

Terms of Surrender

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Terms of Surrender

by [Cronebutcute](#)

Summary

Trapped by the Ministry's new Marriage Law, Hermione Granger has one way out: if her marriage remains unconsummated, she'll have two years to find a partner of her choosing—or repeal the law entirely. All she has to do is endure six months. Simple.

Except her assigned husband is Draco Malfoy.

Her world begins to twist—memories blur, sleep disappears, and nothing feels like her own anymore. But she just has to make it to June. Six months. Freedom.

Unless Draco Malfoy has other plans.

It started in winter

The Daily Prophet

NEW UNITY MARRIAGE ACCORD SIGNED INTO LAW: Minister Shacklebolt Declares "A Path to Rebuilding"

The Wizarding Herald

**LAW TO STABILIZE BLOODLINES AND EQUALIZE INHERITANCE:
All Witches of Eligible Age To Be Matched by Year's End**

The Evening Scry

Harmony Before History: Golden Trio's Granger Among First Matched

Daily Prophet

October 1

NEW UNITY MARRIAGE ACCORD SIGNED INTO LAW

By Barnabas Cuffe, Editor-in-Chief

In a historic moment for post-war Wizarding Britain, Minister for Magic Kingsley Shacklebolt signed the Unity Marriage Accord into law on Sunday morning, declaring the new measure "a necessary step in ensuring magical stability, civic equality, and the restoration of confidence in our shared future."

The law empowers the Ministry's Department of Lineage and Family Affairs to facilitate eligible unions between witches and wizards aged 21–45, with emphasis on magical compatibility, bloodline balancing, and strategic legacy-building.

"After war," Shacklebolt said in his address, "there must be not only peace—but partnership."

The first wave of pairings is set to be announced within days. Matches are legally binding for a minimum of six months and will be reviewed thereafter. The Accord includes safeguards around conjugal consent, housing privacy, and name retention—though critics say the real test will come in implementation.

Daily Prophet

December 28

HISTORIC MATCH: Hermione Granger Assigned to Draco Malfoy Under Marriage Accord

By Iona Fleet, Senior Correspondent

In a turn of events few could have predicted, war heroine and Order of the Phoenix alumna Hermione Granger has been assigned to Draco Malfoy, heir of one of Britain's oldest and most controversial pureblood families.

Sources inside the Department of Magical Records confirm that the Granger-Malfoy pairing ranked extraordinarily high in magical compatibility and "lineal balance." The match is expected to be symbolic as well as practical, marking the first official joining of a Muggle-born and a former Death Eater household under the new Accord.

Neither party has given formal comment, though statements issued on their behalf stress compliance and cooperation.

"This pairing represents the spirit of unity at the heart of this law," said Undersecretary Wendel Kinross. "A bridging of divides. A commitment to healing."

Wedding proceedings are expected within the fortnight.

The Daily Prophet

MALFOY-GRANGER MATCH ANNOUNCED: Former Rivals to Unite in Historic Pairing

The Quibbler

Ministry Law or Mind Control? Granger-Malfoy Union Raises Eyebrows and Wards

It was a room made for bureaucratic violence

Airless, overcharmed, with surveillance spells twitching in the corners and floating quills scratching like mosquitoes desperate to catch your worst decision in ink. The grate fire crackled uselessly behind a Ministry seal. Someone had tried to make the place soothing. They'd failed.

Hermione didn't bother hiding her disgust.

She sat ramrod straight, arms folded, jaw tight. Her robes were elegant well-tailored—but grey, her least favorite set. A deliberate signal. This wasn't celebration. This wasn't surrender. This was a legal requirement she'd step into and *survive*. Six months. That was all.

And across the table sat Draco Malfoy—composed, immaculate, completely *at ease*.

His dove-grey robes were pressed to perfection, his blond hair combed with effortlessness she hated. He looked like he'd dressed for a party, not a forced contract reading. His cuff glinted faintly when he moved, and Merlin help her, their robes almost matched.

She wanted to hex herself for it, she should have picked red.

He looked unbothered. Worse—he looked *amused*. Like he belonged here. Like this farce of a contract was a game he'd already won.

Beside her, Percy was muttering about legal contingencies, voice tense. He'd rolled up his sleeves. His scrolls were marked and smudged with corrections. He was trying—he *cared*—and she still barely heard a word he said.

It was all static under her pulse.

“...autonomy, of course, clause fourteen—residential privacy, including the right to refuse—”

“Oh for Merlin's sake, Percy,” Hermione snapped. “Just write down that I don't want to share a bedroom and move on.”

Percy frowned. “Hermione, it's not that simple—”

"It is if everyone here stops pretending this is about love or even long term. It's six months. That's it."

A quiet rustle from the other side. Malfoy's solicitor—a man with the world's smuggest spectacles—began flipping parchment.

"If Miss Granger intends to wait out the term," he said, tone perfectly polite, "perhaps we skip to core clauses and estate matters? No need to labor through details she's not contesting."

"I'm not contesting anything," Hermione said flatly. "I just want it over with."

Percy glanced at her sharply, then back at the solicitor. "We'd still like time to—"

"No," Hermione cut in. "We don't."

There was a pause. Then—

"Very well," said the solicitor, already annotating. "Miss Granger will retain exclusive quarters. She waives all claims on Malfoy ancestral property except in case of consummation as outlined. Six-month compensation in case of failure to. No obligations. No expectations unless the marriage is legitimized."

"Fine," she said.

"Waives future claims on inheritance disputes."

"Fine."

"Accepts naming traditions in the event of issue—"

"Whatever," she muttered.

Percy actually looked like he might vomit.

The solicitor didn't miss a beat. "And lastly, Lord Malfoy makes no demands for a public wedding. The bonding ceremony may be private, with minimal witnesses. In exchange, Miss Granger will wear the traditional *courting bracelet* of House Malfoy, effective immediately. She will wear the wedding ring after the binding next week. And refrain from speaking ill of the Family or Intentionally damage the Malfoy name as long as it's hers too"

Hermione blinked. "That's all?"

"Yes," said the solicitor, already sealing the scroll. "A bracelet and a ring. No further ceremonial requirements."

She almost laughed. "Fine. If it gets me out of here."

There was a final rustle. The floating quills paused in midair. The charm sealed with a snap of golden light, and the scroll rolled itself shut with a decisive *click*.

It was done.

She stood without looking at Malfoy, intent on leaving before her legs betrayed how much her knees were shaking.

But then—

“Wait.”

She froze.

He was standing too. Calm. Smiling faintly. And holding something small and golden in his hand.

The bracelet was delicate, ancient, and unmistakably enchanted—gold paved in a million of glinting diamonds. It shimmered faintly whenever light struck it. Like it *recognized her*.

“I’d prefer to place it,” he said mildly. “If you don’t mind.”

She stared at him. “Seriously?”

“I could have insisted on getting on my knees,” he said, voice soft. “But I thought you might appreciate the abridged version.”

Every muscle in her body screamed to walk away. But if this was his price for keeping the wedding private—well. Let him play lordling.

“Fine,” she said. “Get on with it.”

She held out her wrist like it was a dead animal.

He took it like it was a gift.

His fingers were careful. Cool. He didn’t rush. The bracelet slid over her skin like a whisper, the clasp sealing with a *click* that echoed far too loud in the airless room.

“There,” he said, stepping back. “You’re officially mine.”

Hermione didn’t reply. She didn’t give him the satisfaction.

She simply turned and walked out—grey robes swirling, her new bracelet burning cold against her skin.

Ministry Chamber 3-C

January A week later

It smelled like parchment, mildew, and old cigarettes.

The kind of room where files were misfiled and people got quietly fired. Not married.

Ministry Chamber 3-C had yellowing walls and an old buzzing charm embedded in the fake windows that mimicked daylight—but flickered every few minutes like it was winking at the absurdity of what was about to happen. The chairs were bolted to the floor. The desk had Ministry tags from the First War. The wastebin was half-full of shredded decrees and stale biscuits.

No one got married here.

Certainly not a war heroine.

Certainly not an heir of an ancient house.

Draco didn't bother turning when the door opened. He heard her steps first—measured, crisp, too sharp to be bridal. A perfect tempo of contempt.

Hermione Granger stepped into the chamber like she was walking into a duel.

Pink robes. No jewels but the bracelet around her wrist. No softness in her face. Just that furious calm that had always made her dangerous.

At least they didn't match his this time, Draco thought.

He watched her from the edge of his vision.

She was alone, of course.

Narcissa Malfoy, already standing near the officiant's desk, turned with the composed disdain she usually reserved for second-rate opera singers and low-rent aristocracy. Her voice, when it came, was all civility wrapped in ice.

"My son said you preferred something modest," she murmured. "But I confess, I imagined something a touch more... warm. Friends. Family."

Hermione didn't flinch. Didn't answer. She walked right past them, not sparing even a glance for the seating area, such as it was—three creaking chairs and a chipped tea set no one had touched.

Narcissa's head tilted, polite as a knife. "No one from your side, then?"

Kingsley stepped forward, clearly hoping to defuse the moment. “I’m here on behalf of her, Lady Malfoy. I’m acting as witness—”

“Oh,” Narcissa said, almost indulgent. “*You.*” She smiled faintly. “Yes, of course. The Minister himself. That’s quite the honor.”

There was a pause.

Then Hermione turned her head.

And carved the room open.

“I didn’t want anyone I cared about here,” she said. “I’m saving my friends’ time for better occasions.”

The silence that followed wasn’t awkward—it was *cut*.

Kingsley’s jaw clenched. Percy blinked like someone had slapped him with a summons. Narcissa’s smile held. Slightly brighter, now. Slightly crueler.

Draco didn’t react. Not outwardly.

Inside, he was humming.

That’s my girl.

She didn’t know it yet. Not really. But she would.

Soon.

Hermione moved to the center of the room without prompting, her chin high, her hands clasped so tightly in front of her they might’ve snapped. The bracelet on her wrist had been resized that morning by house-elf magic. It still felt wrong. Cold.

She hadn’t said more than four words to Malfoy since arbitration.

She hadn’t needed to.

He stood next to her, unmoving. Immaculate. Black robes threaded with barely-there silver, subtle and cold and expensive. Not flashy. Not warm. Just... precise.

Like he was dressing for a funeral.

Fitting.

Kingsley stood off to one side, Percy beside him—both of them looking like they wished they were anywhere else. On Malfoy’s side: Narcissa, unreadable as always, and Theodore Nott, dressed to be bored.

No family. No press. No celebration.

Just the bare-bones mandate of the law.

Just magic.

And then the contract appeared.

Silver-framed, blood-inked, and humming with enchantments. It floated in the center of the room like a blade waiting to fall.

Hermione's eyes darted to the time. She still had a pile of memos to reply too, if this moved along she could make a dent before dinner.

Just before the signatures, Malfoy moved.

She turned slightly, expecting him to speak.

Instead, he reached into his robes and pulled out a round velvet box.

Hermione blinked.

Even Kingsley raised an eyebrow.

Inside: a ring.

Not just a ring. Gold so fine it looked like lace made by faeries, set with sharp, clear diamonds arranged in a thorned halo. Ancient and brutal in its elegance. Inside the band—barely visible—was the Malfoy crest and today's date, etched like a prophecy.

"I had it altered," Malfoy murmured. "It's Russian. Late 18th century. The maker was rumored to be a changeling." He tilted the box slightly toward her. "you might like that, dear."

Hermione said nothing.

The contract hovered, glowing faintly. The spell was ready to seal.

"May I?" he asked.

She hesitated.

Then held out her hand.

The ring slid on with a hiss of magic—like a ward accepting its key. The metal was colder than she expected. She looked down. The bracelet on her wrist shimmered faintly in response, tightening.

Just that.

They signed.

Draco first, with deliberate strokes.

Then Hermione.

The magic caught instantly—spun gold and ember red—threads of light coiling at their ankles, their wrists, their throats. It didn’t burn, but it made her breath catch. Her name flared, then darkened, sealed into parchment like a brand.

She stepped back.

She was already thinking of the answers for the international wand regulation committee, the child education initiative that still hadn’t passed—

But Malfoy stepped forward.

And kissed her.

Full on the mouth. Public. Claiming. Not rough—no. That would have been easier to hate. This was *measured*. Soft. A press of lips that lasted too long to ignore and not long enough to stop.

There were gasps. Someone dropped a quill.

Hermione didn’t move.

She couldn’t.

The contract’s enchantment stirred at her throat, warm and tightening. Not punishing—yet. But ready. Watching. Waiting.

She had said nothing.

But if she had refused him...

If she’d pulled away, or flinched, or spoken—

She knew what the clause said.

Harmony must be preserved.

Draco pulled back with a satisfied hum, like a man placing a final piece on a chessboard.

He brushed her fingers once more, deliberately.

Then turned to speak to Theo and Narcissa.

The room began to clear.

Hermione straightened her shoulders. Nodded vaguely at Percy. Didn’t even look at Kingsley.

And then—quietly, without a word—Disapparated back to work.

Because she had bills to pass.

Because she had *a work to do*.

Because she refused to let this mean anything.

But her hand burned under the ring.

And her wrist ached.

