. Finally, 'Sure.'

Draco frowned. Things were not back to normal. He should have left her to sleep alone in his bed like he had done the last time. Clearly staying the night was some strange line for her that made her standoffish.

'Muggle?'

'Chinese?'

Draco would literally eat anything she wanted. ‘Yes.’

So, the couple found themselves in muggle London at a swanky Chinese restaurant, eating in a tense silence. It was only once Draco asked her to explain the study schedule that she made him that the unease melted away and they settled back into their normal, flirty behaviour. He teased her endlessly for being a swot. She teased him back for loving it.

As Draco was tossing and turning in his bed trying to fall asleep without her, his phone buzzed.

‘You up?’ she asked.

Draco grinned. ‘Yes.’

He sat impatiently, waiting for her to send a ridiculously sexy photo. Instead, a moment later the sound of his door opening startled him. He dropped his phone and stared at her in shock. Hermione bit her lip. She stepped inside his room and closed the door decisively. She wasn’t dressed in anything sexy; she was wearing a too large t-shirt and faded cotton shorts. Her hair was tied into two tight braids.

Hermione tentatively walked into his room, climbed onto his bed, then onto his lap. Draco’s brain remained frozen in shock until she started kissing him, roving her hands over his naked chest.

This was how Draco found himself making love to his wife for the third day in a row. She set a leisurely pace, dragging her body against his, removing their clothing with no rush. Draco rolled them over and made sure to make her come twice before connecting their bodies and rolling his hips against hers. It was as slow and romantic and overwhelming as the night before. They held hands and Hermione whimpered. Draco told her how perfect she was and that she would always be his. They came moaning each other’s names, desperately clinging to one another.

Hermione rolled into him and cuddled him until she once again fell asleep. Draco waited again. He didn’t trust this—she would wake up and leave any moment. But after two hours, she was still asleep in his arms.

“I love you,” he confessed again, before letting himself fall asleep.

Friday, June 10

The rest of the week, Hermione came to his room at night. They made sweet, tender love to one another for hours. Draco stayed up far too late, waiting for her to wrench her body from his. When she didn’t, he whispered his nightly confession and fell asleep.

Hermione always left in a rush in the morning, awkward and mumbling. Come Friday, Draco was having none of it.

She tried to wiggle from his grasp before he woke up, but Draco had been awake for a long while already. He pulled her back to him and rolled on top of her. He started kissing her neck.

“I have to get ready for work, Draco,” she said to him.

“You want me to stop?” Draco rolled his hips against her.

Hermione sighed, her hands clutching his biceps. “I—work...” she tried to say. Draco kissed her neck and she groaned.

“Stop running away in the mornings, wife,” he ordered gruffly. Then Draco brought his hand to her clit.

Hermione nodded. “O—yes—okay. I’ll—yeah, I’ll stay.”

Draco put any thoughts of work out of her mind, instead pounding her into the mattress with a thrust so hard she was hitting her head on the headboard. Draco brought them both to a powerful orgasm.

Wednesday, June 15

From that point, Hermione spent every night in Draco’s bed. Every night, they made sweet love, and every morning he took her hard and fast, waking them both up far better than any caffeine. Draco continued his night time confession into her wild hair.

They didn’t address the drastic change in their behaviour at all, both of them seemingly incapable of speaking to the monumental change. They had their normal ridiculously sexual contract day, full of bondage and spanking, and teasing and toys.

It was only on Wednesday that things changed. Hermione went to her room after dinner like normal—it seemed she liked to pretend she wouldn’t end up back in his bed, which of course she did a few hours later. However, when 10:30 pm hit and she still had not quietly entered his room, Draco frowned.

There was no way he could tolerate sleeping without her at this point. So, he went to her room and decisively knocked on the door. Hermione answered after a few moments, her hair tied back into braids, sporting another of her unappealing pyjamas that hid every feature of her perfect body.

“Hi,” she greeted awkwardly.

Draco pulled her to him and kissed her without further ado. “Why aren’t you in my room well on your way to your second orgasm by now?”

Hermione chuckled, her face going slightly pink. “I got my period this afternoon.”

Draco’s eyes landed on her lower abdomen, then flicked back up to her face. So far, their contract time had fortuitously not been impacted by her period. “I don’t mind,” he murmured,

pulling her to him by the hips. “That’s what cleaning spells and towels are for.”

Hermione flushed deeper red. “Oh—I—well. I mind.”

That did put a damper on things. Draco took a moment to calm down his lust. “Come, I’ll give you a massage.”

Hermione smiled at him tentatively. “Really?”

“Let me run my hands all over your perfect body, my darling wife.”

Hermione followed him to his room. He directed her to his bed and pulled out his massage oils. When Draco turned back, he found, to his horror, that her monster cat was curled up at the foot of his bed. The cat had not been in Draco’s room before. And it was very destabilising to see him there. He supposed they weren’t about to shag, but it still felt wrong. Hermione followed his line of sight.

“I think he’s missed sleeping with me,” she commented, addressing her prolonged stay in his room for the first time. “Usually, we sleep in the same bed every night.”

“Fine. But you’ll have to de-fur my sheets in the morning.”

Hermione laughed.

“Take your clothes off,” Draco ordered.

Hermione blinked at him.

“So that I can massage you,” he clarified, holding up the oil.

“Oh. Okay.”

Hermione turned away from him and pulled off her trousers, then her baggy shirt and revealed she was wearing ridiculous granny panties. Draco smiled, reminded of the first time she showed him her ‘sexy’ undergarments. That felt like ages ago now.

Hermione pulled back the covers and adjusted herself on the bed. Draco gingerly straddled her and got to work.

She sighed into his touch, occasionally groaning in delight or whimpering in pain. Her thighs were particularly tight and he wondered if it had to do with all the shagging they had been doing.

Hermione fell asleep quickly, her light snores filling the room. Draco kept massaging her sore body. When he was tiring, he finally put away the oil and moved from his perch. Draco gently and very awkwardly succeeded in getting her oversized shirt back onto her body without rousing her. She slumbered on, mouth slightly open.

Draco eyed her cat who eyed him back. He sighed in annoyance, but extinguished his lights with a flick of his wand and pulled Hermione into him. He murmured his nightly confession

to her hair. Draco swore he could see her cat's luminous eyes staring him down in the darkness. Draco looked away from the cat and instead and did his best to join Hermione in unconsciousness.

