

& Obey, Till Death Do us Part

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/26736799) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/26736799>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Rape/Non-Con
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationships:	Hermione Granger/Draco Malfoy , Hermione Granger/Theodore Nott
Characters:	Ginny Weasley , Neville Longbottom , Marcus Flint , Justin Finch-Fletchley
Additional Tags:	Extremely Dubious Consent , Alternate Universe - Voldemort Wins , Possessive Behavior , Possessive Draco Malfoy , Stockholm Syndrome , Love Triangles , Dark , Alternate Universe , Hurt/Comfort , Smut , Sexual Content , Forced Bonding , Forced Marriage , Gaslighting , Evil Draco Malfoy , possessive!Draco , Sexual Slavery , Post-Battle of Hogwarts , Protective Draco Malfoy , Narcissism , Obsessive Behavior , Obsessive Draco Malfoy , Stalking , Ownership , Emotional Manipulation , Psychopathology & Sociopathy , Rape/Non-con Elements , Threats of Rape/Non-Con , Attempted Rape/Non-Con , No Redemption Draco Malfoy , Domestic Violence , Forced Orgasm , Forced Pregnancy , Jealousy
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of & Obey, Till Death Do Us Part
Collections:	My God-Tier Theo/Hermione Fanfics , HP best stories
Stats:	Published: 2020-09-30 Words: 146,784 Chapters: 34/34

& Obey, Till Death Do us Part

by [LongtimeLurker1111](#)

Summary

Hermione was on the run for four years before Draco found her. She survived, fell madly in love, and watched the love of her life die at the hands of Death Eaters. Now Draco Malfoy owns her and will do with her what he wants.

"With me, you will be safe and for that, you will obey me wholeheartedly. You will submit to me mind, body, and soul and I will cherish your submission. You can exercise your intellect within these walls, but you will obey me. Let me be clear, if you fight me on this, if you refuse to submit, I will be your hell."

Will she find a way to escape? Will she find love again? Or will she be forced to live as the property of the most powerful dark-wizard in Britain until the day she dies?

Notes

I do not own Harry Potter. All characters and likenesses belong to J.K. Rowling.

Chapter 1: Part I: A Train to Safety?

Chapter Notes

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

2002

Hermione cast a wandless Tempus on her sleeve as she ran through the train station.

8:57 PM, Merlin's balls! Only three minutes left to find the blasted train!

She felt as though she'd run for decades already. Voldemort won the war in 1998 deep in the Forbidden Forest. Harry walked naively to his death one Horcrux short of a victory. If he'd shared his plans for self-sacrifice with her Hermione would have stopped him. She'd known before they headed off to find the remaining Horcrux's that Harry likely was one. She wept for months, hiding out in the cold, over the fact that she never mentioned it to him. Nor did she mention her theory that all the Horcrux's needed to be destroyed before he met Voldemort in the end.

Instead, Hermione watched Voldemort's army strut across the grounds of Hogwarts,

Voldemort's shrill voice magnified with a Sonorous "Harry Potter is Dead! I caught him fleeing the battle to save his skin. Lay down your wands and join me now or suffer his selfish fate."

She met Ron's eyes and barely registered the shock and fear in them before Bellatrix Lestrange cast the green light of an Avada Kedavra and Ron's expression blackened.

Even if he let her live, Hermione wouldn't join Voldemort's regime. So she thanked the gods that the anti-Apparition wards fell during the battle and Apparated on the spot. She landed, breath scratching in her throat from screaming, in an abandoned High School she remembered from growing up outside London. Since that moment Hermione never stayed more than two days in any one location.

Hermione continued the process of Apparating to random locations, setting up Wards, and hiding out waiting for news- the same process she, Harry, and Ron chose over the past year. Although, this time she was completely alone and without a tent, having dropped her beaded bag in the Forest of Dean when caught by the Snatchers.

While Hermione scrapped for discarded food in bins outside Muggle restaurants to stay alive, Voldemort celebrated his defeat of Harry Potter for six months before heading to France to continue his plans for global domination. The rumor was that high-ranking Death Eaters took over the management of his regime in Britain. During that time every single Order member, Muggle-born, or sympathizer promptly disappeared.

One week ago, Hermione sat at the base of a large viaduct in Sussex. As she turned the page in her book something in her pocket burned. Confused, she pulled out the hot object and

noticed it was the galleon that she charmed for the DA to communicate with seven years ago. She read the message that floated around the edge of the coin, **This Monday in Manchester....Train 785...platform 11...red bench...9:00 PM...the phoenix flies again.** Hermione stared at the galleon in shock. She thought all of the remaining Order members were dead, but it took a DA member to change the message.

Holy shit!

She knew it could be a trick but if there was any chance that other Order members lived she had to find out.

Cursing herself for her potential foolishness Hermione found the worn, red bench near platform 11. She stared at it a moment wondering what she had to do to activate its magic. *Do I walk through the bench?* She tried but her knees bumped against the wood and nothing happened. She then tried sitting down and immediately she felt the tingle of magic before transporting to the secret platform. Excited, she dashed onto the train not stopping to think that it was headed for either her salvation or her death.