Tracey Davis was elbow-deep in a half-dissected bill when Hermione walked in, heels clipping briskly across the tile. Her hair was smooth, her robes were well cut but not ostentatious, and her expression was—well. Alert. Polished. Focused.

Tracey blinked once. Then slowly sat back in her chair.

“...Hermione?”

Hermione dropped her satchel onto her desk with practiced grace. “Tracey.”

“I—weren’t you—” Tracey stood halfway, eyes darting to the enchanted calendar above their desks. “*Marrying Draco Malfoy today?*”

Hermione opened a drawer, pulled out a quill. “Mm. I already did.”

Tracey stared. “What, *today* today?”

“This morning. Ministry Room 3-C. Very romantic.” She raised an eyebrow.

“Wait—*really*? You’re *here*? You came *back to work*?”

Hermione looked up, deadpan. “Did you think I was taking the week off?”

Tracey opened her mouth. Closed it. Then walked slowly over to Hermione’s desk like she was approaching a cursed gauntlet.

“Okay, you look great. Like—not *that you don’t usually*, just—Haa it’s the pink you usually wear sober colors. But also...” She narrowed her eyes. “...shinier.”

Hermione blinked. “Shinier?”

Tracey pointed. “*That ring*.”

Hermione followed her gaze. The gold glinted faintly under the desk lamp, the thorned diamond setting throwing sharp little shadows across the parchment.

“Oh,” Hermione said, tilting her hand. “Yes. That.”

Tracey leaned in like a magpie spotting silver. “May I?”

Hermione actually liked Tracey. She wasn’t kind, exactly, but she was honest, and that counted for more.

“Go ahead.”

Tracey didn’t touch it, just held her hand and gasped softly. “Oh Merlin. That’s a one of a kind.”

“I figured,” Hermione said dryly.

“No, Hermione, that’s *an heirloom*. This is *late 18th century, Catherine the great, court*. You can find that design in the Malfoy oil portrait gallery—Rowena Malfoy wore this one on her official marriage portrait. Look at those edges—they’re cut to hold wards better, not just sparkle.” Her voice was half-worship, half-academic thrill. “This is not any ring. Are you sure the Malfoy heir doesn’t have a crush on you?”

Hermione laughed. Not kindly. “Probably showing off, then.”

Tracey straightened, still watching the ring like it might bite. “I don’t know, He could have picked any other piece.”

“It’s just an spectacle for the ministry.”

“Still,” Tracey said, turning back toward her desk, “A Malfoy groom, and a Black as a mother-in-law? Oof a lot. I mean, I’m betrothed, thank Morgana. My parents signed me off to the Flint family years ago. Terrible teeth, lovely estate. But I get to skip this entire Ministry matchmaking lottery nonsense.”

Hermione hummed. “Lucky you.”

Tracey looked at her again—really looked. “You sure you’re alright?”

Hermione smiled. Sharp. Bright. Almost convincing.

“I’m exactly where I’m meant to be.”

The words rang strange in her mouth. The ring shifted on her finger.

She went back to work.

The manor didn’t look like she remembered it.

It was less grand than terrifying—less because of its size than its *order*. Every sconce lit in symmetrical pairs. Every corridor lined with silent portraits. Even the shadows seemed to be in their proper places.

Hermione stepped through the threshold and immediately knew she had made a mistake.

The elves.

There were dozens here. Some she remembered from the war. But these weren't frightened, hopeful creatures. They didn't scurry, they didn't squeak, and they certainly didn't ask her how they could help.

They bowed—*stiffly*.

They called her “Mistress.”

Not *Miss Granger*.

As if someone had trained them to respect her—but not like her.

You could have negotiated their freedom, her conscience whispered.

But she hadn't. She'd been too focused on ignoring the whole thing. On getting out.

Six months, she'd told herself.

Just six months. She would be a free woman in June.

Dinner was served in one of the smaller salons. A room with floral wallpaper that probably passed for charming in another century.

Hermione said nothing the entire meal.

Draco filled the silence with ease.

“This is mother’s favorite soup,” he mused, swirling his spoon. “She thought parsnip and pear were a romantic pairing. Odd, don’t you think?”

No response.

“I had your rooms re-done in neutrals. I know you hate ostentation. Though I confess—” he reached across the table, fingers brushing hers lightly as he refilled her glass, “—I *am* hoping you’ll allow some personal touches. Eventually.”

She flinched at the contact. He didn't comment.

“Darling,” he said, not unkindly, “you should eat.”

She didn't.

He smiled like it didn't matter.

After dinner, he showed her to her rooms.

They were—of course—stunning. Cream walls, pale gold trim, tall windows that overlooked the eastern gardens. A canopy bed draped in silk the color of fog.

And a door.

A single polished door, perfectly centered on the far wall.

She didn't need to ask where it led.

“Just in case you ever want company,” he said, trailing his fingers along her braid. “I thought proximity might help with the awkwardness. It can be locked. From your side.”

Her heart pounded. The bracelet cooled on her wrist like a warning.

Malfoy turned to go, then paused.

Leaning in, he brushed a kiss against her cheek.

“Goodnight, love.”

She didn't cry.

Not while he was still there watching.

But once the door clicked shut—once she was alone with her silence, and the perfume of his cologne woven into her hair—Hermione sat on the edge of the bed, breathing like she'd run for miles.

Her wand was still in her pocket.

She dreamt.

Of voices.

Of silk binding her wrists.

Of someone whispering in her ear: “*Mine now. That's it. Good girl.*”

Of her own voice saying no—screaming it—and silence answering back.

When she woke, the room was too cold.

And the sheets smelled like fir.

Not detergent. Not flowers. *Fir.*

It clung to the pillows, to the duvet, to her skin. Stronger than before—like the scent had *sunk into her*, into her hair, her scalp, her wrists.

The bracelet on her arm pulsed once. Cold. Still.

Hermione threw the covers off.

She stripped the bed, yanked the linens down, flung open a tall window until icy air poured in. Then scrubbed her wrists raw at the basin with a charm that nearly stung the skin off.

Still fir.

Still him.

She stood shaking by the hearth, arms wrapped around herself. “Fire,” she muttered. “Please, Merlin, fire.”

Nothing.

The grate sat cold, pristine, empty.

She gritted her teeth. “Can someone light the fire, please?”

No response.

“Hello?” she called, louder. “An elf—someone—*please*.”

Silence.

Her jaw clenched. Her fingers were purple at the knuckles now, and the hem of her nightgown—no, not *hers*, she realized with a jolt—brushed her thighs like gossamer. It was *muslin*. Embroidered. *Delicate*.

She hadn’t gone to bed in this.

“*Where are my things?*” she shouted, voice rising. “*Where are my clothes?*”

Still nothing.

She snapped.

“*House-elf, come here. Now.*”

With a *pop*, a small, stern-eyed elf appeared near the fireplace, shoulders squared like a tiny soldier.

“Mistress needs to learn to manage the house,” the elf said briskly. “Orders of the Master’s mother. You see?”

Hermione blinked. “Excuse me—what?”

“Polite words are for guests. Mistress gives orders. Mistress commands.”

"I don't *want* to command you," she hissed. "I just want a fire, and—warm clothes—*my* clothes—"

The elf blinked slowly. "The Master's mother said to remove anything... unworthy. Mistress is provided for."

Before Hermione could respond, the elf *popped* away.

Moments later, two others appeared with folded garments. Silk. Padded. Rose-colored.

A dressing gown, lined in satin, was placed silently at the foot of the bed.

She stared.

Then, furiously, *threw* it on. "This is absurd. I didn't ask for a costume change."

She stormed back to the stripped bed, and found it redone.

Not just remade—*transformed*. Heavier sheets. Embroidered trim. Pillows that matched the damned gown.

It all smelled like fir.

She climbed in anyway.

What choice did she have?

The bracelet on her wrist hadn't warmed. Hadn't moved.

It just sat there.

Waiting.

She curled onto her side, fists clenched in the sheets.

Outside the window, the edges of the sky had begun to stain pink with dawn.

She didn't dream this time.

Hermione was only five minutes early.

Which for Hermione Granger was catastrophic.

The lift chimed open on Level Five and she stepped out, composed. Her robes were dark indigo, tailored, elegant. Her curls had been forced into some version of obedience. She looked... put together.

She *felt* like she'd been thrown down a flight of marble stairs.

Everything hurt. Her back, her shoulders, her thighs. As though she'd spent the night fighting—and losing. Or more precisely, like she'd been *barely slept and attempted to re make the bed before she cracked on the house-elves*.

But the worst part was the exhaustion. Bone-deep. As if she hadn't really slept at all.

Her desk was mercifully empty of new scrolls, but her coworkers were not.

"Oh look," Tracey Davis said brightly, "she lives!"

Hermione gave a tight smile. "Morning."

Tracey gave her a quick once-over. "New robes! looking rather posh this morning, aren't we?"

Hestia Carrow looked up from her corner, lips twitching. "New wardrobe, perhaps?"

Hermione froze for just a fraction of a second. "Yes," she said carefully. "A few things were... provided."

"Isn't that *thoughtful*?" Hestia said, with delicate venom. "My mother-in-law did the same. Cleared out everything I owned and replaced it with clothes *she* thought more flattering. I'm told she had exquisite taste, I didn't had the talent to see it."

Hermione blinked.

Ah.

Sarcasm.

Tracey was watching her closely now, lips parted in a small, surprised O.

Hermione sat slowly. Her body protested the motion. She tried not to wince.

"Lovely bracelet," Tracey said, pretending not to notice. "Malfoy heirloom?"

Hermione's hand twitched. She rubbed at her wrist absently. The skin underneath still felt cold, faintly bruised.

"I—" She paused.

Something *caught* in her throat. Just a flicker. Like static.

She tried again. "The Malfoys are—"

Nothing.

The words wouldn't come. Her tongue moved. Her lips shaped the phrase. But the sound didn't follow.

Tracey and Hestia exchanged the tiniest glance.

Hermione dropped her hand.

Tracey's voice gentled. "Adjusting takes time. It's normal."

"Perfectly normal," Hestia echoed, flipping a page. "You'll figure it out. You're *very clever*."

Hermione nodded mutely.

She hated the cold of January the elves were all impossible.

They came when they pleased. They ignored her unless she barked like a caricature of herself. Her clothes were replaced constantly—soft silks, delicate muslins, slippers without soles. Her practical workwear vanished.

At first, she tried stern patience. Then cold detachment. She quoted House Elf Protection Statutes. They blinked at her like she was mad.

Eventually, she gave in.

A small elf with jaundiced eyes and a flattened ear responded best, that's it fear her most. A direct stare. Low imperious voice eventually she could get away with a sarcastic

"Thank you, Filley," and the creature would bowed, every time, with a look that was almost fear.

That scared her most of all, but her rooms were warm and her clothes almost to her taste.

She arrived at work in charcoal grey robes, and gold earrings. The bruise at her throat hadn't faded yet. She didn't remember getting it.

Tracey didn't ask.

She simply handed Hermione a teacup with shaking hands and said, "Your marriage contract must be *incredible*."

Hestia, perched on the windowsill with crossed ankles and dragonhide boots, sighed dreamily. "The *kind* that cherishes you. Maybe too much."

"Almost *protective*," Tracey agreed. "Some would say... possessive?"

“Gilded cage?” Hestia offered.

“Oh no, surely not. It’s *beautifully drafted*.” Hermione murmured

They all sipped tea.

Hermione laughed.

It came out brittle.

She forgot a whole morning.

Not in the usual way. Not paperwork. Not a meeting.

She forgot the moment between, staring at her wardrobe and the next thing, she was at her desk, her hands ink-stained, the contract she’d been reviewing *already signed*.

She told herself it was depression. Burnout. maybe her magic acting out of her stress

She didn’t mention the bruises. Or the soreness. Or the strange, tender ache along the inside of her thigh that made her flinch when she crossed her legs.

Her mind was trying to drive her mad, she decided.

Narcissa made a passing comment about silverware.

Hermione called it stupid.

Within moments, the bracelet on her wrist tightened. The stones cut into her skin, silent and swift. When she inspected it that evening, her wrist was bleeding.

Draco found her in the west corridor, clutching a handkerchief.

He was gentle.

Soothing.

He took her hand with infinite care. “Let me adjust it,” he said softly. “Let me take care of that.”

And he did.

With a murmured spell, the clause about his mother loosened.

Hermione sagged with relief.

He leaned in close, breath warm against her neck.

“See how easy this can be?” he whispered.

And in that moment—just a flicker—she *remembered* the dream.

The one where he chased her through a hallway of mirrors. Through stacks of books. Her voice caught in her throat. Her feet dragging through honey. His hand on her ankle.

And the words in her ear: “*Mine now.*”

Her eyes snapped open.

He was still smiling.

She found Ron outside a fish-and-chips cart, arguing with the vendor about tartar sauce. The pavement around Diagon Alley was slushed grey from last week’s storm. Hermione stepped carefully over a salt-slick patch and stopped three feet from him.

“Ron.”

He turned, surprised. “Blimey, you look—nice.”

“Thanks,” she said, voice flat.

“You’re not working?”

“I had to take the morning off.”