Friday, June 24

Hermione had finally admitted their contractual breaches to Ginny, three weeks after the first offense. The fact that she had kept it under wraps was shocking. Ginny knew only of the first time, on his birthday and thought that they had went back to normal after that.

Instead, the couple had spent every evening together, for nearly three weeks straight.

"I'm sorry—what?" Ginny shrieked.

Hermione at least had the forethought to silence their conversation. They were at some annoying Ministry of Magic charity ball—Draco had looked phenomenal and kept placing his hand on her back as they walked through the oppressive crowd.

Hermione had snuck away with Ginny after the first round of dances that Draco led her through. She was vaguely worried if she stayed in his arms, she might actually pull him into a corner and start fucking him. It was concerning.

So, instead, she had pulled Ginny into a corner and confessed.

Hermione was flushed from the dance, the drink, and emotions. "Yes."

"Three weeks?"

She nodded. "Yes."

"So, every night, you've been—"

"Yes."

"Wow."

"Except for when I got my period."

Ginny frowned. "He didn't want to sleep with you?"

"Oh, no he did. I just hate period sex. Not for me. But, well, we still slept together. In the same bed, I mean."

Ginny's jaw dropped.

"And he massaged me every night of my period."

Her jaw dropped more. "*Wow*. Hermione, that's—"

“There’s more.”

“More? What? *Tell me!*”

“Crookshanks sleeps with us now too. Draco was so pissed at first, but as long as Crooks isn’t on the bed when we’re shagging, he doesn’t care anymore.”

“I wish I could see Mr. Granger’s face!” Ginny laughed, then tried to emulate Draco’s scowl. They both broke out into peals of laughter. “What was the other thing?” Ginny asked.

Hermione shifted and drank some champagne (“prosecco is for peasants, wife,” Draco had declared). “He—uh—Ginny, he said he loves me.”

Ginny’s jaw dropped, then she smiled really wide, then she smacked Hermione on the shoulder, then she started doing a happy dance. It was a lot to process. “He did? When! What did you say? Omigod, I bet it was ridiculously romantic—*how have you kept this from me for so long?!*”

“Gin, relax.”

“Relax? He loves you, Hermione. I have to go give him a stern talking to about breaking your heart.” Ginny looked around the ballroom. “Where is the blond git?”

“Gin,” Hermione grabbed her hand. “I—well. He doesn’t know that I know.”

“Huh?”

“Every night. After, after we, ahem. Finish. When he thinks I’m asleep, he kind of whispers it into my hair and pulls me closer to him. Well, I think it’s every night. But sometimes I don’t wake up, so…”

Ginny blinked at her in confusion. “He hasn’t told you, then?” Hermione shook her head no. “That coward.”

“Ginny! He’s not a coward. It’s a big deal. And…well, I haven’t said anything to him, have I?”

“HERMIONE! YOU LOVE HIM?!” Ginny screeched.

Hermione couldn’t help her laugh at Ginny’s reaction. “I—maybe. But I feel like such a creep since I know that he says it every night, and I’ve said nothing.”

“What’s holding you back?” Ginny asked.

“I don’t know…I love spending time with him. I love having sex with him. He makes me laugh, and gods he infuriates me sometimes, but he makes me think and pushes me in a way no one else ever would. Because of him, I might, well, I’ve been thinking of transferring to the Department of Mysteries in a year or two. And, he’s…all I can think about,” Hermione confessed quietly, despite the sound barrier around them.

Ginny pulled her into a hug. “Only you know how you’re feeling, Hermione. But...that sounds like love to me.”

Hermione’s heart clenched. “I hate this.”

“That’s another good sign it’s love—someone else controls so much of your happiness. It’s scary,” Ginny admitted, her eyes casting about for Harry in the crowd. “But, it’s beautiful too. Hermione!” Ginny declared, pulling her into another hug. “You’re in love!”

Hermione laughed along with Ginny’s enthusiasm. “I—maybe. I think...”

Ginny pulled back. “When will you tell him?”

Hermione shrugged uncomfortably. “I think I need to be more confident before I say it. But... probably soon. I don’t know if I can keep pretending to not hear him say it to me.”

“So, no divorce, then?”

Hermione lifted her shoulders. “We’re still doing research together on how to end this law. I mean—the law is *wrong*, Ginny. If the program was optional, that would be one thing, but *forcing* people to—”

“Okay, okay, I get it: Ministry, bad. Answer my question.”

Hermione shot Ginny a look. “I don’t know. Probably not?” Hermione groaned. “Emotions make everything harder.”

“Oh, here, he comes. Just tell him how you’re feeling, Hermione, even if it’s not love yet—put the man out of his misery.”

“Misery?” Hermione asked in confusion, but Draco had reached the edge of their barrier.

He walked into it comically, then frowned. He knocked on the invisible barrier. “Wife, let me in.”

Hermione and Ginny laughed at him. She waved her wand and ended her privacy spells. She shoved her wand back into her hidden dress pocket. Draco wasted no time in stepping beside her and draping his arm around her waist. Hermione smiled up at him. Ginny’s eyes were sparkling.

“I hope you know, Red, everyone here keeps calling me Mr. Granger. And it is absolutely outrageous.”

Ginny cackled. Draco smiled along with her. “Whatever. You love it, Granger,” she said back. “You seen my husband anywhere?”

“I’m not his keeper,” Draco responded.

Hermione elbowed him. “Don’t be a dick,” she told him.

Draco's eyes landed on Hermione's and she found she couldn't quite look away. "Sorry, darling. No, I haven't seen your husband," he amended to Ginny, but continued staring at Hermione.

"Right, well, I'll leave you two to it," Ginny muttered, neither paying much attention to her.

"Want to dance?" Draco asked.

Hermione nodded. "I'd love to."

And she really would—the man was an excellent dancer.

He pulled her close and led her through dance after dance flawlessly, his superior skill making up for her shoddy dance abilities. Draco smiled at her openly as they twirled across the floor, pulling her closer than was strictly necessary.