Her shoes hit the metal grate of the train steps just as the horn blared and she grabbed the rusty railing to pull herself up. The shabby train didn't hold a candle to the Hogwarts Express but then again, nothing in Hermione's new reality shined as bright as her days before the war. Panting, she ducked into the first empty compartment and flopped down on the cushioned seat. *I made it, no turning back now.*

Just as she began to second guess her decision a man joined her compartment and took the seat across from Hermione, his smile looked kind and there was something familiar in his eyes. *This was a bad idea.*

She stood to leave and the man whispered, "Headed to Manchester?"

Hermione stared noncommittally.

The man continued, "I hear the locals spotted a phoenix there this week. Rare birds, phoenixes, almost extinct, I'm hoping to find one myself."

Hermione checked her reflection in the window nervously. Straight blond hair, blue eyes, round nose - her disguised appearance looked okay.

She knew it was risky but hiding on her own for eight long months made Hermione lonely and willing to engage. "It's dark tonight but the moon is bright." she chanced the code phrase used by the Order years ago.

The man sighed in relief and responded "Too bad, I hoped for rain. I love a good storm, especially if there's thunder and lightning."

Hermione sat. She couldn't believe her luck, another Order member on the run, headed to Manchester. The rumor was true! She wasn't alone anymore.

In a hushed voice, she asked "How did you hear about the resistance cell in Manchester?"

The man looked over his shoulders nervously and leaned in to answer the question, "I heard back in Harry Potter's days at Hogwarts his friend Hermione Granger used a Protean Charm to communicate with Dumbledore's Army. An acquaintance of mine sent me this last week." He pulled a tarnished galleon out of his pocket and handed it to her.

Hermione stared in amazement at the familiar coin and read the scrolling words out loud
"This Monday in Manchester....Train 785...platform 11...red bench...9:00 PM...the phoenix flies again."

The man stared at her with wide eyes before adding, "My friend mentioned that there was a secret group of resistance fighters hidden in Britain. I didn't believe him until the coin arrived," he admitted.

Hermione looked from the galleon to the man, his brown hair framed his face and he wore cheap robes that fit his form well, hugging his shoulders and arms. His eyes scanned her at the same time. Who did he look like? She couldn't place the memory.

"My friend sent me one too." She lied and pulled hers out of her pocket. She wanted to ask who the man's friend was but didn't dare give up her identity yet.

"My name's Darren." He said as he held out his hand.

"Kathy" Hermione lied shaking his hand and noticing it's warmth.

"I went to Beauxbaton." He continued "We look roughly the same age, did you attend Hogwarts?"

Hermione didn't miss a beat, accustomed to the lie, "No, I was homeschooled. My parents wanted to travel the world, Mom was a witch, Dad was a Muggle whose sister got her letter at eleven. They were both killed in the purge."

Darren's face fell "I'm sorry," he said.

Hermione turned to stare out the dirty windows *This train is shit, I can't even see out the window.* The lie stung. Her parents didn't die in the purge, but, they may as well be dead to her; their Memory Charms were no longer reversible.

Darren cleared his throat and Hermione turned her attention back to him. "I heard that Voldemort's British regime is now run by Draco Malfoy. Is that what you heard as well?" He asked.

Hermione scoffed, "Yeah, that's what I heard. Draco Malfoy is a twat."

Darren huffed a half-shocked, half-impressed laugh. "Twat? He killed Dumbledore and rose in ranks quickly." He said.

"Yeah, and he was a twat in school who would only pick fights when he was flanked by his cronies...or so I heard." Hermione caught herself.

Darren narrowed his eyes and said, "I heard Hermione Granger punched him in the face once."

It was Hermione's turn to laugh now, *Happy memories*.

The train ride took two hours and Hermione and Darren chatted pleasantly the entire time, fueled by the relief of finding another Order member and the thought of soon joining the resistance cell.

Darren asked a lot of questions and Hermione found herself describing her past four years on the run. Most of what she shared was a lie but Darren didn't need to know that. She wouldn't tell a stranger about how she'd survived, fallen in love, and watched the love of her life die at the hands of Death Eaters last winter. Those memories were too raw and too personal.

They neared Manchester and Hermione took a moment to stare out the dirty window again. *Phin*.

Theodore Phineas Nott Jr., Death Eater protégé, deserted during the final battle as well. Theodore Nott senior was a violent bastard in his son's opinion and Theo had no intention of following in his Father's footsteps. In fact, he exhaustively researched ways to avoid the Dark Mark from the moment Malfoy approached him with the prospect.

1998

Hermione bumped into Nott outside a magical village near Southpool one day when she was searching for news. It was five months after the fall and Hermione was desperately lonely and hungry. She blanched at first, assuming that Nott was a Death Eater sent to hunt her down. Theo grabbed her arm when he recognized her and Hermione Hexed him in the shins and kicked his wand out of his hand.

"Please, I'm not what you think I am!" He yelled.

Hermione stared down at him as he writhed on the ground in pain, green boils crawling across his leg.

"My ass you aren't! Obli.. " Hermione spat as she leaned down to Obliviate him.

"Stop! Please! I'm on the run as well! Don't erase my memories, I'll be a sitting duck. I swear I'm no harm to you!" He yelled. Hermione inched closer. "I swear it, I'll swear it! Fuck! I'll make an Unbreakable Vow!"

Hermione paused then said, "Convenient, we don't have a Bonder."