His brow furrowed, but not with concern. “Oh. Merlin, are you going to start complaining again?”

Hermione blinked. “No—I mean, I’m not—look, I think something’s *wrong* with me.”

Ron rolled his eyes. “It’s always something with you, isn’t it? A spell, a bill, a conspiracy. You’re married to Malfoy just for what? three more months and *somehow* you’re still acting like you’ve got it worse than the rest of us.”

Hermione’s fingers tightened around her bag strap. “I’m tired all the time. I forget things. I—wake up in different clothes—I don’t remember parts of the day. For no reason.”

“You’ve always been dramatic.”

That landed like a slap.

“You have,” he added, already bored. “You never know how to just... deal with things. Always got to be a problem to solve. Maybe you’re just adjusting to living in a nice house. Maybe the elves have finally had it with you and they are pranking you, everybody warned you since school about that. Must be hard for you. All those Galleons.”

She stared at him. The words she *wanted* to say rose up—burned—then hit the wall of the contract and scattered like ash.

She couldn’t say *Draco’s name*. Couldn’t say *Malfoy Manor*. Couldn’t say *help me* and mean it in the way that mattered.

All that came out was, “You don’t understand.”

Ron shoved his hands in his pockets. “No. I don’t. But maybe you should stop making everything about you.”

She didn’t respond. There was no point.

She turned and left.

Ron didn’t call after her.

By mid-March, he was picking her up from work every day.

At first, it was annoying. The kind of thing her co-workers swooned over. *He’s so attentive, Hermione. He waits outside like you’re a princess.*

Tracey called it romantic. Hestia rolled her eyes, but even she admitted the gesture had “optics.”

There was always something afterward—a dinner, a diplomatic reception, a Pureblood charity banquet, a gallery reopening funded by old family gold. Draco never complained. Never raised his voice. He just offered her his arm and smiled that serene little smile like *nothing bad had ever happened* in his life.

He was the kindest part of her day.

And she hated that.

Because it meant the bar had sunk to *him*.

He never pressed when she was quiet. Never questioned when her hands trembled in public. He’d pull out chairs for her and press her glass gently into her fingers when she forgot it.

And when she fainted outside the Ministry atrium on a Tuesday morning—he caught her before she hit the tiles.

She came to in her own bedroom, draped in a silk blanket with cold compresses on her wrists. Draco sat beside her, expression unreadable.

"You've been running yourself ragged," he said softly. "Even the elves noticed. You're not built for overwork."

She blinked at him. Her mouth felt like cotton. "I was just—tired."

"No," he said, tucking the blanket higher. "You're fragile."

"I'm not—"

"Delicate," he said gently. "There's no shame in it."

The words made her want to scream. But her throat refused.

By nightfall, the arrangements were already made.

She would now work **three days a week**. Her schedule had been "graciously adapted." A memo from the Department head appeared in her satchel before she could protest. *Lord Malfoy has made some very convincing arguments regarding your well-being.*

The worst part?

She was relieved.

Just a little.

Because maybe now she could sleep.

That night, he kissed her forehead as she climbed into bed.

"You don't need to be strong anymore," he murmured. "Not with me."

She lay in the dark, every muscle locked.

She didn't sleep.

The nightmares were just so

Chapter Summary

She had been a storm of despondency and fury, but minutes later, her eyelids grew heavy, and her fierce demeanor softened. “No need to linger, Malfoy. I can find my own way to my rooms just fine,” she insisted, her voice slurring slightly. He checked on her ten minutes later, and to his immense satisfaction, she was groggy and fumbling clumsily with the buttons of her robes.

The nightmares were just so

The wedding had completely drained her, and he could see the raw edges of her nerves, the Herculean effort it took for her to contain her emotional upheaval. That's why he secretly slipped the drops into her tea, not some enchanted potion, but plain Muggle medicine—the irony of it all was not lost on him.

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He had meticulously curated her rooms, selecting every detail with precision—from the intricate embroidery on the pale, iridescent silk of her bedspread to the dainty, spindly writing desk, something exquisitely feminine and just spacious enough for letter writing, but nothing more.

He was lost in thought, recalling how he had chosen each piece of furniture with care, ensuring every detail reflected her personality. It meant to be a sanctuary for her. But now, as she lay before him, eyes glazed and mind clouded, she seemed bewildered. Her usual stern demeanor softened into something vulnerable and delicate. She let out a confused sob, trying to make sense of why he was gently guiding her to bed.

In the dimly lit room, she appeared ethereal, her eyes slightly unfocused and her usual sharpness replaced by a dreamy vulnerability. Her high cheekbones, typically set in a commanding expression, softened into a gentle curve. She seemed more approachable, almost angelic, with her wide, doe-like eyes and a delicate pout that could have easily bent anyone to her will. If she had asked him for the world in that moment, he would have been hard-pressed to refuse, though now, his attention was on helping her out of her elegant robes. Her skin, pale yet kissed with a hint of gold, was adorned with a delicate sprinkle of freckles across her shoulders, resembling constellations in the night sky.

He had selected a set of pajamas for her, choosing a top crafted from diaphanous muslin. The fabric was embroidered with intricate details, its puffy short sleeves adding a girlish charm. It was barely a garment, more a veil that clung to her form, revealing the outline of her nipples

and every curve of her skin underneath. He hadn't bothered with the pajama bottoms yet, opting to focus on her upper half as she struggled to focus on him. Despite her dazed state, she was somewhat compliant. Her eyes, glossy and unfocused, flickered with confusion and distrust. "Why am I... so tired?" she questioned, her voice trembling and punctuated by soft sobs.

"Shh, it's alright," he whispered, steadying her with a gentle hand on her shoulder. "You've had a long day. Just let yourself rest."

"I don't want to sleep," she protested, her voice laced with fear and reluctance. Her fingers weakly clutched at his sleeve, a desperate attempt to resist his touch. "I don't want to—."

His voice was soft but insistent. "You need this," he reassured, guiding her toward the bed with a gentle, determined nudge. Her sobs continued, muted now like distant echoes, as she struggled against his body and the pull of exhaustion.

She sank into the mattress, her breathing slowly steadied, though her eyes still held a flicker of resistance. He brushed a tear from her cheek and murmured, "It's okay. Just close your eyes and rest." Her body, despite her mistrust, gradually surrendered to the quiet calm that enveloped the room.

With a swift and deliberate gesture, he conjured a length of silk ribbon, a pale pink hue that seemed to glow with an ethereal light. As carefully as possible, he bound her wrists behind her back, her breasts pressed down under her own weight. She was a living masterpiece, every detail meticulously arranged. There was little chance she could bruise herself in this position, her body becoming softer and more pliable with each passing moment. He effortlessly maneuvered one of the myriad decorative pillows beneath her hips, angling her perfectly.

She was an exquisite work of art, her loose curls cascading around her face as she lay with her features and breasts pressed into the bed, her mouth slack, her knees parted, and her backside poised at just the right height above the bed. He even took the time to adorn her legs in white silk stockings, secured by ribbons that matched the one binding her wrists. She was absolute perfection.

He let her like that a light warming spell on her as he got himself ready for bed, she had signed the contract she was his wife now.

The muggle medicine wouldn't keep her totally sleep more like in the twilight of consciousness, docile and unable to hold any memory. When he came back to her, he was careful to keep her calm, and asleep for as long as possible.

She was never leaving him.

He climbed in bed next to her, and pulled her legs further apart, he was naked He never understood the point of wearing clothes to bed, he did enjoyed the vision of a witch's body tangled in lace, delicate muslim and silk, but he slept nude.

He was rock-hard, and the faint whimpers escaping her lips had his cock throbbing, ready to burst. Looming between her trembling legs, he saw just how delicate she was compared to him—but he was determined to be gentle.

He thrust one thick fingertip into her tight, wet cunt, and she cried out, a sob wrenched from deep within. He stroked her hair roughly, his voice a low growl, "Hush, it's just the medicine, love. It's been a long fucking day."

"Wh-what did you... give me? I can't... move my legs..." she stammered, her breath hitching.

She was so tight that he could feel her walls clamping down on him. With a muttered incantation, he ensured she was dripping wet, her perfect, delicate pussy struggling to take even one of his fingers. Her body convulsed and bucked wildly at the intrusion, already trembling on the precipice of release.

"Hush, little dove. Surrender so I can tend to you."

He forced her head down, withdrawing his finger only to replace it with his cock. A brutal thrust seated just the tip, her cries a symphony of agony and ecstasy. Her body battled against him, but she was weak, too drowsy to resist.

"Please, no more. It hurts."

"Be the good girl I know you are, love."

Hermione's body capitulated as he angled her hips, his cock sheathing itself fully within her. Her breath hitched with sobs, her body too defeated to fight anymore.

"Just like that, see how easy it is when you obey? Open up for me."

She wept harder, thrashing within the limited constraints the drugs allowed—a futile, delicate struggle that only proved her noble breeding. Her sobs mingled with pants, victory surging through his veins as their joined magic fueled his assault. He could no longer discern between her sobs and moans, his hands digging into her hips, forcing her body flush against him. She was his, completely and utterly.

"Beautiful, See how beautifully you take me? This cunt was crafted for my cock alone, a flawless sheath designed to bear my heirs." One of his hands abandoned her hip, descending to where their bodies merged. He taunted her, pounding into her with a ferocity that dragged her body against the bed, his force a thief of her sobs, reducing them to mere hiccups. As his control shattered, so did his rhythm, and her cries echoed his chaotic thrusts. His fingers pinched her cruelly just as she fractured, convulsing and shuddering. With a final, brutal drive, he buried himself to the hilt, flooding her with his seed. It was done, their marriage consummated; she was his forever.

Before dawn broke, he claimed her three more times, a swift enchantment ensuring his seed remained within her.

Hermione woke up in a daze of half dreams and a sore body and one of the delicate pajamas that the elves had stuffed her drawers full of.

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He hadn't meant to be gone long. The conversation with Potter had dragged, full of tired politics and tight-lipped warnings. When he returned to the manor, the scones in the hall burned low.

The sleeping draught he'd left in her cup sat half-drunk on the bedside table.

Draco frowned.

He didn't bother waking the elves. Lowered the lights, adjusted the charm on her bracelet, and went looking for her.

He found her quickly, Barefoot in the corridor.

Facing the ballroom.

Pink fabric fluttering at her ankles like candlelight.

The wards hadn't alerted. Her bracelet hadn't flared because she was asleep. But she was moving—slowly, silently, eyes half-lidded like she was walking in her dreams.

"Hermione."

His voice was low. Careful.

She didn't answer.

She stepped toward the ballroom doors.

Draco followed. "Hey—dove, wait."

Another step. Her fingers brushed the handle. The old brass groaned softly. She slipped inside.

Shit.

He moved after her.

The ballroom was still. Cold. The light from the sconces overhead shimmered strangely against the mirrors. She was already halfway to the center, moving like something in a dream. Her feet barely touched the floor.

"Hermione," he said more firmly. "You shouldn't be here."

She didn't turn.

Just kept walking. Toward the far wall. The archway to the library loomed ahead.

He caught up, gently wrapping a hand around her arm. "Hey. Look at me."

She blinked, once. Unfocused. Frightened.

He let go immediately.

Wrong touch. Wrong time.

"Alright," he murmured, falling into step beside her. "Let's go to the library. You will feel better there."

The library doors creaked as he opened them, letting her inside first. She didn't speak, but her breath had started to calm.

Despite that she was trembling.

He herd her like a frightened lamb a bit of a time onto an alcove of astronomical charts, he cornered her slowly almost gently making sure she couldn't escape him again.

The scent of fir drifted from the hearth—he'd spelled it earlier, out of habit. Familiarity. She liked it. Or at least, she hadn't said otherwise.

Hermione looked at him like she didn't quite know his name.

"It's just a bad dream," he said softly. "You're safe."

Her back pressed lightly to the books, hands fluttering uncertainly at her sides.

He pushed her slowly against the shelfs until she stood on the tip of her toes and helped her lift her arms just enough to stick them to the furthest shelf she could touch.

A lazy *Muffliato*, silenced the alcove just so.

Draco pinned Hermione's body against the bookshelf, she was trashing with defiant sobs. so sweet he mused as he shredded her underwear and pushed out of the way her nightgown, leaving her bare and vulnerable. Hermione's tears streamed down her face, her breath hitching as confusion flooded her face. It was easy to push her knees apart, he liked her like this, sobbing, vulnerable open to him "Look at you, so beautiful. You didn't take your medicine like a good girl. I'll have to see to that after we are done, doll."

The magic of the bracelet was easy especially when she was half sleep, a single tap and her breathing relaxed, but the jagged, shivering sobs keep coming. He loves her like this, He tries to be soft, teasing her cunt open as he whispers against her skin, "Mine." She softens a bit, He bites her nipples through her gown, She sobs as he kisses his way up her neck to her jaw and up so he can tell her in his quiets murmur, "I see you love, you want to be mine. You're have always been a fighter, but here, you're a delicate, broken doll."