When Hermione began to tire, Draco brought her off the dance floor. They returned to the surrounding area and conversed with friends and colleagues. The whole time, they remained touching; holding hands or Draco holding her waist, or guiding her with a hand on her back. Hermione could barely tear her attention from him, but he seemed thoroughly engaged with the conversations around them. She, on the other hand, was entirely off in her own world, barely talking to anyone at all or taking in her surroundings.

Hermione realized that he fit in with her life so seamlessly. It was beyond bizarre. But here he was, casually conversing with her work colleagues, carrying the conversation on behalf of Hermione, as if it was completely normal. He knew who she wanted to avoid, because he listened when she ranted about her colleagues. He knew when she wanted a break from the crowd and brought her to the dance floor or the balcony to have a moment of peace together. He knew who she wanted to spend time with, and put up with Ginny teasing him mercilessly and Harry going on about another confidential case. Draco knew her so well.

He didn't comment on her all around mental absence from their evening until she was wrung out from her fourth orgasm and spooning him in his bed.

"Are you alright, Hermione?" he asked softly, kissing her shoulder.

"Hmm?" she asked, still not quite recovered from his earlier ministrations.

"You seemed far away tonight. Quiet. I know you're not a fan of crowds, but..."

He knows me so well, she thought again. "Sorry. I was a bit...just...thinking."

"About what?" Draco's fingers traced patterns down her arm, making her shiver.

Hermione didn't know if she had the courage to admit it. She remained quiet for a long time, tracing patterns on his chest. "I've realized it doesn't make sense for us to get a divorce."

Draco froze. "What?"

Hermione spoke to his chest. “Well, Ginny pointed it out really. But—well, we’re the most compatible out of the entire UK magical pool. So—if we get divorced, it means that no matter who they match us with next, which they will match us with someone new, it means that they won’t be as compatible as we are with each other. And I mean, really, 99% sexual and 98% romantic—those are good numbers.”

Draco shifted from beneath her. To Hermione’s surprise, he pulled away completely and sat up against his headboard. Hermione was confused. She thought he would be happy. She sat up and faced him, the sheets pooling around her waist. Draco didn’t even glance at her naked breasts, which was a testament to how upset he had to have been.

“Do you not agree?” she asked, concerned now that somehow she had misheard him all those nights. Maybe he didn’t love her. Maybe it was all a fever dream?

Draco swallowed and stared down at the covers. “You think we should stay together because the next bloke won’t be able to make you orgasm as much as me?”

Hermione blinked at him. “What?”

“You’re saying you only want to stay with me because we’re sexually compatible. Because we have ‘good numbers.’”

“Do you not want to stay together?” Hermione asked, confused by his reaction.

Draco finally looked up at her. His eyes bore into her own. “Of course I want to stay with you.” Something flickered in his eyes. “I told you, I want to be with you, Hermione. I—want you. I l—care for you.”

Hermione bit her lip. She had to tell him. But he kept talking.

“And it seems the only reason you want to stay with me is because I’m good in bed. Which, isn’t the nicest thing to hear.” He looked away again, face stony.

Oh. She understood now. “No—that’s not what I meant. Oh my gosh. It came out all wrong. No, I just meant—I care about you too,” she admitted quickly. “I think. I mean. I might be falling in love with you.” Her heart thudded in her ribcage loudly.

Draco’s eyes snapped to hers. “You what?”

Hermione fidgeted under his intense gaze. She repeated, more confident this time, “I’m falling in love with you. That’s the real reason we should stay together. I mean—if you want —”

Draco pulled her onto his lap and brought their lips together passionately. He devoured her for a long time. Hermione’s heart thudded erratically with her confession.

“I love you,” he confessed into her neck between possessive kisses. “I love you, Hermione. Merlin, I’ve loved you for ages.”

Hermione pulled back, her smile radiant. “Really?”

“Yes. I love you.”

Hermione’s body felt so warm and fuzzy; she was overcome.

“You got another round in you?” he asked darkly.

Hermione laughed. “Draco, we’ve just spent the last two hours shagging.”

“I need to show you how much I love you.” His hands ran up and down her sides.

Hermione agreed pretty quickly. Draco gently rolled her onto her back and spent the next hour exploring her body and telling her every part that he loved, kissing and stroking it as he went: I love your breasts, I love your neck, especially the left side, I love your hair, I love your eyes, I love your smile, I love your belly button, I love your hips, I love your thighs, I love your clit, I love your cunt, I love your ass, I love your nose, I love your smell, I love you.

He took her achingly slowly, making her whimper. Every thrust was coupled with his dark words of how much he loved her, how perfect she was, how she was his, forever, how he would do everything he could to deserve her. Draco bit her shoulder and Hermione tumbled into her fifth orgasm of the night. Holding her hands, he came within her, repeating *love, love, love* over and over again.

Draco fell asleep first for once, wrapped so impossibly tight around Hermione that she considered pushing him away slightly. But she relented, letting herself be held possessively by him and secretly thanking the Ministry for instituting marriage law.

Right as she was about to drift off, she realized with a start that this meant they were going to have to start trying to have a baby soon.

Chapter End Notes

There was finally some admitting of feelings going on!--can you believe Hermione went weeks without saying anything to him? (Yes, I know. Unrealistic, but *shrugs* I like her being an emotional dunce and I guess I like torturing Draco...).

--

I spent a long time thinking through his birthday gift. The one thing that I knew she would not get him was that diamond he saw in the mall--mainly because Draco had already definitely purchased it for himself (ha!). I love lawyer Draco.

--

I do want to say, re: Hermione getting her period. I do actually have a creepy little Hermione's period cycle chart in my notes for this story and the only time she got her period on contract day was when Draco disappeared before memorial day. Every other time her period was over before Saturday came around.

--

So, the last chapter is more like an epilogue than anything. Get ready for the fluff.

From this Day until my Last

Chapter Notes

We made it! This chapter is almost entirely fluff except:

****implied reference to abortion—extremely minor (there is no abortion).** In the final section of the story when Hermione casts the pregnancy charm. You can skip from her casting the spell to “Hermione, love, you are the most beautiful woman in the world”. Also there's a little bit of Draco angst.

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

Saturday, June 25, 2015

After spending the day with Draco absolutely destroying her (featuring, toys, crops, and handcuffs)—it had been no less than sixteen orgasms—Hermione found herself confessing against his cooling skin, “I love you, too.”