Theo's eyes widened in fear.

"However, lucky for you I nicked some Veritaserum a week ago." she sneered.

Theo downed the potion without complaint and spilled his life story to Hermione. How he grew up under an abusive father, how he was nearly forced to take the Mark, and how he Apparated away during the final battle.

From that day on Hermione and Theo were inseparable. They took to calling one another Mia and Phin so as not to draw attention to themselves if they were ever overheard. After three months on the run together Phin surprised Hermione with a magical tent and some food he Accio'd from a store late at night. She flew into his arms to celebrate but he froze, stared into her eyes, and slowly brought his lips to hers.

Hermione shut her eyes tight and brushed her hand to her lips. A tear ran down her cheek as she remembered their early days together. She and Phin spent nearly three years together, on the run, and madly in love before he died.

Darren stood up to stretch. "Are you okay?" He asked.

"Yes, just thinking about my loved ones who won't make it to Manchester." She answered truthfully.

Darren nodded in understanding. "I'm going to see how far we have to go before we get there. We should be arriving soon." He said.

Hermione tried to smile at him as she turned back to the window.

After ten minutes the train slowed and stopped. Darren hadn't returned but Hermione hoped she would find him on the platform. It was comforting to feel connected to someone again, even if he was a stranger, he was an Order member and they were in this together.

Not having any bags, Hermione jumped up and walked towards the metal steps to depart from the train. She watched her feet as she walked and looked up just in time to see the familiar sloped roof of Hogsmeade station, Dervish and Bangs Magical Equipment, and the silhouette of Hogwarts in the distance against the night sky. She stared, shocked, and then Death Eaters, got her attention by casting a spell that sliced her hand. Hermione's eyes shot up in anger as they shoved her off the train towards a group of screaming witches. A little ways away wizards huddled together being cursed one by one and dropping to the ground.

There is no resistance cell. It's a trap, we are going to die.

Hermione immediately began her mental checks and calculations. *I've got my wand.* She felt its pressure against her arm in her holder. *I still have the tent.* She felt the lump of the Reducio'd tent in her pocket. *If I can Apparate I'll be okay.* She tried to turn on the spot but felt resistance, like running into a force field. *Fuck, Anti-apparition wards. Well, that's not surprising.* She scanned her surroundings trying to ignore the wails and sniffles of the witches around her.

They are killing the wizards but leaving the witches. Why? Hermione followed the crowd of witches as the Death Eaters corralled them into carriages. *We are headed to Hogwarts. Once we arrive I can curse the Death Eaters and run to the Forbidden Forest. Maybe I can grab some witches to go with me. We can find Firenze; he'll help.*

Hermione didn't dare talk during the carriage ride. There were three other witches that she didn't recognize and a Death Eater. *Why haven't they taken our wands?* She ducked her head and chanced a glance at the guard's face. He sneered at her. Hermione felt the trail of his eyes lick up and down her body and then she felt a shiver up her spine. She made a mental note to curse him first.

Where was Darren? Did he escape or was he killed? Dread crept over Hermione; she felt like she knew the answer. She didn't see anyone escaping at the platform. No, it was a perfectly orchestrated attack and she walked right into it. *Damnit!*

The carriages passed under the dilapidated gates of the castle grounds and Hermione readied herself for the attack.

Her carriage stopped, the Death Eater huffed, "Stay where you are until I tell you to move!" and jumped down to chat with the other Death Eater guards.

Hermione saw three carriages in addition to hers. Sixteen witches, *Fuck! How can I get them all out?* The guard came back and roughly pulled the witches from the carriage. When he clamped down on Hermione's arm she jumped into action kicking him in the nose and grabbing out her wand. "Furnunculus!" she shouted as the guard yelled in pain. Nothing happened. *What!? Why isn't my magic working?*

"Crazy Witch!" the guard growled, and the last thing Hermione saw before she blacked out was the back of his hand careening towards her face.

She came to on the stone ground of the Great Hall, her head fuzzy and throbbing. The magical ceiling above reflected an ominous sky and someone was talking. "...Death Eater Training Grounds... You will be assigned to a guard... Wise to obey"

Hermione shook her head and stood up gingerly. The hall was empty except for guards milling around chatting with one another. She and the other witches stood in a roped-off fence. Hermione reached toward the fence but pulled her hand back before making contact. *Not a good idea, Hermione. It's probably charmed to shock or worse.*

A witch next to her whispered to her neighbor, "What do they mean assigned to a guard? For what?"

The neighbor didn't engage but stood stone-faced and terrified. The Death Eater addressing the witches stood on the large dais where Dumbledore and the other professors used to eat their meals. The long table was gone, an empty stage left in its place.

"Guards, the auction will proceed now. Make your way to the front" He said.

Assigned, Obey, Auction!?

Hermione felt her heart rate increase. She wildly glanced around for any means of escape.

A Death Eater walked to the roped-off area, the fence panel dissolving as he entered. He roughly grabbed a witch and the panel slowly emerged again as he dragged her past the enclosure. The Death Eater deposited the wailing witch on the dais as the speaker announced "We will start the bidding at seventy galleons."

The anxiety level in the enclosure increased as the Death Eaters bid for the witch on the dais. Hermione panicked as she watched witch after witch, sold, and then dragged away.