The feeling of her soft folds against his fingertips was intoxicating, to see the fight leave her body as he invaded her in search of that inner most sensitive spot, He wished she was fully there, or just enough to beg. But alas, not yet He brought her to the brink of orgasm, once, twice, three times, until her body was a shaking mess. "You were so naughty, love." he hissed, his fingers leaving her only to replace them by his cock, thrusting into her with brutal force.

Her body shook, with the force of his trusts, the need within her was a silent siren, urging her onward. He could feel the delicate spasms of her body, a silent whisper of desire that matched his own. Though her mind might sometimes rage against him, her body sang different, yearning for him. She was warmth and softness personified, his hands bruised her hips, her breasts, her leg everything about her was soft, silky, delicate, no matter how hard he fucked her responses were a symphony of moans and whispers, her knuckles brushed in pink, He loved to hook his hands behind her knee and pull her close opening her to

to the tides of sensation until she surrendered to the waves of release. Once, twice, thrice she surrendered, until she was a tranquil, quivering form, lost in the haze, and only then did he allowed himself to drift into his own, filling her as deep as physically possibly.

How He wanted to come in her face, to fill her mouth, to paint her breast with his seed, but that would be latter, once all was settled once she learned to be a good girl. she was everything he wanted.

She looked like something painted—half-real and unseeing. A ghost of herself. The kind of dream you wake from feeling like your ribs are too tight.

She was soft. Warm. Breathless.

But already slipping away.

So he whispered the spell against her temple—just gently enough to keep her floating.

She collapsed into him like a string-cut puppet.

He carried her through the corridors with easy arms, cradling her like a fragile porcelain figure being returned to its display case. Her cheek fell against his chest. He imagined she could hear his heartbeat.

Poor thing. She was so tired lately.

All those social obligations, all that stubborn resistance. The Ministry took enough of her time; he would see to the rest. He was a *generous* husband. A *patient* one. Once June arrived, she'd feel different. She'd understand. And if not...

Well.

They had time.

He placed her carefully in her bed, smoothing the covers up to her collarbone.

He brushed a curl from her cheek, then stood.

And drew his wand.

Her mind opened beneath his like paper peeling from old wallpaper. Familiar. Pink and floral and orderly. A little girl's room still touched by teenage pride.

Her memories lined the shelves—organized by logic, by habit. Some were folded into books, some curled in shoeboxes beneath the windowseat. Notes tucked in drawers. Lists behind mirrors. He had seen it before.

Tonight, he brought something new.

A letter box: mother-of-pearl and gilded with soft edges, slightly too ornate to match the rest. It gleamed, oddly out of place. Like a gift too expensive for the occasion.

Everything was inside—The library. Their first kiss. The way she struggled against him. The way she softened without knowing.

He packed the memories delicately. Laid them in like ribbons, buttons and hairpins. Closed the lid.

But still—a few memories curled out through the seams. Satin ribbons. Flickering bits of scent and sound.

She'd see them, maybe. Bits of them. In dreams. In *déjà vu*.

It couldn't be helped.

He loved her too much to seal it all away.

He slid the box beneath the bed, just beside a faded purple diary that hadn't been opened since Hogwarts. Fitting, really. The things she didn't want to remember always lived there.

He pulled back slowly, the connection fading. Her breathing remained even. Dream-heavy.

She stirred once. Mumbled something soft. He leaned down, brushing his lips near her temple.

"Rest now," he whispered. "I'll keep it all safe for you."

And then he turned off the light.

In the middle of a storm

Chapter Summary

Unfortunately, she couldn't ignore Narcissa.

Since Malfoy had modified the bracelet—lifting the restriction that kept Hermione from speaking ill of his mother—Narcissa had doubled down. She had a hundred tasks for Hermione, a hundred questions, a million of tiny tasks she needed Hermione for.

Every meal was a silent battle.

Every hallway a trap.

“Oh, Dear, do you like leek soup?”

“I assume you don’t dress like this every day do you?”

“The house elves are complaining of you coming into the kitchen.”

Chapter Notes

Hello Dears this is chapter 3, but dont worry chapter 2 will be unveiled with chapter 4, in one hand you don't get to know whatever Hermione doesn't yet know, but you will at the same time she does, good news is that Next time I post you will have 2 chapters to read at once, I know I know, also I lowered the chapter count by one chapter since I almost finished this whole thing and I't will flow better like that.

As I love to say, you are getting same word count different format ;)

Also fair warning that this is a very very dead dove, and it's coming out of the fridge next chapter please get your forks ready

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

In the middle of a storm

It was raining.

It had been raining forever.

Grey skies blurre

d across the manor windows like smeared ink, day after day after day. The weather matched her nerves—soggy, raw, frayed around the edges.

Hermione was furious with Malfoy, just like that he had plucked her from the MoM.
She hadn't spoken to him in days.

She didn't scream. Didn't hex. She just... stopped acknowledging him. Which she found it was worse, for him probably an only child thing she knew she hated to be ignored. Which was why she kept doing it. He kept up with quiet gestures—books left outside her room, her favorite kind of sugar en every tea service, rare copies of books she dared not to touch.

She ignored it all.

Unfortunately, she couldn't ignore **Narcissa**.

Since Malfoy had modified the bracelet—lifting the restriction that kept Hermione from speaking ill of his mother—Narcissa had doubled down. She had a hundred tasks for Hermione, a hundred questions, a million of tiny tasks she needed Hermione for.

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“Oh, Dear, do you like leek soup?”

“I assume you don’t dress like this every day do you?”

“The house elves are complaining of you coming into the kitchen.”

She spent her every waking moment in that house avoiding Narcissa in a maze of rooms she was very familiar with. Her new three-day work schedule was a slow spiral into madness.

At the Ministry, she was ghost-like. She filed reports. Reviewed proposals. Took twice as long to do anything because *she was gone so often, she would have been obsessed with a problem just to come back to it forgotten or solved.*

She went looking for **Bill**, cornered him near the Floo lifts.

“Bill,” she said, quiet but urgent. “Please. I need you to review my jewelry. Or at least look into the marks in my arm. Something’s *wrong*.”

He looked instantly pained.

“Hermione, I can’t. I’m under contract.”

“With them?, How?”

“Technically with the estate. Vault assessment, curse-break for every single vault and heirloom, they wanted to be sure no muggle-born curses were on any thing you might come into contact. Any conflict of interest on their holdings… I can’t touch it.”

Her stomach dropped.

She ran into **Harry** in the lift later that day. She hadn’t meant to—he looked surprised to see her.

“I didn’t know you’d be in today,” he said, shifting awkwardly.

“Yeah, I have my work days. Tuesday through Thursday. Courtesy of your *favorite classmate*.”

He blinked. “Draco said you wanted more space.”

Hermione froze.

“Do you talk to him?”

Harry nodded. “Often actually, since a couple of years ago he is one of the owners of the Harpies.”

She almost laughed.

But didn’t.

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Percy’s office was stacked with folders a folder marked “**MISSING – MB**” sat unopened on the edge of his desk.

Hermione knocked once and opened the door.

He looked up—startled, then genuinely warm. “Hermione.”

She stepped inside, closing the door behind her. He looked pale, rain-worn, and brittle at the edges. He gestured to the chair across from him.

“Tea?”

“No. Percy, I need—”

“I know,” he said gently. “I’ve been meaning to reach out.”

She blinked. “You have?”

He leaned forward, lowering his voice. “I saw your name come through the system. Reduced hours and limited projects? nearly threw my tea at the wall.”

“That makes two of us.”

She crossed her arms, pulled out a Ministry form. “I think I screwed up, I want to see my contract.”

“Yes. You did”

He winced. “I can’t let you.”

Hermione stared at him.

“The second it was signed, it was transferred to your Head of Family. That’s Malfoy now.”

Her voice sharpened. “But I’m the bonded party.”

“Doesn’t matter. The law treats the contract like an estate artifact now—protected by legacy clauses. This whole law was rushed. The vote passed while half the seats were out for the winter recess.”

She was quiet.

“What if I file a request for abuse?”

Percy winced. “I don’t think you have anything... actionable.”

She blinked. “What?”

“I’m not saying what’s happening to you isn’t real. But wizarding law—especially around marriage—is *centuries* behind Muggle precedent. Unless he’s used an Unforgivable on you, or there’s visible spell trauma—”

“You’re telling me he could manipulate me, control my movements, isolate me from my friends, my work and that’s *legal*? ”

“In most cases, yes,” Percy said grimly. “It’s disgusting, but it’s not new. What’s new is how many people are being affected.”

Hermione stared at him, horrified. “How has no one done anything?”

He rubbed his eyes, exhausted. “Do you remember how controversial your elf legislation was?”

“That’s not the same—”

“It is, actually. You gave magical beings more autonomy than most married witches have on paper. Most women under bond still don’t control their own finances, can’t alter property wards, and can be disciplined by their husbands without recourse—provided it’s ‘for safety.’ The only reason it wasn’t common before is that the only ones with magical marriage contracts were *purebloods*. ”

Her blood ran cold.

“Then every witch with a contract now has an extra layer of control written in.”

Percy didn’t answer right away.

Then, finally, “Yes. Not all—but more than you’d think. Ten percent more on average.”

She rubbed her wrist. The bracelet was cool again. Always watching. Always listening.

“I can’t prove anything like an unforgivable.”

Percy looked down, frustrated. He pulled another file out of the stack. “You’re not alone.”

He showed her four open cases: witches with gaps in memory, magical inconsistencies. One of them was a Muggle-born assigned to an old Irish family. She hasn’t been seen by her family or friends for three weeks. The Aurors had done *nothing*.

“I’m buried in this,” Percy said. “And the Minister won’t revisit the framework. He says it’s too politically fragile.”

Hermione said nothing. Just let the information stack in her chest like stones.

“I’m sorry,” Percy whispered. “You deserved better than this.”

She swallowed. “Everyone does.”

He nodded once. “If you find a way in—something outside the formal structure—I’ll help you. But if you go through the front door, you’ll hit his seal every time.”

She stood. Her hands were shaking, but she didn’t let him see it.

“Thank you, Percy.”

“Be careful, Hermione.”

She left without another word.

Behind her, Percy stared at the pile of files again.

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Eventually the clouds had peeled back early, leaving the fields behind Malfoy Manor soaked in gold. The air smelled like new grass and old frost—the last of winter finally retreating. Sunlight warmed the leaded windows of the study in a way Draco hadn’t seen in weeks.

And for once, he was distracted by it.

His quill hovered halfway through a note to the vault team in Marseille when the door creaked open without warning.

He looked up, ready to reprimand an overeager elf.

And froze.

It wasn’t an elf.

It was *her*.

Hermione Granger stood in the doorway, wearing a rose-pink coat that fell to mid-thigh, a dark skirt, soft leather boots. Muggle. All of it. Her hair was pinned back cleanly, and her skin—while still pale—held more color than it had in days. Weeks.

She looked beautiful.

And utterly unreadable.

He didn’t move.

She hadn’t voluntarily spoken to him since their wedding.

“...Yes?” he said, careful.

Her voice was cool. “I need something.”

That pulled at him more than it should have.

He schooled his face, smoothing it into something dry and wry.

“Oh?” he said, settling the quill aside. “How can I make my wife happy this morning?”

Hermione stepped inside without smiling. Arms crossed. Chin up. “Do you have an account in the Muggle world?”

Draco blinked.

There was a beat of silence.

Then he opened the bottom-right drawer of his desk, the one where he kept less ancient things: modern documents, a miniature silver case, an unopened bottle of Glenfarclas.

He rifled briefly—parchment, a few warded seals, a wrapped crystal key—then pulled out a thin black card.

He held it between two fingers.

Hermione stepped forward and took it without hesitation.

“Does it have a limit?” she asked flatly.

Draco smiled faintly.

And raised a single eyebrow.

Hermione let out a slow exhale through her nose. “Good.”

She turned without another word, already halfway to the door.

“I’ll be back before dinner,” she added.

“Wait.”

She paused. Looked back over her shoulder.

He opened a drawer beside the card tray and pulled a square sheet of parchment, scribbled a quick series of Apparition coordinates, a contact number, and two names in tight, precise script. He folded it once and handed it over.

“There’s a townhouse near Mayfair,” he said, watching her closely. “Discreet. Warded. Muggle-registered. The car service is on standby—just ring. The drivers are Muggle. There’s a Squib butler there, old family contact. You can send anything back to the manor through him.”

Hermione took the paper.

Didn’t blink.

Didn’t thank him.

Just gave a curt nod—and left.

The door closed softly behind her.

Draco stared at the space she’d stood in, every inch of his body brimming with something he didn’t let reach his face.

He was thrilled, yes.

She’d asked him for something.

Hermione swept into the drawing room with three books under her arm and a silk scarf still knotted around her throat from her London spree. Her heels clicked crisply on the marble floor. She was glowing with something that wasn't joy—her lips stained red, her expression carved in porcelain.

She had walked out of Cartier with earrings, out of Harrods with shoes, and out of Waterstones with *weapons*.

Fairy tales.

She dropped the books onto the end table with a satisfying *thud* and said—softly, without looking up:

“Filley. Come here.”

A small *pop* answered her.

Filley appeared in the doorway, wringing his hands before his feet had even touched the floor.