It was a mistake, because they were finally winding down for sleep, but it caused Draco to go absolutely feral again. He slid into her and pounded into her roughly, demanding that she say it again and again—and she did, screaming out her feelings as loud as her hoarse vocal cords would let her. A painting fell to the ground in the hallway. Then, Draco, somehow not sated, made tender love to her. Both of them confessed their love over and over into each other’s sighs of pleasure.

Tuesday, June 28, 2015

As Hermione was being slowly lulled to sleep in Draco’s arms, a thought occurred to her. Since his confession of love, Draco muttered every time he was on the brink of orgasm that he would do anything to deserve her, or something along those lines.

Hermione’s brain finally put together what he was saying.

“Do you think you don’t deserve to be with me?” she asked suddenly, her voice thick from impending sleep.

Draco jolted; he had been on his way to unconscious if Hermione had to guess. “What, love?” he asked, voice gruff. Draco trailed his hand over her arm. Then his eyes closed and his breathing evened out.

Hermione looked at his peaceful face. “Draco,” she nudged him, “Wake up.”

Draco jolted again. “Huh?”

Hermione pushed herself up so that she was sitting. Draco rubbed at his eyes, not fully present. “Do you think you don’t deserve to be married to me?”

Draco cleared his throat. “Love, it’s bed time. We can talk later.”

Hermione poked his side and he shifted away from her. He sighed and pulled himself up against the head board. Crookshanks came and sat between the two of them, purring loudly.

“Answer me,” Hermione demanded.

Draco scratched Crooks behind the ears. He didn’t answer for a while. Hermione opened her mouth to bully him into talking when he finally replied. “I know I don’t deserve you, Hermione.”

“Draco—”

“Not only because of who I used to be. How I used to treat you. But because of how exceptional you are. You deserve the best in the world and—”

“And I want you,” she interrupted. Draco looked into her eyes. She stared back at his silver ones. “I want you,” Hermione repeated. “And in fact, I think I get to decide what I deserve. Not you.”

“But you’re so good and—”

“Draco,” she interrupted once again. “I know that you mean well, but every time people say how good I am or how I am the smartest person in the world it makes me feel like I can’t just be me. I’m just Hermione. I’m a woman. Sure, I made some good choices in my life. I’ve also made terrible choices and done terrible things.”

Hermione thought of Marietta Edgecombe or luring Umbridge to her violent capture by the centaurs. She didn’t really feel remorse for either action, but she knew that they were definitely not ‘good’ things she had done.

“But comparatively—”

“No, Draco—”

“Will you stop cutting me off?” he huffed. Hermione apologized, remembering their only low score was communication. Draco continued, “You are better than me, Hermione. You’re better than most people. I want to be someone who has the honour of being with you, or being chosen by you—”

“Draco,” he shot her a look as she cut him off again, “You are with me. We’re married. We love each other. I chose you already.” Hermione took his vow hand, a jolt of electricity running up her arm. “I love you,” she said for the thousandth time that evening alone. “You deserve me. And I deserve you. Because you make me happy.”

Draco squeezed her hand. “I...I’ll try to believe you. I don’t want to waste my chance at happiness, just like Snape said.”

“Snape?” Hermione asked in confusion.

Draco gave her a lop-sided smile. “The short version is that on Memorial Day he told me to forgive myself and tell you how I feel. To not waste my chance at happiness, like he did.”

Hermione nodded, thinking of Lily Potter and Snape’s doomed friendship/Snape’s unrequited love/Snape’s unhealthy obsession [sorry, I am not a Snape fan]. “For once, Snape is not wrong. And Draco...I wouldn’t love you if I thought you didn’t deserve to be loved. The only reason it took me so long to admit my feelings was because I didn’t want the marriage law to be right—that we are each other’s perfect match. And, I mean, it takes a lot to be that vulnerable.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yes.”

“How long have you loved me?” Draco demanded to know.

Hermione smiled. “I’m not 100% sure. I’ve never really been *in* love before and it took me a good long while to realize what was happening to me...but since Memorial Day maybe. When you went missing and I lost it—I realized how much I actually care about you.”

Draco trailed his thumb across her knuckles.

“And you? When did you realize?”

“About a month after we got married,” he confessed a light blush on his cheeks.

“That early?” she asked, surprised.

Draco lifted a shoulder. “I was doomed from the start really. Maybe even our wedding night...I think I’ve been attracted to you for far longer than I’ve ever been consciously aware of.”

“Since when?” Hermione was intrigued.

“I will say, getting slapped in the face in third year was definitely a strange turn on.”

Hermione and Draco shared a laugh. When they both sobered a bit, Hermione said seriously, “I know it’s not as easy as me saying you deserve me and you’ll just believe it. But I mean it, Malfoy. You do deserve me. And I hope you realize that sooner rather than later.” Draco stared down at Crookshanks who was snoozing happily. “And maybe you should think about going to therapy to help work through your feelings...”

Draco sighed heavily. “Yeah. Maybe I should. But maybe you should too since you can’t seem to come to grips with your own emotions.”

Hermione scoffed at him. Though, he did have a point. Instead of acknowledging his point, Hermione kissed Draco sweetly, then rearranged them so that Draco was spooning Hermione, who was spooning Crookshanks. Draco's hand lay over Hermione's side and was petting Crookshanks softly as the three of them fell asleep.

"I love you, Draco," Hermione mumbled. "You deserve me."

"I love you too, Hermione." He kissed her shoulder and the family drifted off into unconsciousness.

They were a bit ridiculous for a while after that. Before, they rarely had public displays of affection, but now. Now, Draco could not keep his hands to himself whenever she was around him. He kissed her chastely in public, his hands roamed over her body—it was all rather innocent: a shoulder, a respectable spot on her hip, holding her hand, rarely grabbing her bum—but it was *constant*. Hermione loved it.

Hermione was slightly better than him, but barely. She did not usually reach for him first, but she did often pull him into a locked and silenced loo and shove her hands down his pants—so who's to say if she was actually better than him or not.