When only six witches remained, Hermione felt a hand on her shoulder and turned to see Justin Finch-Fletchly dressed in full Death Eater garb.

"Come on," He said, "You aren't supposed to be here." Then he whispered, "I'm here to get you out."

Hermione didn't know what to think. Had Justin joined the Death Eaters or was he a spy? *Does he recognize me? Is he here to save me?* The panel beside Hermione dissolved and Justin led her through.

They snuck out of the Great Hall and Justin brought her through the stone corridors of the old school.

"Where are you taking me?" She asked.

He didn't respond.

They ended up in front of the large gargoyle that used to lead to Dumbledore's office. *This can't be good.* Justin mumbled something that Hermione didn't catch and dragged Hermione up the winding steps as they emerged. Once inside he let go of her arm and headed back down the steps. Hermione ran towards the door before the steps disappeared but didn't make it in time.

She pulled out her wand "Alohamora!" she shouted. Nothing happened. "Justin, come back! Help me!" she cried, banging her fists on the door.

"He can't get back through the wards," said a deep voice behind her.

Hermione turned around and took in the kind form of Darren from the train, his eyes now hooded and dark. *What the fuck!? You Bloody Bastard!* Darren waved his wand in front of Hermione and she felt her transfigured disguise revert back to her original appearance.

"There you are." He whispered. "I've been searching for you for a very long time."

Hermione froze, confused and horrified.

"Sorry, let me explain." Darren said and waved his wand again, this time pointed at himself. The tall, cold, muscular form of Draco Malfoy stood in Darren's place.

"Welcome home, Hermione." He sneered.

Chapter End Notes

Song Choice for this chapter: "O.... Saya by M.I.A feat. A.R. Rahman"

Chapter 2: Malfoy's Gifts

Chapter Notes

Thanks to everyone who read Chapter 1. Here is another chapter for this week. After this I will try to keep to a weekly schedule. I hope you enjoy!

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

Hermione jerked her wand up and directed it at Malfoy's torso. "Stay back, or I swear to the gods I will blast you into oblivion," she croaked, with a shaky voice.

Malfoy chuckled as he stalked toward her, "Surely you've realized your magic doesn't work here," he said placing a large hand on her back and directing her to a bookcase in the wall.

Hermione didn't budge; Malfoy's fingers gripped her hip.

"Hermione, love, there is nowhere to run. Come, let's talk." His smooth voice dripped with a dark threat.

"I am not your..." Hermione started but Malfoy cast a wandless, nonverbal Silencio and her voice died in her throat.

Hermione bit her lip weighing her options. She couldn't speak. She had no magic. The wards wouldn't let her out. *Breathe, Hermione, Breathe. Be smart. Keep your eyes open and find a way out.*

She took one reluctant step forward as Malfoy chuckled again savagely and said, "Good girl."

He walked Hermione to the bookcase and it opened wide like a door, exposing a massive living quarter. Hermione stepped past the threshold and took in her surroundings. To her left was a long, heavy wooden dining table with an iron chandelier hanging above it. The main room was open with what seemed like twenty-foot ceilings. There was a bedroom past the dining area in the corner. The door to the bedroom was open and Hermione could see the edge of a huge bed with white sheets and another open door to a bathroom.

Directly in front of her on the far wall stood two, floor-to-ceiling windows with thick, intricate mullions. The living area housed a long sleek, gray couch with its back to the door and a console table behind it, in front of the couch were two leather chairs and a tall coffee table.

To the left of the sitting area stood the largest fireplace Hermione had ever seen, a crackling fire blazed in its hearth. To Hermione's right, along the wall, were two arched doorways. One led to a stately library with expansive bookshelves and a coffered ceiling of chunky beams in a checkerboard pattern. The other door was closed.

The windows or the fireplace are the likeliest places to escape.

Malfoy stared at Hermione as she observed the space. "Do you like it? I want you to feel comfortable" he said.

Welcome home? You want me to feel comfortable? Yeah, psycho, it's a beautiful prison.

Malfoy gave her a confident and knowing smile, as if he read her thoughts across her face like a book. "Take a seat, we have a lot to go over." He said.

He gestured toward the couch but Hermione walked across the room and stood near the window instead. She crossed her arms and leaned against the pane.

Malfoy didn't seem to care, he walked to a bar cart in the library and poured himself a drink and then stuck his head out the archway to ask, "Fire Whiskey?"

Hermione glared *like I'm going to drink anything you give me*. Before he came back she pressed her back against the pane to test its resistance. *Definitely magically reinforced.*

He crossed the room while taking a sip of his drink. Malfoy arrived at the couch and sat resting his arms on the back of the furniture, he took up a huge amount of space.

When did he get so big?

"I want to go over the basics with you. Will you come sit?" He asked.

Hermione continued to glare.

"Suit yourself," he said before continuing. "Voldemort headed to France three and a half years ago and left me in charge. Hogwarts is now a training camp for the regime. I've built the strongest magical military in the world within these walls."

He stopped to take a sip and let that sink in for Hermione's sake.

"Training and military life gets tedious after a while so I reward my men with female property." He sat forward and rested his elbows on his knees, legs spread wide, and fingering the rim of the glass. He took off his robe as they entered the living quarters and was now wearing dark, fitted trousers and a white oxford with the top two buttons undone, sleeves rolled up.