He was smaller than most, yellow-eyed and jittery, with ears that bent in uneven folds and an apron that looked one day overdue for laundering. Hermione had picked him deliberately. He was the easiest to unsettle.

“M-Mistress returns,” Filley said, bowing. “How can Filley serve Mistress?”

Hermione turned to him slowly.

She smiled.

It wasn't warm.

“I brought reading material.”

Filley blinked. “Mistress... reads to elf?”

Hermione gave a dry, humorless chuckle as she dropped into the armchair. “No. *You'll* read to me. This one.” She held up the middle volume, its cover weathered and stained: *Tales of the Unseelie Court and the Cruelty of Fairies*.

Filley's ears twitched.

She opened it to the page she'd marked with a ribbon from her scarf and handed it over like a decree. “Page 84. ‘The Changelings.’”

He clutched the book with shaking fingers and began to read aloud.

His voice was thin, brittle as rice paper.

“And the peasant couple, suspecting the babe was not their own, sought counsel from a hedge witch. The witch told them: ‘The child of the Fae fears the flame.’ So they stoke the fire high and dropped the child square down the hearth—and when it screamed in the old tongue and vanished, their true child was returned the next moon.”

Silence fell.

Hermione let it stretch until even the walls felt it.

Then she rose.

Her tone was mild, but her eyes had gone flat.

“Very interesting, don’t you think? I grew up with stories like that.”

Filley didn’t respond. Didn’t move.

She took a step forward, and he flinched.

“Now,” she said, “bring me the babies of the manor.”

Filley stared at her, lips trembling.

“M-Mistress?”

She tilted her head. “The young ones. All of them. The ones born in the last seven years.”

Filley stammered, stepping backward. “The babies are too small for Mistress—too small to serve—they are very little—”

“I didn’t say I wanted to *use* them,” she snapped, voice sharp as ice. “I said I wanted to *see* them.”

Filley dropped to his knees. “Mistress, please, the Master’s Mother—”

“I,” Hermione said coldly, “did not say *please*. ”

Her voice cracked like a spell mid-duel.

“Now.”

Filley vanished with a pop so loud it echoed.

Five minutes later, six baby elves appeared in the doorway.

They were tiny things—grey and pink and speckled with lint, each of them no taller than a child’s knee. One wore a knitted tea-cozy pulled too far down over its eyes. Another clutched a spoon like a wand.

They stared at her with open, blank curiosity.

Hermione crouched low, hands resting on her knees, inspecting them like volumes in an ancient archive.

They fidgeted. Whispered to one another in a language she didn't know.

"Who named them?"

Filley stepped forward, eyes cast low. "The Master's Mother... Lady Narcissa, Mistress."

Hermione's gaze turned to the smallest one, still half-hidden in his scarf. She reached out and tapped the top of his tea-cozy.

"What's your name?"

"P-Petal," it squeaked.

"Not anymore," Hermione said crisply. "You're *Socrates*."

She turned to the next—tall, twitchy, with a streak of soot on its nose.

"You're *Plato*. And you—" she tapped the scarfed one again, "—you'll be *Epicurus*."

They didn't cry.

They blinked.

And slowly, they began repeating the names to themselves.

Trying them on like new clothes.

Filley made a distressed sound in his throat. "Mistress, this will upset Mistress-Mother terribly—"

Hermione rose to her full height.

Her voice was low. Final.

"I am the Lady Malfoy."

Silence.

"I married her son. I wear the name. The ring. The bracelet. And I've suffered the soup. From this moment on, you answer to me."

The elves didn't nod—but they didn't disappear either.

She turned her gaze on Filley again. "Now. Sushi. For dinner. In my rooms. I don't care if you have to Apparate to Tokyo. If I smell one more boiled root or attempt at consommé, I will assume you've forgotten the tale of the hearth fire."

Her smile returned.

Smaller.

Sharper.

Filley disappeared.

The rest scattered seconds later like a gust had hit them.

Hermione sat down. Opened the second book.

Fear was a language everyone understood.

°·ξδ ☆ 63 ·°

“You don’t understand what she’s doing,” Narcissa said through her teeth. “She’s desecrating everything we built.”

Draco didn’t look up from the decanter. “This manor is a tomb, Mother. She’s just letting some air in.”

“She’s a mudblood.”

The glass in his hand cracked.

He turned slowly.

“Say that again.”

Narcissa’s spine straightened, but there was a flicker in her eyes. Regret, maybe. Or fear.

“She’s a—”

“It was a warning not an invitation, mother— Draco hissed —Not after what you let happen.”

“I—”

“You stood in this very house and watched my father fund ruin,” he snapped. “You didn’t stop him. You encouraged him. Your *ideals* turned this family into a punchline.”

“Lucius did what he thought was best for—”

“Father,” Draco cut in, voice rising, “was a coward clinging to your skirt and outdated beliefs. And look where that got him. Rotting to death in Azkaban. Look where it got *me*. Tortured. Humiliated. Branded. Do you know how long it took me to scrub that mark off my arm? How many layers of skin I had to strip before it stopped bleeding?”

Narcissa's lips trembled. "I *asked* for you."

"You *begged* for me. That's all you ever did. Talk."

He stepped closer.

"You never stopped them. Never stood in front of me. Not once. And don't talk to me about blood when Lily Potter died shielding her son from the Dark Lord and you—*you*—handed me over."

The silence was knife-sharp.

Draco's voice dropped, cold and final.

"She had a year to be a mother. You had twenty-five."

Narcissa recoiled like she'd been slapped.

Draco didn't stop.

"If my wife wants to eat off plastic Muggle cutlery and fill the ballroom with neon furniture, then *that's what we're doing*. What did you think this was? Another doll to dress in silk and parade at tea?"

He threw the cracked glass into the fireplace.

"She's not your pet. She's not your project. She's *mine*."

Narcissa flinched again. Not at the possessiveness.

At the certainty.

He turned away, chest heaving, throat raw.

"If you don't like the food, the curtains, or the color of the drawing room, you are welcome to relocate. There's a villa in Provence, one in Florence, two in the Hebrides. Take your pick."

When he looked back, she hadn't moved.

Her face was pale. Eyes shining—not with tears, but fury held on a razor's edge.

She opened her mouth.

Then shut it.

And walked out.

The fire was low and the room was thick with the scent of cedar, smoke, and something darker—Theo's imported cigars, probably.

Draco sat in the green velvet chair like he had been in a fight—collar undone, cufflinks missing, one hand draped around a glass of Theo's best.

The cracked glass from earlier still stung his palm.

Theo, naturally, was unbothered. Legs crossed, wand balanced across his knee, *The Daily Prophet* floating in the air between them.

“You look like hell,” Theo said casually.

“Kicked Mother out of the manor.”

Theo snorted. “That explains the scowl and the dent on my cabinet.”

He turned the page with a flick of his finger.

“I take it the war of curtains and cutlery continues?”

“She’s renamed the elves. I think one of them’s ‘Aristotle’ now.”

Theo raised an eyebrow. “Oh, I like that.”

“She’s getting a decorator. A Muggle.”

Theo whistled low. “Statute of secrecy? What statute?.”

He held up the paper. “Did you see this?”

The front page headline:

LADY MALFOY SPOTTED ON LUXURY MUGGLE SPREE

Extravagant hand-forged muggle flatware, Extravagant muggle designers, and whispers of a modernist art obsession.

Draco looked.

Hermione was pictured in profile, stepping into a waiting car in a grey wool coat, sunglasses on, chin up. Regal. Icy. Unreachable.

He laughed low.

Theo looked sideways. “You’re not upset?”

Draco took a slow sip of his drink.

“A lesser man,” he said, “or a lesser vault—might be weeping.”

Theo smirked. “She’s replacing your art collection with *Muggle* paintings, mate.”

“She has taste.”

“She bought a piece called *71* that looks like someone casted a spell wrong for ten millions of galleons.”

“At least they are quiet,” Draco said calmly.

Theo studied him for a beat.

“You really don’t mind?”

Draco’s smile was slow. Thin.

Theo leaned back, exhaling a cloud of smoke.

“You’re either madly in love or clinically unwell.”

“Can’t it be both?”

They drank in silence for a while.

The fire crackled.

°·ξδ ☆ 63 ·°

Hermione didn’t notice Narcissa was gone until the third day.

There was no confrontation. No dramatic farewell. Just... silence.

No biting remarks, no passive-aggressive comments, no carefully veiled insults delivered over teacups.

Just quiet.

At first, Hermione assumed Narcissa was sulking. Hiding in one of the guest suites. Waiting for the peonies in the rose garden to be replanted before making another icy reappearance.

But the house-elves, when asked, only replied, “*Master’s Mother is not longer in residence.*”

That was it.

Gone.

Vanished without warning .

And suddenly—Hermione had *nothing to push against*.

The days became strangely shapeless. Not restful. Not peaceful. Just *flat*.

Without Narcissa's hostility, there was no friction, no catharsis. Just the soft crush of the manor's carpets and the never-ending hush of rooms too large and too empty.

And worse than that—

Malfoy had filled the space Narcissa left behind.

Subtly. Quietly. **Completely**.

At first, it was dinner. “I thought we could eat together. No need for formality.”

Then it was breakfast. “You’re always up early—thought I’d join you.”

Then it was *tea*, uninvited but not unwelcome. “The elves give you the best biscuits, I want some.”

She retreated but he followed her all the way to *her rooms*.

He didn’t knock but He didn’t make demands. He just... stayed. Ate from her plates. Read over her shoulder. Asked what she was reading. What she thought of the plot. If she’d ever read the *French original* of the new translation she’d bought.

He handled her books with care. Not reverence—just a kind of studied intimacy.

And when she sat in silence, he stayed silent too.

Just watching.

The bracelet hadn’t burned in days.

It rested against her skin like a dormant ember.

She no longer tested it—no longer felt the immediate panic to speak ill or to push against the limit. She knew now how far to go before it hurt. She knew how it punished her when she *forgot herself*.

And now—it barely pulsed.

It was worse than when it hurt.

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The end of May came quietly.

Neither of them mentioned it.

The contract date loomed like a shadow beneath every breakfast, every glance across the hall, every quiet dinner where he asked if she'd like a second cup of tea.

Hermione didn't dare bring it up—not out loud, not even in her head for long.

And Draco, maddeningly, seemed unbothered. Not tense. Not curious. Just... patient.

She started filling her free days more deliberately—more *defensively*. Hestia and Tracey came to visit twice a week now. They brought her, gossip, admired her new art collection. She even let them drag her to a tea in the Greengrass garden. She wore soft blue and kept her voice light, like a woman who wasn't counting down hours in her head.

Without Narcissa, the social calendar dried up. No more dinners, no curated poetry recitations, no chamber orchestra nights.

The house was *quieter*.

But it wasn't restful.

It was the quiet of a drawn breath. Of something just before it breaks.

And all through the corridors of Malfoy Manor, the air felt tight with waiting.

As if the walls themselves knew—

Chapter End Notes

Some of you know that I do a lot of research on the marriage aspects of my Fics, well here are some really depressing facts feel free to skip them, but also kinda Important you know them.

1853 – Act for the Better Prevention and Punishment of aggravated assaults upon women and children is passed. A man who beats his wife can be imprisoned for up to 6 months.

1882 – Married Women's Property Act – Gives married women the right of absolute control over their own money and property.

1956 – rape legally defined for the first time.

1991 – Marital rape criminalised.

1993 – Violence against women and girls recognised as human rights violation.

2015 – Serious Crime Act criminalises Coercive control.

2021 – Domestic Abuse Act becomes law – legally defining what domestic abuse is, recognising children in their own right.

I got all the facts from here Please go and check Refuge.org.UK

Tesco and Fear

Chapter Summary

He'd been nothing but gracious.

Mostly, quietly respectful. No cruel remarks. No gloating. No tantrums. And ever since she had managed to chase Narcissa out, he hadn't said a single word to complain about it or make her uncomfortable.

He'd just... been around.

Tea, always around tea.

Asking about her books.

Reading the papers across from her.

Silent company that didn't go away.

Chapter Notes

Yay! so finished this please enjoy!

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

Tesco and Fear

She didn't remember until Theo's owl arrived at breakfast.

"Is it alright if I steal your husband for lunch drinks? It is his birthday, after all."

Hermione reread the sentence three times.

Birthday. *His birthday.*

The pit in her stomach formed instantly—sour, slow, and absolute.

She hadn't planned anything.

She hadn't even *thought* about it.

Which wouldn't have mattered—shouldn't have mattered—if Draco had been the cruel or annoying—more annoying, really. But he hadn't said a word. Not dropped a hint. Not sulked. Not expected.

And he'd been... if she was honest with herself, painfully, coldly honest—

He'd been nothing but *gracious*.

Mostly, quietly respectful. No cruel remarks. No gloating. No tantrums. And ever since she had managed to chase Narcissa out, he hadn't said a single word to complain about it or make her uncomfortable.

He'd just... been around.

Tea, always around tea.

Asking about her books.

Reading the papers across from her.

Silent company that didn't go away.

Most of her animosity toward him stemmed from the nightmares that haunted her—vivid, lustful, and horrifying scenes that invaded her dreams night after night. These visions were not his fault; they were hers alone to bear. Perhaps she truly needed to consult a mind healer once the cursed bracelet finally slipped from her hand.