Their sexual desires did cool slightly after the summer came to an end. But they spent a wild, hot summer, feverishly exploring one another's bodies and their sexual desires (Draco had almost an entire audiobook of *Hogwarts: A History* at the point). They always slept together. After another month of staying in Draco's room, Hermione officially moved into it, bringing her things with her. Draco had more than enough space to accommodate her things, though he was less than pleased that Crookshanks was now a permanent fixture on his sheets.

Draco and Hermione both went to therapy like mature adults. And Draco did eventually feel like he deserved her, though that didn't happen for a couple years.

Hermione continued to help Draco study, two nights a week. He did his best to distract her by having his way with her in the library, but Hermione would have none of it and forced him to focus so that he would ace his law exam. They also continued their research to overturn the marriage law, though it was half-hearted, since they had no interest in ending their marriage. Draco continued to tutor her in occlumency and Hermione became passable at it over time, but she would forever gripe about how she would never be as good as him—*stupid natural occlumens*. Draco never had trouble reading her emotions, even when Hermione tried to occlude.

Narcissa and Andromeda reconnected, with the help of Harry and Hermione. Things were still awkward, but Hermione could tell Draco enjoyed having family. Seeing him with Teddy also did something to her—Draco would make an excellent father.

Draco brought Hermione to Spain for her birthday, treating her to wine and delicious food while they stayed in his villa.

In late September, when Draco broached the topic of Hermione going off of her contraception potion, they had a heated argument. She refused to get pregnant because of the Ministry. She also wanted to wait to be pregnant until after Draco was through most of his law school program because she wanted him to be a present father, which was harder to achieve when one was drowning in legal texts and courses. Draco was adamant that he would be there for his children. Hermione was adamant that she was waiting.

Their friends had started getting pregnant already—Ginny was during the Ministry summer ball, not that she knew (this caused a whole hubbub since she was not due to start trying until after the quidditch season and was suddenly benched right when the Harpies were doing so well in the playoffs. Angelina was beyond pissed when the Harpies did not advance to the finals, largely because Ginny was not playing). Pansy and Luna had just found out they were both pregnant as well.

When Draco tried to reason that they would face severe fines from the Ministry of Magic and potential jail time, Hermione threw back that he would be an excellent lawyer and ensure that they stayed out of Azkaban. As for fines, they had more than enough money. Their lack of baby was reported on far too frequently by one Lavender Brown in the society pages, which did nothing to help the tension between the couple. Their pregnancy argument popped up frequently as the months progressed, it was the only real thing that they actually fought over. Draco had to spend a few nights on the couch when their argument got too heated.

Draco sat the law exam in November and found out in December that he passed with flying colours. Hermione helped him with his application to Oxford's magical law school. He applied to the accelerated program, so that he could finish in 1.5 years, instead of 3. Hermione tried to talk him out of it, but he was insistent that if she wanted to wait for him to be done school to get pregnant, he would finish school as fast as humanly possible. Hermione found his dedication to academics to be a turn on, and went down on him promptly after he submitted his application.

Hermione rung in 2016 the only woman in her friend group not pregnant. She enjoyed being able to get drunk with the men. Part of her was envious of her friends, though. She did want children. But she wanted them on her own terms.

For Valentine's Day (Draco took her on a surprise trip to Kyoto for a week), Draco re-proposed to her, stating that he felt they deserved a real wedding built in love. Hermione had sobbed, then made love to him for hours—they barely saw Kyoto, but they did see a lot of their hotel room. The wedding was scheduled for the next summer.

As the anniversary of the marriage law approached, Hermione and Draco threw themselves into their appeal. Hermione took to the Wizengamot floor 365 days after her first attempt at an appeal, this time, far more armed with research and evidence. When she was questioned about her own marriage, she expertly pivoted to the crux of the problem—the lack of autonomy. The Wizengamot did not appear swayed until Hermione pointed out a more pragmatic problem: what would magical society do when there were hundreds of new babies, all of the same age? Births needed to be spread out more, or there would be serious social issues to contend with like staffing Hogwarts, housing, jobs, and their precious *economy*. She made a compelling comparison with the Baby Boom which was having real negative

implications for an aging population. Hermione also emphasize the need for a robust magical population now—not in 17 years from now. The second prong of their argument was to increase magical immigration incentives and bring in an adult labour force.

One week after the appeal, Hermione received the news in the form of Harry calling her and interrupting a rather inappropriate moment with Draco (in Harry's defense, she was at work and Draco should not have been doing what he was doing to her on her desk, during work hours...). Draco took a lot of convincing to remove his head from between her legs. Harry, exuberant, informed her that they overturned the law. But they were keeping incentives in place and were even going to publish a suggested time frame for pregnancies to stagger the birth rate. People were welcome to enter into the compatibility program, on a voluntary basis—since this part of the program had been such a success. Immigration incentives were being proposed as well. As soon as Hermione hung up the phone, Draco got right back to work, congratulating her on her hard work. Hermione was thankful for her silencing charms.

As their friends starting giving birth, Hermione became even busier—named as a godparent to far too many children. She loved spending time with the babies though, and gave the tired parents nights off as much as she could manage between supporting Draco, fucking Draco, and managing her own ridiculous workload—the magical internet was a time-consuming task.

Hermione took her annual “allowance” (Draco refused to stop giving it to her and had convinced her to take 1 million a year after a few contract days where she had agreed to do “whatever you want, *Draco, please!*”) and showered her friends and family with money. She paid for a trip for her parents to Japan. She bought Arthur Weasley a new car and completely renovated the Burrow. She invested in George's shop. She renovated Grimmauld Place, adding in more windows especially. Her friends reacted to her generosity in strange ways, some accepting (Ginny and Harry), some fighting (Arthur, Molly, and her own parents), some (Ron and George) demanding more. Hermione was happy to throw the Malfoy money at her friends—it wasn't like the Malfoys earned it fairly anyway.

Draco and Hermione posed for their family portrait. It hung in the library nestled between two overburdened shelves. Sometimes, Hermione would find Draco talking to her portrait self and he'd flush in embarrassment. He would never tell her what they talked about. Other times, she would walk in on their portrait selves being entirely indecent with one another. Their behaviour was hilarious until Draco pointed out that his mother visited often—that resulted in them having to tell off their painted selves to at least go to a non-public area to bang (they were rarely found in their frame after that conversation).