"Some men choose a new witch every month it seems. They go through them quickly, poor souls. I, myself haven't taken a witch yet. I've been waiting for you."

Ice crept down Hermione's spine at those words.

"I've used every resource at my disposal to find you, which is considerable. You really are the brightest witch of our age to have evaded me for so long. But, I found you in the end. I remembered these blasted coins you charmed."

He took the galleon out of his pocket and turned it over in his hand.

"I searched and found Potter's galleon with his personal items left behind when he died. The Dark Lord kept his possessions at Gringotts, did you know that?" He paused to look at her.

"Once I had Potter's coin it was simply a matter of hunting down the remaining twenty-three DA members and locating their coins as well. Many of the witches are still here. As soon as you read the words on the train I knew I had you. You forgot that only original DA members could read the messages, dear. It took me weeks to figure out how to program it. Luckily for me, Finch-Fletchley selflessly offered to help set the message in return for a place in my military...and for a promise that I wouldn't murder his entire family."

Hermione felt dead inside. *How could I be so stupid?* She tapped her throat with her fingers and gave Malfoy a pleading look. *Let me speak you, manipulative bastard.*

"Not yet, love, I have more to tell you." He stated smugly.

Malfoy continued "You belong to me now. I own you and I will do with you as I please. And believe me, I've had many years to imagine all the ways you will please me." He paused and took another sip as his eyes raked over her body.

"I'm not heartless though, I'm going to give you three gifts. First of all, I will give you eight hours. Starting the moment I finish talking to you tonight. You can rage, scream, use your magic in whatever way you see fit, and try your best to escape. Tomorrow at 8:30 AM your time is up. After that, you will be respectful, do as I say and obey my every command. When I say 'jump', you'll say 'How high?' When I tell you to suck my cock, you will drop to your knees. I will never need to tell you anything twice."

"My second gift to you is fourteen days. I will give you fourteen days to acclimate to your new surroundings before I touch you. I won't expect anything of you except one kiss a day when I drop you off to work each morning in Hogsmeade. That all ends on the fifteenth day, from that point on I will take you as often as I wish, in whatever way I desire and you will give yourself to me."

"Lastly, I won't hurt you. I won't use Unforgiveables on you, I won't lay a hand on you. With me, you are safe and for that, you will obey me wholeheartedly. You will submit to me mind, body, and soul and I will cherish your submission. You can exercise your intellect within these walls, but you will obey me. Let me be clear, if you fight me on this, if you refuse to submit, I will be your Hell."

Malfoy took one last sip and then stood up, placed his drink on the console table, and walked to his room saying "Enjoy your evening, love."

The Silencio dissolved the moment he shut his bedroom door leaving Hermione screaming and clutching at her arms as she sank to the ground.

Think Hermione! Find a way to escape. She stood quickly and scanned the room again. *He said I could use my magic.*

She grabbed her wand and whispered "Lumos!"

Light shone from the tip of her wand and she let out a sigh of relief. However, the relief was short-lived for nothing Hermione tried aided her escape. First, she cast a Protego around herself and then tried Bombarda and Bombarda Maxima on the windows, door, and even the floor. She thought about shrinking herself to crawl under the door, but Malfoy charmed it with several wards. Hermione ultimately tried her entire repertoire of spells, charms, and hexes with nothing to show for it except for destroying Malfoy's home.

Lastly, and in a moment a sheer desperation Hermione threw caution to the wind and conjured Fiendfyre. All the floors, furniture, and belongings burnt to a crisp but Hermione remained unharmed. *FUCK! He must have used dark magic to protect me. There go any suicide attempts.*

In a way that was a relief. The situation was dire but Hermione's drive to survive was high.

After realizing her magic wouldn't help her, Hermione decided to spend the evening screaming obscenities at Malfoy through his bedroom door. Like the exterior door to the dwelling, Malfoy's door remained untouched throughout her magical outburst. Hermione suspected that Malfoy either gained incredible patience in adulthood or he cast a Silencio and couldn't hear her screaming.

At dawn she finally lost steam and let herself succumb to the exhaustion that felt embedded in her bones. Having blown up or burned all the furniture she had no comfortable options for places to rest. However, she often slept on the ground while on the run, so comfort wasn't her primary concern. Instead, she found a pile of rubble to curl up behind as her only form of protection.

She woke to Malfoy crouching over her, his hand was on her shoulder.

"Hermione, wake up. I let you sleep, I know how exhausted you are but let's move you to somewhere more comfortable."

As soon as her eyes opened the fear and anxiety of the previous day crashed over her. She moved to a crouching position and placed her back against the wall. From this perspective, she saw that the entire space looked pristine as if last night never happened.

Did I imagine it? Am I going crazy?

"You certainly showed off your magical abilities last night. You're still a very smart and capable witch." He said, although the subtext was that he was obviously smarter and more capable.

Malfoy moved quickly and pulled Hermione to her feet.

Hermione yanked her arms back spitting out "Fuck you and your condescension, you crazy Bastard. Touch me again and I will murder you."

Malfoy stood, ice-cold, his eyes showed pure malice. It was a warning. She clearly crossed a line. Then in an instant his rage was gone, replaced by a confident smirk.