But right now it was his birthday.

And she felt guilty about it, she had her fair share of birthdays that had went unacknowledged now that her parents were lost forever.

She replied to Theo that of course it was alright, Malfoy didn't need his permission for anything. closed the owl scroll and immediately Flooed to Muggle London, wrapped in an oversized coat and guilt.

At Tesco, she picked the saddest cake on the shelf—chocolate fudge, slightly dented, in a clear plastic dome. The expiration date was tomorrow. Perfect.

She grabbed a £2.99 card with cartoon balloons and confetti. The kind a bored child might pick for a classmate.

She wrote inside:

It could have been worse.

No signature. No flourish.

Just that.

That afternoon, she placed the cake on the furthest table from her favorite chair in the drawing room, like a dead animal she didn't want to be near. By the time Draco wandered in—*right on cue*, as always, just after five—she was already curled on the couch with a book she wasn't reading.

He paused in the doorway. Spotted the cake. Spotted her.

A slow smile crept across his face.

He crossed the room and examined the cake with the same unabridged joy and pride a mother might show when presented with a mess of glue, paint, and dried pasta on Mothering Sunday—as if it were the most perfect thing he had ever received.

“You got me a chocolate cake?”

She didn't look up. “Don't read too much into it.”

“I wouldn't dare.”

He turned toward her, mock-hopeful. “Will you sing?”

Hermione's head snapped up. “Don't push it.”

Draco laughed. A real laugh—low, amused, almost delighted. He opened the card next. Read it.

And laughed again.

“Perfect,” he murmured. “Truly.”

At that moment, two elves appeared—nervous, as always—and quietly laid out fine dessert plates on the cake table. Porcelain. Hand-painted. Probably French.

Draco served himself a slice with ceremonial flair, then brought her one without asking.

She took it. Begrudgingly.

He sat across from her, legs crossed, utterly content.

“Chocolate cake and a birthday card,” he said. “This might be the most honest birthday I’ve ever had.”

Hermione gave a soft, involuntary laugh. Just a breath. No joy in it—just the absurdity of it all catching in her throat.

Because it *was* funny.

Because this whole thing—this marriage, this manor, this mess—was ridiculous.

And it was almost over.

Just a couple more weeks.

She glanced at Draco, who was already halfway through his cake, humming a little under his breath.

At least, she thought, he’d stopped kissing her in public.

That was something.

°_·ξδ ☆ 63 ·°

The bakery was one of Ginny’s Muggle favorites—frilly and warm, all blush-pink tiles and gold-leaf menus, tucked just off the alley behind the bookshop. It smelled like rosewater and almonds. There were mirrored sconces on the walls, mismatched china on every table, and soft jazz lapping at the windows.

Hermione arrived just as the second teacup was poured.

“You’re late,” Ginny said, grinning.

“Not really,” Hermione murmured, unbuttoning her coat with deliberate fingers. “I was just... somewhere else.”

Ginny nudged the chair out with her foot. “Sit. I’ve got pastries. All your favorites.”

Hermione looked at the plate. Couldn't remember what her favorites were. Sat anyway.

"You look good," Ginny offered, passing her the tea.

Hermione stirred without looking up. "I feel like static."

Ginny laughed like it was a joke. "You've been everywhere in the papers. Gringotts, Greengrass gala, the Macmillan hearings—Malfoy vaults must be weeping."

"I'm trying," Hermione said. "But it's harder than I thought. More complicated."

"Since when does *complicated* stop you?"

Hermione gave a twitch of a smile. Not quite real. "Since I stopped sleeping."

Ginny's smile dimmed, but she didn't press.

The clink of sugar tongs. A slice of tart. Jazz humming over a lace curtain's flutter.

Then Ginny leaned in, voice low. "Percy told me about the Greymark girl."

Hermione blinked.

"She's alive," Ginny went on. "Cruciatus. Locked up for months. Her mother-in-law. Percy said the husband didn't even know."

Hermione's hand curled around her teacup. "Didn't know," she repeated. "Convenient."

Ginny hesitated. "I'm just—" she exhaled, "I'm glad you didn't get someone like that. I mean, the Malfoys are... strange. But they didn't hurt you."

Hermione looked down. The saucer's edge was cracked—she traced it with her thumb. "This time."

"What?"

She blinked. "Nothing. I meant—nothing."

Ginny frowned. "That came out wrong. I wasn't trying to—God, I'm making this worse. I just meant, things could've been so much worse and—"

"Right." Hermione gave her a smile. A cut-glass expression. "Everyone says that."

There was a pause. Then Ginny cleared her throat and brightened.

"Mum's planning a massive breakfast. First morning after your contract ends. Full Burrow treatment. Charlie might even come."

Hermione's cup trembled against the saucer.

"Why?" she asked.

Ginny laughed. “To celebrate, of course! You’ll be free. Two whole years to do whatever you want. Date. Travel. Sleep for a week straight.”

“Find someone,” Hermione said flatly.

Ginny hesitated. “Well. If you want to. Mum thinks...”

Hermione nodded. “Right. Of course.”

A pause.

Ginny sipped. “She said this time you’ll get to choose someone who deserves you.”

Hermione nodded again. Then again, slower. Her eyes weren’t focused.

Ginny tilted her head. “Minnie?”

“Hmm?”

“I said—we’re thinking of trying for another baby.”

Hermione looked startled. “You already have one.”

“I mean a second.”

“Oh. Right.” Hermione blinked. “You said that.”

Ginny smiled, gentler now. “Harry wants to wait until spring, but—if we timed it right, maybe you and I could—”

“Pregnant?” Hermione repeated.

“Yeah,” Ginny said softly. “If you wanted. Someday.”

Hermione nodded too quickly. “Yes. Of course.”

Ginny reached across the table, touching her hand lightly. “You okay?”

Hermione blinked down at their hands. “You said something about names?”

“I did,” Ginny said slowly.

Hermione squinted. “What were they?”

Ginny studied her. “Do you want me to repeat them?”

Hermione smiled again. Tight. “Please.”

They sat a little longer. Ginny talked about James. Luna. Flying lessons. Hermione nodded at the right times, even laughed when prompted. But her gaze wandered. She asked the same question twice. Then again.

Ginny re-answered. Gently. Each time.

When they stood to leave, Hermione didn't remember if she'd eaten anything. Her mouth tasted like sugar, but her hands were cold.

She remembered the way the spoon clinked against porcelain.

And Ginny's voice, too kind, too bright:

"At least they didn't hurt you."

°·ξδ ☆ 63 ·°

Draco was hunched over estate ledgers, sleeves rolled and wand in one hand, half a dozen scrolls hovering mid-air.

The door slammed open.

Theo strode in without knocking, as usual, wand twirling lazily between his fingers.

"I bring scandal," he announced, grinning like the Prophet's society page come to life.
"Greymark family's gone up in smoke."

Blaise followed, slower and smoother. "Your fellow husbands are giving us all a bad name."

Draco didn't look up. "Which idiot this time?"

"Luca Greymark," Theo said, flopping into the armchair opposite his desk. "Married a Muggle-born last winter. She disappeared in March—guess where she was?"

"Not abroad."

"In the bloody attic," Theo said cheerfully. "Mother-in-law locked her up like a cursed heirloom. Full Cruciatius package."

That made Draco look up. His face sharpened.

"And Luca?"

"Claims he didn't know. Conveniently out of the country on business. Came home, saw the wreckage, ran straight to Kingsley. Dragging his own mother to trial, crying about justice and family honor."

"He might mean it," Blaise offered. "Or he might just be smart enough to know it's his only shot at avoiding Azkaban."

Draco's jaw tightened. "He let her be tortured under his roof. If he wasn't man enough to run his house, he shouldn't have married."

Blaise shrugged. "Not everyone inherits early. Most heirs are still sipping sherry and avoiding responsibility at twenty-four."

Theo stretched out on the couch, ankle crossed over knee. "Yeah, not all of us have the privilege of a dead Death Eater dad clearing the path."

Draco's eyes flicked toward him—just briefly.

"My mother," he said coolly, "would never have touched Hermione."

Theo raised a brow. "No, of course not. Torturing Muggle-borns was strictly Aunt Bella's hobby."

Draco's mouth curled—somewhere between a grimace and a sneer.

Blaise, ever the diplomat, steered it back. "Point is, Kingsley's calling it a success story. Mixed marriage survives. Pureblood matriarch punished. A pregnancy on the books. It's ticking every reform box."

"Except the girl," Draco muttered. "No witch deserves anything less than a devoted husband. And she didn't get that."

Theo tossed a cushion in the air, lazy and thoughtless. "Well, she's getting a baby. Maybe he'll shape up. Or vanish to the Continent and let her raise it in peace."

Draco gave him a flat look.

Theo grinned. "Hey—I'm not saying it's *ideal*. I'm saying your wife's going to hear about this. And when she does? She'll want her own brand of justice served hot."

Draco's eyes narrowed.

"She already asked around," Blaise said mildly, arms folded, watching Draco like one watches a storm cloud build. "Which means she's two steps away from inviting the girl over for tea and tearing the entire Greymark line apart."

Draco exhaled through his nose.

Theo tilted his head. "Might want to distract her. Flowers. Fires. Something shiny."

Blaise's mouth twitched. "Or you could just let her loose and see what survives."

Draco leaned back in his chair, staring at the ceiling like it personally offended him.

"I really wish she'd quit that Ministry job," he muttered. "She doesn't belong in politics."

The morning paper was burning a hole in the table.

Hermione didn't look at it. Not yet.

Steam curled from her untouched coffee. The sugar bowl was still full. Her spoon rested in the saucer like a blade she hadn't picked up yet.

Across from her, Percy paced.

He looked like hell. Tie crooked, collar wilted, sleeves half-rolled with parchment tucked under one arm. His face had the haunted look of someone who'd spent the night convincing himself he still had a moral compass.

"She's staying," he said finally.

Hermione looked up. Her eyes were cool, alert.

"She's... convinced. Or scared. Or just tired," Percy continued. "She says Luca didn't know. She believes him."

Hermione's mouth tightened.

She set her cup down with just enough force to crack the silence, then pushed back slightly in her chair, legs crossed with restraint.

"She believes," she repeated. "How very convenient."

Percy winced. "She's pregnant. He's pledging protection. Kingsley thinks that's enough. He's calling it a functional outcome."

Hermione didn't blink. "And the old witch?"

"The Wizengamot will convict her," Percy said carefully. "But it won't be severe. House arrest, maybe. Exile to a smaller estate. Kingsley doesn't want backlash—he wants it closed cleanly."

Hermione picked up her spoon. Stirred. Let the sugar dissolve into the coffee she no longer wanted.

The spoon clinked against porcelain like a tiny, deliberate hammer.

"It's a shame," she said flatly. "That won't happen."

Percy frowned. "Hermione—"

“How much to bury her?” she asked.

He blinked. “What?”

She looked up at him then, her face as calm and cold as the table’s marble surface.

“I want a number. A real one. What’s the price to make sure she’s tried, sentenced, and gone before the ink dries on the story?”

“Hermione, this isn’t—”

“Don’t be naïve,” she cut in. “The Wizengamot has taken Malfoy money for decades. They can take it again. Just with my name on the account this time.”

Percy’s mouth opened, then shut again. His shoulders stiffened.

“Do you really want to—” he paused. “Tarnish your name for this?”

Hermione gave a short, humorless laugh. “Percy. My name is already made of tarnish and blood.”

She sipped her coffee.

“Bring me a number.”

He stared at her.

“Quickly.”

The trial came and went in a flash of cold precision. No appeals. No delays. No editorial preambles.

Lady Clarissa Greymark, once a name whispered with deference at Ministry galas, was sentenced to death by unanimous vote.

Executed by magical means within seventy-two hours.

Azkaban never opened a cell.

The newspapers exploded.

“*Elder Abuse of Justice?*”

“*Is This Kingsley’s Vision of Reform?*”

“*Pureblood Matriarch Executed Without Trial Delay—What Precedent Does This Set?*”

Half the press cried foul: it was too harsh, a political stunt, an old woman sacrificed for optics. The other half said nothing at all.

And in the silence, the whispers started.

Someone had greased the wheels. Bribed votes. Shortened procedures.

The paper trail was thin—but not thin enough.

The money had come through a shell vault.
The shell vault had links to Malfoy holdings.
The disbursements bore Granger's signature.

And yet...

No one said her name.

Not out loud.

No one wanted to believe it. That *Hermione Granger*—war heroine, Order icon, Muggle born, with a soft spot for House-elves —had executed a woman with coin and will alone.

The Ministry was behind of it no doubt. Kingsley had married the girl to the Malfoy heir hadn't he? Public confidence dipped.

°·ξδ ☆ 63 ·°

Draco met her in the corridor just outside the drawing room. His expression unreadable. The newspaper still folded in his hand.

“You bribed the Wizengamot,” he said.

Hermione paused, one hand adjusting the cuff of her sleeve.

Draco stepped closer. “Have you tired of buying art, Dove.”