September 2016, Draco started law school and had the grace to admit that Hermione was right to wait to have a child. He was busy beyond imagination and they barely saw one another outside of bed time hours and the library. Seeing him study was endearing for Hermione, but he was so distracted, they barely even had sex—that's how heavy his workload was. It was a taxing time, but Hermione was proud of his dedication and studying together was basically foreplay for them so, it wasn't all bad.

In February of 2017, Hermione put in her transfer application to the Department of Mysteries. It had taken her nearly a year and half, but she had managed to create a version of

the magical internet. She also felt that her department was adequately equipped to keep up her work and keep improving the network without her there. The Department of Mysteries accepted her into their shockingly well-lit sublevel in May (their library *was* 10-storeys high, disappearing into the gloomy, magically extended ceiling). Hermione began work on the integration of muggle technologies and magic—moving into extremely complex theories far beyond anything the Muggle Liaison Office could handle. She was excited beyond belief with the prospect of a career in researching the unexplored.

Draco and Hermione renewed their handfasting the summer of 2017. This time, they made sure to vow to love one another “from this day, until my last”. The ceremony was even more beautiful than their first one, since this time Narcissa actually wanted the wedding to happen. The vow was more powerful than the first time, and Hermione and Draco absconded to their suite while their friends and family pretended not to notice their 2-hour (!!!) absence from the wedding.

Hermione, now accepting that she was actually a billionaire, made Draco read the book: *The myth of the ethical billionaire*. He slowly but surely joined her in her mission to get rid of their wealth through giving back to others. Draco insisted they must remain millionaires and keep the properties, if only to set their children up for success. Hermione considered this a win, since he agreed to divest of any of his wealth.

In January 2018, almost three years after they got married, Draco graduated from law school. Hermione hooted and hollered as he crossed the graduation stage. Narcissa was even on her feet, cheering with a wide smile on her face. Hermione threw Draco a family friendly graduation party, everyone bringing along their young children, eating, laughing, and celebrating having a free lawyer in the family.

When everyone finally went home that night, Draco tried to make Hermione go off the potion, claiming he had fulfilled his part of the bargain. Hermione relented. She was pregnant two months later. Narcissa lost her damn mind when she saw Hermione and Draco’s new wedding bands—demanding to know when Hermione was due.

Draco, to Narcissa’s joy, opened a law office in Diagon Alley. They debated the name for a long time, since Malfoy and Sons didn’t quite work anymore. Draco had been living as Draco Malfoy-Granger for years. Not to mention, according to Hermione’s latest doctor’s appointment, they were having a girl. He finally settled on Malfoy and Associates, hopeful that the business would grow to include some of his law school friends and other leading lawyers in discrimination law—that was Draco’s specialty, anti-discrimination. Hermione had all but lost it when he had told her he had decided on his specialization mid-way through law school.

Draco was both a nightmare and a godsend during Hermione’s pregnancy. He was distracted by setting up his new law office, for one. For two, he was more anxious than she was about the baby, constantly asking if she had eaten enough, done enough exercise for the day, had her vitamins. He’d sic Flopsy on her to do the most menial non-dangerous tasks...But then he would literally wait on her hand and foot. He would carry her from room to room, cook her special desserts, buy her rare books and presents for their daughter. He turned Hermione’s old

room into their daughter's nursery and packed it to the brim with everything a child could ever possibly need (and then some).

Draco was a mess when Hermione gave birth on December 10, 2018. The birth was, according to Ginny, very easy. Hermione found it anything but easy, but she forgot anything about it at all when her daughter was gently placed into her arms by the healer.

Ara Rose Granger-Malfoy.

Draco and Hermione had tears running down their cheeks as they gazed down at the newest member of their family.

Thursday, October 31, 2025

Hermione bustled down Diagon Alley, tugging along four-year-old Scorpius in one hand and resting her hand on the back of one-year-old Cassiopeia who was in her carrier strapped across Hermione's front. Ara was walking along beside her siblings, taking in the lively street with interest. Hermione had just picked them up from their day care in Horizont Alley. Draco was busy wrapping up a client meeting and had asked her to do pick up for him. She had begrudgingly agreed because he promised to make it up to her by a) shagging her senseless, and b) making the kids breakfast the following day so that she could sleep in. Draco was usually on dinners, but since it was a holiday the following day, he was able to help out more in the morning. (Flopsy helped of course, but after a heated argument wherein Hermione explained the importance of children seeing humans do chores, not just elves and that their children would learn how to provide for themselves, Draco had to learn the ins and outs of cooking. He did dinner, and she did breakfast since she left later than him and got home later than him.)

"Mommmmm, can we please stop at Uncle George's? I really want a pygmy puff and he said he'd give me one for free," Ara begged again, turning her brown eyes on Hermione.

"No, sweetheart. We're running late. Besides, you know that pygmy puffs bother Crookshanks."

Ara looked longingly at the joke shop slightly further down the alley. "He just doesn't understand that they could be best friends. If I just explain it to him... Please, mom!" Ara begged.

"No."

"Mom," Scorpius asked, turning his silver eyes on her.

"Yes, sweetie?"

"Can I have pick-me puff?"

Hermione laughed.

“It’s pig-me,” Ara over-pronounced for Scorpius.

“Pigk-me,” Scorpius tried again.

“What about Aunt Pansy and Aunt Astoria’s and Aunt Daphne’s?” Ara asked instead. “They always give me candies.” Ara had a sweet tooth—to Hermione’s parents’ horror.

“Ara, you’ll be getting plenty candy tonight.” *Besides, their boudoir photos office is hardly an appropriate place for children,* Hermione added in her mind.

The children had been there a few times, remaining in the lobby that didn’t display any naughty photos. It had still felt bizarre. All the children knew was that their aunts took photos for adults. The women had done a series of free couple’s shots for all their friend group. Hermione and Draco had one framed in their walk-in closet—charmed against prying eyes. The women really were skilled and Draco looked all sorts of sexy in it. Hermione looked at the photo every morning when she got dressed.

They had reached their destination. In front of them sat Draco’s pristine law office, declaring: Granger, Malfoy & Associates. Ara had bullied him into changing the name two years ago because she did not think it was fair that only the Malfoy side would be represented in the business, especially if she was “going to be inheriting it someday.” Ara had a lot of her father in her—she was spoiled. And Draco had real issues not giving Ara everything her greedy little heart asked for (which was a source of fights between the couple), so, he changed the name within a week of her request.