"It's 9:15 AM, love. Would you like to change the terms of our deal?" He asked.

Hermione cowered. Because of the first of Malfoy's "gifts" Hermione knew that there was no escape from within his house. If she wanted to escape she needed him to let her out.

Malfoy mentioned a job in Hogsmeade. Maybe I can escape while working.

She didn't want to risk an opportunity for escape on the short-lived satisfaction of name-calling or insubordination.

She schooled her emotions and said, "No, I think your terms are ...fair." She stumbled over her words.

Malfoy's smile widened. "Smart decision." He said as he gestured toward his bedroom. "Why don't you go lie down or take a shower."

He says, as if I have a choice, Hermione thought.

Malfoy continued, "There are books in the library for you to read. I've just decided that we will have a dinner guest. You can look forward to the company."

They walked across the living room and dining area but Hermione stopped before she entered his room.

Malfoy took her hand and said, "These chambers are our home, and this is our room. There will be no more sleeping on the ground."

Hermione took in the room, noticing how the flickering light from the sconces made shadows creep along the walls. It looked like a posh hotel room. A king-size bed with nightstands on either side lay along the wall to her left. A couple of armchairs sat in the corner with a round coffee table, there was a low walnut dresser across the wall ahead of her and the bathroom door stood open next to the dresser.

"I have work to attend to this morning and afternoon. You can rest today and I will take you to your job in Hogsmeade tomorrow. Make yourself at home," Malfoy said. He placed a hand on her shoulder and gave a gentle squeeze. His thumb ghosted her neck, causing Hermione to shiver. "I will let you use your magic for now, but behave."

Hermione shrank away. *Won't touch, huh? I guess that meant sexually.*

She turned to face him and said, "I'll be fine in *your* home, I won't mess up your things again."

His expression fell and he nodded.

Ha! I can be polite AND assert myself.

Malfoy left for the day and Hermione decided to scope out the bedroom in detail, without annihilating the space like last night. The room had no windows and she didn't find any new potential avenues for escape. After about an hour of searching, she decided to take a shower. Her tent's bathroom was functional but the water rarely came out hot. Hermione decided a scalding hot shower might feel good and take her mind off her situation for 20 minutes.

The bathroom was the size of a small living room. There was a stand alone shower and a clawfoot tub as well as a dual vanity and a door leading to a closet. White marble tile covered the entire space. Hermione chose the shower. The last thing she wanted was to sit in contemplative silence in a tub.

After scrubbing at her skin for a while in the shower, Hermione came out into the bedroom and curled up in one of the armchairs. She found a bathrobe on a hook in the bathroom that looked to be her size. *At least this is warm and soft. Tomorrow, tomorrow I will find a way to escape.* Exhaustion won out again and Hermione nodded off for a few more hours.

When she woke, Hermione put back on her old clothes, worn jeans and a green jumper, and went to go find food and a book. Earlier she discovered the walk-in closet attached to the bathroom and noted that it housed enough clothes in her size to keep her well dressed for years. She had no interest in wearing anything provided by Malfoy.

He didn't tell me I had to!

She found a platter of brunch items laid out on the table under Stasis and dug in, choosing a piece of bacon and a blueberry muffin. It tasted heavenly. Afterward, she spent the rest of the day reading old *Daily Prophets* in the window seat.

At 8:00 PM, the door to Dumbledore's office opened and Malfoy walked in with Marcus Flint and *GINNY!*

Hermione ran forward to wrap her arms around Ginny with tears in her eyes but as she got close Malfoy put out an arm to stop her.

"You remember Marcus, right Hermione?" he asked.

Hermione stared at him.

"He's here to join us for dinner." Malfoy gave no mention of Ginny's presence at all.

It was then that Hermione noticed Ginny looked awful. She hunched over like a wounded animal and kept her eyes toward the floor. She didn't look up at Hermione once and it looked like she had a bruised cheek. Fear crept back up Hermione's spine.

What happened to you?!

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Mad World by Gary Jules"

Chapter 3: The Three Broomsticks

Chapter Notes

I plan to update on Tuesday evening going forward.

I hope you enjoy the chapter. I'm having a blast writing it; I've wanted to try my hand at writing for AO3 for a while. Thanks for reading everyone!!

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

Malfoy gave Hermione a long, disapproving look then directed the four of them to the dining table and offered Marcus a drink. Hermione sat across from Ginny trying to catch her eye. Ginny refused to look up.

A dinner of roast beef and Au Jus, new potatoes with lemon-butter and chives, green beans, and toasted almonds arrived. Hermione hadn't eaten food like this in years but she didn't have an appetite.

Why won't she look at me? Watching Ginny behave so meekly and scared made Hermione feel sick.

The dinner dragged on for hours as Malfoy and Marcus talked about training schedules and routines, completely ignoring Hermione and Ginny. Afterward, Malfoy and Marcus walked over to the living room to sit in front of the fire. Ginny followed and knelt on the floor near Marcus' leg.

What the fuck?

Hermione spent the entire dinner analyzing the situation and her brain hurt. *Ginny is clearly terrified, she must have been auctioned off to Marcus at some point.* Hermione wished she knew what happened to Ginny after the Battle of Hogwarts. She wanted to know how long Ginny had been at the castle and what else Ginny knew about the wards.