She tilted her head. “yeah, buying justice made a better purchase.”

His eyes searched hers. Not angry. Not surprised. Just... trying to see how far she'd go.

“The papers are a mess. Kingsley’s furious.”

“I imagine he is.”

“Did you think I wouldn’t notice?”

Hermione walked past him, smooth and composed. “I thought you might approve.”

She didn’t wait for his response.

But it came anyway—low, quiet, as she reached the stairs:

“You’re a good girl.”

Hermione stopped mid-step.

The words settled like frost on her spine.

For a moment, everything flickered. Light bent sideways. Her throat closed.

A voice in her memory whispered the same thing. Against her skin. Against her mouth.

Mine now. That’s it. Good girl.

Her hand gripped the banister. She didn’t look back.

°·ξδ ☆ 63 ·°

It was that strange hour when the world wasn’t dark anymore—but still hadn’t committed to light.

The windows glowed a soft, undecided grey. The curtains moved only slightly, as if even the air wasn’t sure it wanted to stay.

The room was warm.

Too warm.

Hermione blinked awake slowly, her lashes sticky from sleep, the silence too absolute.

No sound.

No movement.

Just that thick, soupy stillness. Like the house was holding its breath. Like something was about to happen—or had already happened.

She shifted slightly. Her pillow was warm beneath her cheek.

Too warm.

Her eyes adjusted.

And then she felt it—that extra breath, close. Soft. Measured.

Not hers.

Her body went still.

Her mind did not.

She turned her head.

And froze.

Malfoy.

Sleeping beside her, turned slightly on his side, his arm brushing hers, as if this were simply how things were now. How they had *always* been.

For a moment—one long, sick second—she couldn’t move. Her brain short-circuited. Every part of her screamed *wrong* but there was no place to put the thought, no thread to pull to make sense of it.

She was still dreaming.

She had to be.

She never let him into her room. Not once. Not fully.

And yet—

The sheets were real. The smell of him was real. Warm cedar. Fir. The clean scent of his soap. Too familiar. Familiar in the way only time or intimacy made possible.

No.

No.

She sat up—too fast—and nausea surged, her blood rushing behind her eyes like a train coming off the rails.

Her stomach twisted.

She clenched the blanket.

Still a dream. Still a dream. Wake up, wake up, wake up—

But everything was too sharp.

The chill in the air, the texture of the sheets, the ache in her spine.

This wasn’t a dream.

This was real.

She was awake.

She was—*here*.

And she wasn't alone.

Her skin prickled. Sweat collected at the base of her neck.

She dragged her gaze downward.

Her wrist.

The bracelet.

Still there.

Still cool.

Still tight.

Her breath caught.

Her mind refused.

No. No. Today—it ends today. It was supposed to burn out. It was supposed to vanish. The spell should've lifted at sunrise. At sunrise I would be free. At sunrise I would leave.

She touched it.

It didn't fade.

It pulsed.

Her heartbeat stuttered.

She wanted to scream. Her throat locked.

The room tilted slightly, the corners of the ceiling bowing inward.

She clutched the edge of the bed, nails digging into the coverlet, trying to anchor herself. Trying to hold on to something that made sense.

What is happening?

She was forgetting something.

No—remembering.

Something just out of reach. Something she couldn't let herself look at directly.

Her lungs ached.

Her hands shook.

She had to breathe. Had to *think*.

There was only one place left untouched.

Only one place that still obeyed her will.

She closed her eyes.

And **occluded**.

It was her childhood bedroom.

Clean. Tidy. Pink walls and a white bookshelf. Her bed was perfectly made, her old stuffed bear tucked against the pillow. A desk with color-coded pens. Folders. The smell of dustless safety and old lemon polish.

Too safe. Too staged.

She stood barefoot at the window, breath fogging the glass. The air was still and cold.

What happened?

She turned, driven by something sharp and hot behind her ribs.

Opened drawers. Empty.

Rifled through notebooks. Nothing.

The pens were in rainbow order. The silence hummed.

What happened?

She dropped to her knees.

And looked under the bed.

There, nestled neatly between a shoebox of letters and her old Hogwarts diary, sat a box.

Mother-of-pearl and gold. Ornate. Out of place. Not hers.

Not meant to be here.

Too delicate.

Too perfect.

Too wrong.

She reached for it.

Her fingers brushed lace. Silk. Ribbons.

Memory trembled at the edges.

The scent of fir. Warm skin. Cold sheets.

A voice—hers. And then his.

Good girl.

“No,” she whispered.

She grabbed the box. It resisted her. It wasn’t meant to open.

But she saw through the cracks.

Flash-glimpses—

The library.

Her nightgown.

A kiss that hadn’t happened—except it had.

The bed.

The weight.

The voice at her ear.

Her body remembered before her mind did.

She remembered.

She remembered.

“Hermione—”

Draco’s voice, inside the dream—

“Stop.”

He ripped the box from her hands.

Suddenly, he was in the room with her. Not a memory. Not a dream. A presence. Calm. Composed.

He placed the box gently on a shelf—high, high, where she couldn’t reach.

Her knees scraped on the carpet. She was still trying.

“You don’t want this,” he said.

And the world shattered like glass around her.

She gasped back into her body, choking on breath like surfacing from ice.

The bedroom. Her real one. The Manor. The cold light of dawn creeping through the curtains.

Draco was sitting up beside her, holding her wrists, steady and unbothered.

His eyes were wide—but not surprised.

“Don’t do that,” he said gently. “You’ll only scare yourself.”

She couldn’t speak.

Tears spilled fast and ugly down her cheeks. Silent sobs hitched in her throat, full-body grief, raw and shaking. She was curling inward, trying to get out of her own skin.

Draco's arms circled around her.

He pulled her in, tucked her head beneath his chin, stroked her hair with a slow rhythm that felt practiced.

"It's alright," he whispered. "Everything's okay. You're mine now."

She jerked, but he didn't let go.

"You don't have to worry."

Her nails dug into her palms.

"If your friends are angry," he murmured, brushing tears from her cheek with the backs of his fingers, "you don't have to talk to them anymore."

She shook her head, ragged, frantic. "You hid it from me—all of it."

"I kept you safe, love." His voice never changed. Still calm. Still tender. "Gave you time to adjust."

"You took it," she choked. "You *took*—"

"Shhh," he breathed into her hair.

She was sobbing harder now, chest heaving, her whole body pulled tight with revulsion. She wanted to scream. She wanted to vomit. She wanted to disappear.

But his arms were warm. His chest solid. His hand stroked her spine in gentle, looping motions.

And that was the worst part.

Because part of her didn't fight it.

Didn't pull away.

Because he was comfort. He was safety. He had broken every single part of her.

"You're alright," Draco whispered.

He kissed the top of her head.

"It's over now."

He smiled against her hair.

"You're mine."

He covered her body with his, pinning her softly, stroking her cheek, brushing her hair aside. She was warm. He toyed with her hands and kissed every fingertip, every knuckle, the palms of both her hands. She could barely breathe. "My sweet wife," he murmured. "My good girl." Her mind was full of noise, static and screaming. His hands scoured her. His mouth claimed her. He had taken everything from her, and he wanted more. She was in a daze, rattled, unmoored. It was as if she was inhabiting someone else's body, as if she wasn't there. As if this was happening to someone else. His fingers grazing her breast. His lips kissing her brow. No escape. No refuge. It was like her dreams. Of course it was. It had always been real. Her body was now that of a trained animal. A puppet. He knew his way across every inch of her. She couldn't speak. She could only sob as he hiked her nightgown and caressed her thighs open. Everything faltered. Everything blurred.

She was wet and sticky. How many times had he taken her, last night, last week, month, since January? It didn't matter. Nothing did. Her thoughts were interrupted by the shaking of her own body, by the pressure and the weight as he rammed his way inside of her. Her spine arched. Her lungs burned. Her cheeks were wet with tears, and he kissed those too, never missing a beat. Her body responded to him as a puppet hanging off strings. "Relax, love," he said, low and commanding. "Let me." And her body softened the tension in her legs dissolved with a sigh, the bracelet warm in her arm, and she felt him trust deep into her, stretching her open to her limit. The fullness was unbearable. Her breaths came short and ragged. Her body contorted in pain. Or was it pleasure? Oh Merlin. Oh god. Oh no. It was pleasure. She sobbed harder, and he kissed all her tears as her body let out moans, as her muscles clenched around him, as her brain fought its last, losing battle. She was collapsing into him. Into herself. Into all the wrong things. She wasn't there. She was gone. Broken. And too complete. The heat building inside of her was terrible, real. It took her over, and she couldn't stop it. She couldn't stop. Blood pounding. Hands grasping. She was a swimmer drowning. Smoke in her own fire. The room spun and her mind splintered and Draco never stopped. Her moans became cries. Her cries became gasps. The sound of it—the sound of her—was the worst part. Because it wasn't him. Because it was her. She lost her grip. She lost herself. Violent flashes behind her eyes.

And then from the vague corner of her mind she felt it, the moment her husband filled her womb with his seed, as deep as he could she trembled in what she prayed was revulsion, but it was lust as his warmth spread inside, her.

She was cradled in his arms, her body still trembling and spent. The room was silent now, save for the faint rustle of the curtains and the soft, rhythmic breathing of the man beside her. The air felt heavy, oppressive, as though the walls themselves were closing in to witness her despair.

Her tears had dried on her cheeks, leaving tracks that felt etched into her skin like scars. But inside, her mind was a maelstrom of confusion and defeat.

"How long?" she whispered, her voice a brittle thread in the suffocating silence, her question fraught with a desperate need to comprehend the full extent of her betrayal.

Draco's fingers stroked her hair, a gesture so gentle it felt like a violation. "Since our wedding," he replied, his tone unnervingly serene, as if stating an undeniable truth. "You've been mine since then."

Her breath hitched, and she wanted to recoil, to escape the bonds of his arms, but the betrayal of her own body kept her frozen, mired in a paralyzing mix of exhaustion and horror. She buried her forehead deeper into his chest, as though seeking refuge in the very place that had become her prison.

Each sob that escaped her lips was smothered by the eerie quiet of the room, swallowed by the void that surrounded them. His arms tightened around her, not in a gesture of possessiveness, but with a tenderness that twisted the knife of her despair even deeper.

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The table was set.

Piled high with roasted tomatoes, soft eggs, toast in stacks, sausage, Molly's jam, and a cinnamon crumble she'd stayed up past midnight to finish.

The clock over the sink ticked like it was mocking them.

"She's probably just flooing in late," Molly said, for the third time, wiping her hands on her apron. "Maybe she stopped to grab flowers. Hermione always brings something."

"She's never late," Ginny said quietly. Her eyes were red. "Not two hours."

Charlie sat stiffly beside her, arms crossed. "We sure she was told the time?"

"I told her," Ginny said. "Twice. And she said she was coming."

Harry paced behind the table, one hand in his hair, the other gripping his wand too tightly. "Maybe she's working something out. Maybe she's doing something smart. She's—she's Hermione."

Bill leaned back in his chair, frowning. "She *is* smart. But maybe she changed her mind. Maybe she didn't want to come here and make a whole thing of it."

Ginny stared at him like he'd grown two heads.

"I'm just saying," Bill continued, "Draco paid through the nose to ward every single square inch of that manor for her. I know because I audited it. There's no cursework left. No traps. Not a single unstable seal. It's the safest property I've ever seen."

"I Talked to her 3 days ago, she wasn't planning to stay" Percy said sharply. He was sitting near the end of the table, elbows on knees, shaking his head. "She wouldn't stay if she had a way out."

Harry stopped pacing. "Maybe Kingsley knows something. Maybe he—"

The fireplace flared.

And Ron stepped out, looking rumpled and smug, like he'd just rolled out of bed and couldn't be bothered to care.

"Oi," he said, eyeing the table. "Is that crumble?"

"Ron—" Molly began.

He ignored her. Grabbed a plate. Started serving himself eggs and toast like nothing was wrong.

Ginny turned away, wiping her nose.

Harry just stared.

Percy looked like he might explode.

And then—

With a *pop*, a house-elf appeared at the far end of the table. It was dressed in a pristine white and green tea towel, wrapped like a toga. The hem was stitched with tiny silver thread.

The elf bowed deeply, arms wide.

"Lady Malfoy sends her apologies," it squeaked. "She will not be attending breakfast at the Burrow. She thanks you for your invitation."

Another bow.

And it vanished.

The room fell silent.

Even the clock stopped sounding like it ticked.

Ron snorted. "Well. Guess she *did* fuck the ferret after all."

The slap of Harry's fist across Ron's face was sharp and fast and loud.

Ron stumbled back, hitting the wall hard. His plate clattered to the floor.

“Don’t,” Harry said, shaking with rage. “Don’t talk about her like that. You don’t know anything. You *never* did.”

Ron held his jaw, stunned. “Well she would—”

“She’s not coming,” Ginny whispered. “She’s not—she’s not leaving him.”

Molly sat down slowly, as if her legs had stopped working. “No...”

Harry turned and stormed toward the door.

“Where are you going?” Bill asked.

“To see Kingsley,” Harry growled. “He *promised* me. He promised she’d be okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Now, chapter 2 should be available to you, in case you want to see how Draco put the box inside of Hermione's mind and what's on it!