The façade of the business had large windows and deep brown wood. Hanging in the windows were pumpkins and bats that Ara, Scorpius, and their other friends’ children had cut out.

Ara opened the door for her siblings and mother. Hermione shuffled them all inside and sighed as the warmth of the office assaulted her. The lobby was empty, the large comfortable seats calling her name.

Josie came out from the back upon hearing the bell tinkle and greeted them with a smile. “Need a hand, Hermione?” she asked.

“No, that’s fine.” Hermione let Scorpius run free. He bolted right down the hallway toward his father’s office without pause. Ara greeted Josie politely and wished her a happy Halloween before following in her brother’s foot steps.

“You look beat.”

Hermione sighed and leaned on Josie’s desk. “Cassie didn’t sleep well last night,” she explained, stroking the baby’s hair.

“Draco said. Teething is the worst.”

Hermione agreed with a head nod. “Anyway, I’m here to pick up my husband. Happy Halloween,” Hermione wished Josie, then ambled off down the hallway.

It was littered with newspaper clippings from their successful cases over the years; werewolf rights, prosecuting neo-Death Eaters, squib rights, dragon poaching, house elf rights...

Hermione leaned on Draco's open door frame and took a moment to luxuriate in the wholesome picture before her. Scorpius was on his lap playing with an action figure that Draco kept in his office for the child. Ara had found her way onto his desk, her legs dangling, and was chattering at him about her absolute *need* for a pygmy puff. She was playing with her blond braids, her curls escaping after a day running around at day care.

Draco kissed Scorpius' wild head of platinum blonde curls while Hermione watched on. He looked up and saw her in the door.

"Hello, my love," Draco greeted. "Come, sit. I'll take Cassie. You look exhausted, darling."

Draco stood, holding Scorpius easily in one of his muscled arms while the child giggled and continued playing with his toy. Draco took Cassie from Hermione and held her in his free arm. Then, he kissed Hermione's forehead, followed by Cassie's.

Hermione sighed. "I love you," she murmured and collapsed into one of his expensive armchairs.

Draco was truly an excellent father to their children and care giver (to her), something she was eternally thankful for during the long nights of no sleep, the endless diaper changes, and the tantrums over toys. He sat back down on his desk chair, holding Cassie in one arm. She played with his hair while Scorpius readjusted himself on Draco's lap.

"What's that photo from, dad?" Scorpius asked, pointing at the wedding photo Draco kept on his desk.

Draco smiled, his arms full of children. "That's from the second time your mother and I got married."

"Second time?"

"Can you believe it?" Ara declared. "These two got married two times. What *weirdos*!"

Scorpius giggled along with Ara. "Weirdos!" he squealed in delight.

Hermione and Draco's eyes landed on one another across the room. "Weirdos in love," Draco corrected his son. "One day, I hope you'll meet someone you love as much as I love your mother. As much as I love all three of you!"

Ara struggled to climb onto Draco's over-burdened lap, and—impossibly—succeeded. Draco kissed all their children on the cheeks, making them squeal, and making baby Cassie laugh in her pure little voice.

Both Ara and Scorpius inherited Draco's blond hair. All three children had Hermione's curls, though slightly tamer. Only Cassie had brown hair like Hermione. Scorp and Cassie had Draco's eyes while Ara had Hermione's. All the children inherited Hermione's nose and her light brown skin.

Hermione fumbled for her phone and snapped a photo before the cuteness ended. Draco glanced at her and threw her a wink. Hermione's chest warmed. She loved him so much.

"Okay, family," Draco declared once their squeals of delight had calmed down, "I think we're supposed to be headed out to trick or treat with the horde, aren't we?"

Draco called their friends and their families "the horde" and Hermione loved it. There were a veritable horde of them by that point, Harry and Ginny had two kids, Ron and Pansy had four, Luna and Blaise had one, George and Angelina had three, and Astoria and Theo had two. Sometimes even Daphne and Roger joined them, with their two kids. Then if Hermione's other friends (not connected by the Slytherins), like Neville and Hannah and their one child, or Seamus and Romilda and their *five* joined, things really got out of hand. And that was without even counting all the Weasleys.

(As a complete aside, Draco had come up with a nickname for George: Draco would call George a new G-name every time he saw him, they got increasingly obscure as the years wore on (Günter was a personal favourite of George's). Draco had to purchase several baby name books and keep a tally of which names he had yet to call George. George loved Draco's dedication to a subpar joke. The two were good friends by that point.)

Hermione forced her friends to participate in the muggle tradition of trick or treating—the children had fallen in love. The parents had varying reactions to the event, but mostly enjoyed the free candy. Now, every Halloween, the horde headed out to the muggle suburbs dressed in their fairy/witch/Iron Man/princess/pirate costumes and caused a ruckus.

"Did you get the pumpkin buckets?" Hermione asked over Ara's please for a pygmy puff.

Draco nodded and pointed with his head at the table beside her. Hermione looked at the buckets she hadn't noticed before. She was really exhausted. She hadn't been so tired since she was pregnant with Cassie.

"Thank you, love," she replied.

"And do we have all of our costumes ready for tonight?" Draco asked the children before him.

"Yes!" Scorpius and Ara screamed. Cassie joined in, not sure why she was shouting.

"Can we go home now? Please! I want to put on my scientist outfit!" Ara declared.

"I'm a pumpkin!" Scorpius added. "Just like grandpa always calls me!"

Draco laughed at them. "Okay, hop off. We'll take the Floo together in a moment."

Draco walked to his office door and called down to Josie, "Happy Halloween, Josie! We're Flooing home. See you on Monday."

"Happy Halloween, Draco!" she shouted back.

Draco closed his office door and warded it with a few flicks of his wand, balancing Cassie in his other arm. Scorpius and Ara waited impatiently by the Floo chatting with one another about their favourite Halloween candies. Hermione remained seated, relishing in the moment to relax.

Draco made his way to her and helped her to her feet. He kissed her on the cheek. “Do you need to stay in tonight?” he asked quietly.

Hermione rested her head on his chest, cocooning Cassie between them. “No. I’m fine. I just need some caffeine.”