Hermione fumed, she wasn't allowed to engage Ginny in conversation, and they likely wouldn't be left alone.

Not if she is following Marcus wherever he goes.

Hermione had no heroic options or even clever magical or Muggle tricks at her disposal. She decided a drink might at least numb her pain and frustration so she walked to the library to grab something from the bar cart.

Malfoy and Marcus drank the Firewhisky without any trouble.

She poured some over ice and walked back into the living room, plopping down in the window seat and staring at the grounds.

Maybe if Ginny works in Hogsmeade I can get her alone and figure out what the hell is going on with her. I'll find a way to get her out too.

"Malfoy, you let your witch behave this way?" Marcus asked.

Hermione turned her head and noticed that Marcus and Malfoy were staring at her. Marcus looked shocked and Malfoy looked as though he was incredibly pleased with himself.

"She just arrived last night. She's still learning my preferences." Malfoy said as an explanation.

Hermione's eyebrows rose. *What am I doing wrong? Did he actually expect me to kneel on the floor?*

Marcus huffed and said, "My witch learned quickly because I showed her a firm hand straight from the start. I'm not interested in giving them time to figure it out."

Malfoy turned his gaze to Marcus and said with an arrogant drawl, "I'm the most powerful wizard in Britain, I don't require a firm hand. I'm very persuasive."

Marcus uses a "firm hand?"

Hermione stared at the back of Ginny's head. Ginny continued to stare at the floor as if she were a piece of furniture, completely unaware, and unaffected by the conversation. Tears slid down Hermione's cheek. She intuited as much, but to hear Marcus talk so brazenly about his abuse stung.

"Doesn't look like she is learning much. Her clothes alone, Malfoy, they're tight don't you think? I wouldn't let my witch near other men dressed like that." Marcus said leering at her.

Suddenly, Marcus was on the floor clutching at his throat and thrashing around in pain.

"You remember that I am a Master Legilimens, no?" Malfoy sneered at Marcus as he flailed around on the ground trying to catch his breath, mouth open in a silent scream. "If I ever catch you even thinking about appreciating my witch's figure again, I will kill you."

Malfoy released the curse on Marcus and looked at Hermione.

"Say goodnight, Hermione. I'll see you in our room later," he commanded.

Hermione stood, not wanting to test his patience, but she also didn't want to leave Ginny with an irate Marcus. One look at Malfoy told her that disobeying his command wasn't currently an option. She reluctantly walked across the room.

Marcus stood gasping for breath. He grabbed Ginny by the collar and spat "We're going!"

Hermione caught the look of panic in Ginny's eyes before she closed Malfoy's bedroom door.

Thirty minutes later, Malfoy entered the room. Hermione sat curled into a ball in the armchair, crying. Malfoy walked past her into the bathroom and through to the closet.

"Come!" he said.

She followed him into the closet where he stood, taking off his robe. Malfoy was wearing another pair of fitted pants and a blue Oxford today. As he unbuttoned his cuffs to roll them up, he asked, "Did you enjoy your evening?"

Hermione balked, but before she responded, Malfoy warned, "You may speak to me freely, but you will remember to show me respect."

She took a deep breath and stated, "You planned that. You wanted me to see Ginny that way, didn't you?"

Malfoy reached up to unbutton his top two buttons and said, "Yes, I'm glad that didn't escape your notice."

He tilted his neck to the right and then the left and Hermione heard it crack. "You will learn to appreciate that you're mine."

Hermione wiped the remaining tears from her cheek and stared at him. He looked as though he was waiting for something. He placed one hand on the large dresser in the middle of the closet then said.

"Strip."

Hermione took a step back from him and stuttered, "You said..."

But before she finished her thought, Malfoy interjected.

"I said I wouldn't touch you. In my opinion, you've overstepped twice today. Once this morning for which you were then invited to see how other Death Eaters treat their witches- let me know if you wish for me to behave differently - then, once when you chose not to wear the clothes I left you. So, strip."

Hermione stood frozen to the spot. She bent her head and whispered, "Please...I can't"

Malfoy tilted her chin upwards with one finger, gave her a kind, understanding smile, and said slowly, "You can. You're Hermione Granger. You're smart and fearless." Then he lifted his own chin as if to say 'Go on.'

Wanker!

Hermione cried angry tears this time as she pulled her jumper over her head, kicked off her shoes, then unbuttoned and slid off her jeans. She kept her eyes on his so that he could see her indignation. She stopped when all that remained was her bra and panties.

Malfoy said, "Keep going unless you'd like me to take over."

Damnit!

Shaking, she unclasped her bra, pulled it off of her shoulders, and threw it on the ground. Her heavy breasts heaved and her nipples tightened to buds from the cold. Then finally, she pulled down her panties and kicked them away as well. She stood before Malfoy seething, embarrassed, and vulnerable.

He drank in her figure with fire in his eyes but didn't move any closer and refrained from touching her. Hermione could almost taste his want.

"Fuck!" He whispered. "You were worth the wait."

Malfoy vanished her old clothes and then leaned in and ghosted his fingers over her nipples as Hermione took a sharp intake of breath. He gave a cocky smile and stepped forward lowering his hand to stop just inside her thigh, still not touching her, but Hermione felt the heat from his hand against her sensitive skin. Then he bent his head to her ear and whispered, "If you choose to disobey me again, I'll enjoy watching as you cum on your fingers."