Clipped Wings

Chapter Summary

Draco pushed him back, chest heaving. “At least I want her, I love her. I Protected her, —yes maybe from herself. What did you do? You were twirling your wand hoping she was going to solve this?. You let Kingsley pass that law. You sent her back into the Ministry like a soldier—again. There are things she doesn’t know ?”

“I trusted her,” Harry spat. “She’s Hermione.”

Chapter Notes

► Click here for trigger warnings if you must!

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

Clipped Wings

The vacuum cracked—once—loud and sharp, as the wards of the manor screeched when someone forced their way through them.

Draco looked up from his desk. He barely had time to register the whoosh of magic before Harry Fucking Potter, savior of the wizarding world, appeared—wand already in hand.

Behind him, Kreacher popped into view, grim-faced and silent.

So that's how the asshole had managed to breach the wards.

Draco rose instinctively, wand half-drawn. His heart leapt into his throat.

“Don’t—” he said quickly, before Harry could speak. “I love her.”

Harry’s face was thunder. “You—what?!”

Draco stepped around the desk. “Hermione is ok. She’s safe. She’s mine.”

Harry lunged forward, grabbing Draco by the collar and slamming him into the bookshelf. “You snake. You tricked her!”

“She was trusted into my care—of course I was going to do what was best,” Draco snarled back. “Your precious Minister gave her away to me. You keep trusting the Ministry, Potter—they sold you *twice*, and now they’ve sold *her*.”

“You think that excuses this?!”

“I did what I had to,” Draco shouted. “Do you really think Hermione Granger would’ve stayed unclaimed under Shacklebolt’s reforms? Two more years and she’d be married to someone worse—bonded to another House and gone. Maybe dead after they got an heir out of her. You know *nothing* about how magical families work.”

Harry’s fist clenched.

Draco pushed him back, chest heaving. “At least I want her, I love her. I *Protected her*, —yes maybe from herself. What did *you* do? You were twirling your wand hoping she was going to solve this?. You let Kingsley pass that law. You sent her back into the Ministry like a soldier—again. There are things she doesn’t know ?”

“I trusted her,” Harry spat. “She’s *Hermione*.”

“She has limits,” Draco hissed. “She has been fighting the ministry from the inside while you and the other dunderhead have been playing Auror.”

Harry flinched.

“You think Kingsley was going to give her two clean years?” Draco sneered. “You think he was going to let the brightest witch of her age run loose, He didn’t put an ounce of a fight when Hermione had her work week reduced.”

Harry said nothing.

Draco’s voice dropped. “She never had a chance.”

The Daily Prophet

July 2nd, 2007

“Tempers Flare at the Ministry: Potter Confronts Minister Shacklebolt Over Marriage Law Fallout”

By Elladora Marchbanks, Senior Political Correspondent

In a dramatic and highly publicized confrontation yesterday afternoon, Harry Potter—Head Auror and former Order of the Phoenix leader—stormed the Minister’s office in what eyewitnesses describe as a “furious and unrestrained tirade” against Minister Kingsley Shacklebolt.

The incident took place shortly after ten o’clock in the morning, when Mr. Potter was seen entering the Ministry’s executive wing without an appointment, demanding to speak to the Minister “immediately and in private.” When access was denied, he forced his way into the office regardless, reportedly casting a **Silencio** charm on the assistant’s quill before entering.

Inside, the conversation—if it could be called that—was anything but quiet.

Sources from the Department of Magical Law Enforcement report that Mr. Potter accused Minister Shacklebolt of “breaking his word” and “selling out” witches placed under the Marriage Protection Provision, specifically citing the case of Lady Hermione Malfoy (née Granger), whose six-month contract was due to expire as of July 1st.

“She was supposed to be free,” Potter was heard shouting. “You told me nothing would happen to her. You *promised*.”

The confrontation escalated when Minister Shacklebolt allegedly refused to comment on Lady Malfoy’s current situation, citing the confidentiality of magical contracts and the independence of bloodlines. At this point, according to two stunned Auror witnesses, Mr. Potter attempted to draw his wand but was physically restrained by his own team—who then **refused to arrest him**.

Potter reportedly accused the Minister of “blaming Hermione” for the execution of Clarissa, the Greymark matriarch tried and sentenced last week in a controversial fast-track hearing.

“It wasn’t her,” Potter was heard saying. “Hermione Granger wouldn’t do that.”

The trial in question has already caused deep rifts within the Wizengamot, as some argue the punishment was disproportionate and politically motivated. Rumors continue to circulate that bribes were involved, though no formal charges have been brought.

She was lying sideways in bed, the sheets a tangled mess around her. The dim room smelled faintly of fir, his scent was now a constant, in her skin, her hair, her very breath. a scent that once brought her peace but now seemed to mock her restlessness. Exhausted. Well—not precisely exhausted. Defeated. The air was heavy with the warmth of summer and the flowering fields outside the manor, mingling with the subtle aroma of the tea that had gone cold on her bedside table.

She hadn't left her bedroom in two, maybe three days. Sunlight filtered through the half-closed curtains, casting muted patterns on the walls that blurred in and out of focus. The light never really changed. It was always morning. Or maybe evening. It didn't matter. Shadows stretched lazily across the floor, never moving, much like her.

She had heard the screaming, of course. The shouting match downstairs—Harry's voice frantic, full of anger, Draco's like ice cracking underfoot but calm, confident. The echoes of their argument still reverberated through the wooden beams, a reminder of the chaos she was too tired —ashamed to confront.

And yet Harry hadn't come to see her. Hadn't even asked to. That part didn't surprise her. He had listened to Draco. Believed every word. Of course he had. Draco hadn't lied. He hadn't needed to. He was a snake. And she—Hermione Granger—was a stupid little idiot.

Her eyes drifted to the ceiling, it was pretty a light blue full of fluffy pink cheeked clouds. Pity pooled in her chest, viscous and heavy. She didn't even have the strength to feel ashamed about it.

And what did her husband do? He spoiled her. Rotten. The house-elves brought her favorite meals on enchanted trays—salmon, mushroom tart, tea steeped to the exact temperature—but she rarely took more than a bite. Sometimes, she forgot to chew. Sometimes, she spit it out when no one was looking. She wasn't hungry.

She hadn't dressed properly in days. Just layers— delicate nightgowns, robes, sometimes a shawl draped loosely over her shoulders. Everything smelled faintly of *him* now—smoke and fir and something sharper beneath it—blended with the soft trace of her own perfume. The scent clung to her skin, soaked into the seams. She couldn't tell where one layer ended and the next began. The elves brushed her hair in silence. She let them. They plaited it into a long, careful braid, always tied with pink silk ribbons. She could barely look at the ribbons without crying.

And Draco— He was never unkind. Never once did he raise his voice. Every night, he would tenderly kiss her forehead before peeling one by one each of the layers she had covered her shivering body with. Called her love. That was the worst part. That was the thing that was breaking her. He wasn't cruel. He was soft. Even when he took her, the cursed bracelet in her wrist afforded him that luxury, She was docile, compliant, meek under him. He would kiss every inch of her breast, he would untie her braid and use the ribbon on her wrists.

He always made sure she was ready for him, sometimes He would dose her with Draught of Peace, whispering sweet nothings that no one had ever spoken to her before, letting her drift into peaceful slumber for hours until she awoke, in the middle of the fog of the potion to find herself on the precipice of her own climax as he was deep inside her, Her body stretched and

trembling under him. But he was always tender. And she couldn't fathom how to exist without that sweetness.

This was her life now. This was it.

The Wiltshire Gazette & Herald

July 30rd, 2007

“Of Unexpected Matches and Quiet Affections: The Malfoy Union, Six Months On”

By Celestina Thorne, Social Affairs Correspondent

It was the contract that surprised everyone—and, perhaps, the outcome that surprised us more.

Six months ago, the announcement of Miss Hermione Granger’s match to Draco Malfoy sent tremors through every drawing room from Wiltshire to Whitehall. The pairing—sanctioned under the controversial Ministry Marriage Protection Provision—was viewed by many as volatile, if not outright mismatched. And yet—there has been no scandal. No unraveling. Only the quiet hum of a life being built, slowly and out of sight.

The Malfoy family has declined to comment on the terms of the marriage contract. A spokesperson for Lord Malfoy stated only that the arrangement was “entirely legal and in accordance with Ministry requirements.”

But sources close to the family suggest the contract included a standard clause regarding *consummation* within six months—common to most post-war matches formalized through the MPP. What is uncommon, however, is the degree of visible harmony between the couple.

Lady Malfoy (née Granger) has been seen regularly in Diagon Alley and Muggle London, attending art showings, acquiring books, and, most notably, curating pieces for what one insider called “an ambitious redecoration of several Malfoy properties.” Her taste has been praised as “sharp, modern, and surprisingly generous,” and her expenditures reflect a woman trusted to wield the Malfoy vault with complete freedom.

While the couple remains intensely private, acquaintances note a steady presence of affection.

It’s not uncommon for school-era rivals to forge strong adult partnerships—passion wears many faces, after all—and those who knew the couple in their youth admit they’re not entirely shocked.

“She always challenged him,” one classmate said, on condition of anonymity. “I think he liked that more than he let on.”

Lady Malfoy, once considered one of the Ministry’s brightest rising stars, has also recently reduced her working hours, scaling back to three days a week and stepping away from

several high-profile committees. Whether this signals a retreat from public life—or a shift toward a new one—remains to be seen.

As the six-month mark quietly passes without public drama, perhaps it's time to admit that some things, despite all odds, do work out.

It was grey again.

Not raining—just dull. The kind of morning that didn't bother to rise, didn't try to pretend it might become something else.

Hermione lay still beneath the covers, her body heavy with a tiredness that felt deeper than bone. Her stomach churned. A slow, twisting nausea that had nothing to do with the food she hadn't eaten.

She thought, vaguely, she might finally be dying of sadness.

She had hoped for it, a little.

A quiet ending. A slipping away. Maybe just not waking up.

But no.

Of course not.

Life, she thought bitterly, is *never* that merciful.

She forced herself to sit up. The room swayed. She braced herself with one hand on the mattress, the other pressed flat against her stomach—instinctive, sick, afraid.

It wasn't grief.

Not entirely.

It was something else.

She whispered the spell, lips barely moving, the words catching in her throat.

A golden light glowed faintly in the air before her.

Hermione stared at it.

It hovered for a heartbeat, two—

And confirmed everything.

She was pregnant.

Her breath caught—and then broke.

She didn't sob—she *shattered*. The sound that left her throat wasn't human. It was too raw, too deep. Sobs wracked through her so violently she doubled over, arms wrapped around her stomach.

The elves appeared in a panicked cluster, wide-eyed and whispering to one another, too frightened to speak aloud.

Plato—old and cracked, with the biggest ears she had ever seen and a collection of mismatched cufflinks adorning the chest of his napkin as if they were military medals —stepped forward, wringing his hands.

"Mistress mustn't cry that much," he whispered. "It will make Mistress sick. Please. Mistress must rest. Please."

But she couldn't stop.

She was going to drown in it.

She had thought she'd already lost everything.

And now—somehow—she had even more to lose.

The house-elf interrupted his meeting with Carrow. That alone was enough to raise alarm.

It was trembling—distressed—whispering in that convoluted way he loathed. Draco didn't wait for it to finish. He left behind his notes, the half-finished port, and whatever dull point Carrow had been making about trade law.

He found her on the floor.

Still in her nightclothes. Still crying.

He dropped to his knees, pulled her into his arms, whispered nonsense and promises and comforts that had no name. He held her like she might vanish. Told her she could have anything—*anything*—if she would just stop looking at him like she did.

He told her he loved her.

It took her more than a week to ask.

A new Minister of Magic.

"Maybe Rowle," she said, voice quiet. Measured. "Kingsley despises him."

That was the moment he knew she was coming back to him. Not fully—not yet. But something had shifted. Part of her was waking.

She allowed her friends to visit. Hestia and Tracey, first. Then Mrs. Potter.

As the news trickled through their social circles, reactions varied. Some friendships withered —*for the better*, Draco thought. Shallow, brittle people who had never deserved her. Others clung on like mold. Potter, for instance. Always Potter.

Mrs. Potter was also pregnant, which was... unfortunate. With Draco's luck, it would be a girl. And then his son would fall in love with her, and the Malfoys would be chained to the Potters forever.

He made a mental note to preemptively discourage the idea.

It was a relief when Mrs. Potter found out she was having a boy—and planned to name him *Albus Severus* (the poor baby—and here Draco was, feeling sorry for a *Potter*).

His mother came around, of course. The prospect of a grandchild was enough to dissolve Narcissa's pride. She wrote letters. Sent gifts. Begged—*elegantly*—for forgiveness.

And Hermione, generous to a fault, allowed a truce.

She still didn't smile often.

But she no longer cried alone.

And for the first time in years—

Draco Malfoy's life was perfect.

Chapter End Notes

Uff, we are at the end I feel this is the perfect point to leave this story alone, I might post some drabbles I have of little pieces of chapters and way into the future that don't fit anywhere else.

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