“Oh right.” Draco turned to his desk, grabbed a coffee cup (filled with her favourite black tea) and handed it to her. “I got this for you.”

Hermione grinned at him. “You are the best husband.” She kissed him.

“Ew!” Ara and Scorpius shouted.

The parents ignored their children and continued to kiss chastely. Scorpius began tugging on Hermione’s hand to get her attention. She pulled away from Draco’s lips. He kissed her cheek instead while Hermione turned her attention to their son.

“Yes, we’re going, sweetie. Sometimes mommy and daddy need a moment to themselves,” Hermione reminded them.

“I need to change!” Ara replied. “It’s almost dark and I need to look perfect so that I get all the treats!”

“Ara,” Hermione warned. “Watch your tone.” Ara huffed and crossed her arms.

Draco guided Hermione to the Floo. “Okay, come here, family. Hold tight onto me,” he ordered briskly in the voice that Hermione had dubbed “Daddy Draco.” It wasn’t sexual (that was Dom Draco), but it held all the authority and love of a dad. While he was a push over, Draco could lay down the law when he needed to.

Draco swirled them all to their ever expanding flat. Luckily, whatever magic Isla had placed on the apartment meant that adding and changing rooms to meet their growing family had been fairly painless.

While the children went to their rooms and got changed, Draco dressed Cassie, and Hermione lounged on the sofa, consuming her caffeine. She was getting a bit of a headache. *Must be my period*, she thought offhandedly.

Hermione sat bolt upright. “No.”

She cast the pregnancy charm right as Draco strolled into the room looking absolutely ravishing as a vampire (specifically Spike, from *Buffy*), holding Cassie who was a bumblebee. Draco’s eyes fell to the pink light floating around Hermione’s stomach then back to her face. His eyes widened.

“No,” he declared, but he was grinning ear to ear.

Hermione pressed a shaky hand to her forehead. She cast the spell again. “I guess we know why I’m so tired,” she finally said.

Draco was on her in seconds, Cassie pressed delicately between them while he kissed her fervently. “Do you think we’ll have another boy? You women are outnumbering me here.”

Hermione was tearing up. “I thought you only wanted two children total.”

Draco shrugged. “That was until I saw what beautiful children we make, wife.” Draco kissed her again. Then he kissed Cassie’s forehead. She giggled. “I thought you wanted four.”

“I...” Hermione was still crying, overcome with emotion.

Draco looked at her in concern. “Do you not want...”

“Mom,” Cassie called, placing a hand on Hermione’s face in concern over the tears. “Mom sad?”

Hermione kissed her hand. “No. I’m happy, Cassie.” To Draco, she said, “I’m happy. I want it.” Hermione kissed Draco again. “I want it. But four is the last one. My poor body is already ruined from childbirth,” she muttered.

“Your body is perfect,” Draco murmured against her lips.

Hermione smiled. “You’re just saying that.”

“Hermione, love, you are the most beautiful woman in this world.”

Hermione grinned at him. “You’re not bad yourself.”

“Whatever, wife. We all know, you’re head over heels for this fantastic body.”

Hermione laughed and nodded. “I am.”

“Anyway, four has to be our limit,” Draco commented. “It’s in the contract.”

Hermione laughed throatily. Cassie joined in, not following what was going on, but mirroring her mother. Hermione was suddenly being dog-piled by a scientist and a pumpkin.

“Mom!”

“You didn’t change yet! We’re going to be late! *Mom!*”

Draco gracefully distracted the children while Hermione quickly changed into her vampire hunter costume (aka Buffy). It was simple, but clung to her body and she had stakes strapped to her leather harnesses. When she returned to the living room, the children were jumping on the sofa and Draco was as well. He stopped when he saw her, his eyes lighting with desire at her formfitting outfit.

“Photo time,” Hermione declared. She set up her phone and everyone posed for a series of photos, laughing and smiling and kissing one another.

“Can we go now, mom?” Scorpius whined.

Hermione put away her phone, handed out the pumpkin buckets, and helped Draco strap Cassie across his chest. He had wordlessly taken the baby to give Hermione a break, since she was newly pregnant and all. He was going to be insufferable again once the news really sunk in. She looked forward to it in a strange way.

“To the horde!” Draco declared.

The kids joined him, shouting about hordes and trick or treating and pick-me puffs. Draco kissed her deeply—the children complaining about gross adults and kissing—before they all stepped into the Floo to join their friends.

*

Fin.

Chapter End Notes

I don't know who's keeping track, but at their wedding, Draco calls her friends a “horde” when they all dance with her and I just felt the need to bring it back. Also, Hermione's dad calls her pumpkin—so he also calls his grandkids pumpkin. So cute.

Draco as a dad brings joy to heart and heat to my loins.

Writing this last chapter was probably my favourite. the summary of their lives alone could be two follow-up fics. I see so much in their lives and just love them together. But really I like writing the pining, denial, lead up and rarely go beyond that. But who, knows, maybe some spin offs to come.

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Wow. What a whirlwind. Like I said in chapter one, this fic has been sitting all lonely in a dusty folder on my computer for years. I never thought I would finish it and here I am. Done! Thank you all for reading and reviewing. I really enjoy your comments and it's heartwarming to know that others enjoy my antics. I always have dreams of doing spin-offs for fics I write, but given that this one was neglected for a good five years, maybe don't get your hopes up. I am constantly writing at least 3 fanfics at a time which is never the best move to make, but here we are.

I will say, I have one unfinished (and potentially abandoned one) about a Uni (muggle) AU--not sure if there's interest. It might motivate me to finish it if there is, so let me know. NottPott is the side-pairing.

The other one that I am writing obsessively is about dragons--Draco is a dragon changeling type creature and he has amnesia, enter, Hermione, dragon wrangler. I think that one will probably be published first, but I'm only a 1/4 in so far, so it will be a while. That one also has a shocking amount of plot, which is a fun deviation for me XD!

I will also be editing my Veela fic because I re-read it recently, and girl needs some editing. Bhahaha! But, when I finish that edit, I will post it all at once, so might be a few months as well.

Writing brings me joy and Dramione will forever live in my heart rent free thanks to the lovely fanfic community. Thank you all again for reading, it means a lot!

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