His breath felt hot on her neck; it made Hermione shiver. Then he suddenly drew back, leaving her cold and horrified.

"Choose something to wear from the closet. I'll see you in the bedroom." He said and walked out.

Hermione let out a heavy, shaky breath.

He kept his word. He didn't touch me. I've been naked around men before. I can handle it.

She decided to take as much time as she could get away with before going back to the room. She chose a pale yellow, silk, pajama set that consisted of a button-down short-sleeve shirt and a pair of shorts- it covered slightly more skin than any other option. Then she schooled her emotions before walking out into the bedroom.

I AM Hermione Granger. I've survived years of hiding out. I lived through terrible atrocities. I am a resilient badass!

She told herself, hoping her pep talk sunk in.

Stop crying! Stop letting Malfoy know that he is getting to you. Draco Malfoy is a twat! I am smarter than him. I'm going to lay low, do as he asks, stay alive, and find an opportunity to escape. He can try to frighten and intimidate me all he wants. I am not a wounded animal. I am a warrior!

She walked into the bedroom and stopped. Malfoy was in bed resting with his back against the headboard. He looked up from a book and gave her a questioning look.

Hermione didn't want to touch the bed. Something about the bed made everything real. Once she laid down, there was no going back. In thirteen days, if she didn't escape by then, Malfoy would take her there. It wasn't a symbol of comfort.

Malfoy infuriated her.

It's cruel to make me walk towards my own demise. Why was it easy for me to put on the new clothes tonight when earlier I couldn't imagine doing that?

The bed felt the same way as the clothes did earlier- another milestone. She didn't want to cross it unless she had to. She analyzed her feelings to understand the root of the emotion like picking apart an Arithmancy equation. Understanding always helped her to cope and adapt.

Malfoy broke through her thoughts, "Hermione?..."

She realized that she still stood in the middle of the room. "I don't suppose I can sleep on the chair." She chanced.

"No." He said, with a tone of finality.

"Then, can you command that I join you?" She asked.

Malfoy raised his eyebrows, shocked. "What?" He laughed.

"It's just that it's easier for me to justify the action if you demand it as opposed to feeling like I chose it. " She stated with a swotty air of detachment.

"Merlin and Morgana!" Malfoy laughed

He threw his head back with his forearm over his face and smiled at the ceiling incredulously.

"Granger, get over here. You definitely don't have a choice, especially now!"

Hermione walked over and pulled back the covers noticing Malfoy was shirtless but wearing pajama pants.

Thank goodness.

She laid down as far from him as she could manage and faced the wall.

Hermione thought about asking to get a book from the living room but decided to try and fall asleep as soon as possible to forget the awkwardness of being next to him.

Thankfully, Malfoy cast a Nox on the lamps in the room and laid down as well. He didn't say anything about how far away she was or try to disturb her.

After a few minutes of silence, he said, "I know that it's been hard on you so far. That's intentional. I trust you are still a quick study. This is your life now, Hermione; I won't pretend it will be easy, but it isn't my goal for you to be scared and miserable either."

Hermione didn't respond. She shut her eyes tighter and hoped for sleep.

In the morning, Hermione woke to Malfoy walking around the room preparing for the day.

She squinted at him, rubbing the sleep from her eyes,

"Take a shower and find some clothes. There are robes for you as well; choose one. I'll request breakfast. We leave for Hogsmede in an hour." He said.

Hermione waited for him to exit the room before she got up and headed for the bathroom. She took another long, hot shower then found a knee-length gray skirt and light blue blouse to wear. She grabbed one of the ten black robes her size and then fixed her hair in a low ponytail before choosing a pair of flats.

When she walked out of the bedroom, Malfoy was leaning against his desk in the library. He set down his paper and walked to meet her at the dining table. "I ordered a full English for you. I wasn't sure of your preferences."

Hermione grunted, "Thanks," and sat down selecting toast with jam and a cup of tea.

You could have asked.

Malfoy sat across from her and chose eggs and sausage patties as well as toast and jam.

He then said, "You will be working as a server at the Three Broomstick's. It's not glamorous, but I realized years ago that things went smoother when the witches at least had some break from the castle living quarters. I will drop you off each day at 9:00 AM and pick you up at 4:00 PM. You will not go anywhere except for the Broomstick's. You will be heavily guarded...to ensure your safety, of course."

Serving customers at the Three Broomstick's sounded incredibly boring, but it meant that she would be out of the castle, near other witches, and able to plan and strategize.

She nodded her understanding to Malfoy over a mouth full of toast. Hermione wanted Malfoy to drop his guard so that she could escape easier. It was a long game that started with building trust.

Malfoy watched carefully as Hermione washed her toast down with a swig of tea.

"Okay, it'll be nice to get out of the castle for a bit." *Time to build that trust.* "I was on my own a lot on the run. It was lonely. It will be good to be around people. I don't want to spend every day here alone." Hermione said, hoping she didn't lay it on too thick.

Malfoy eyed her critically, then nodded and stood from the table. "I have a few things to finish up before we leave." He said. He vanished his plate and walked back to the library.

Hermione had plenty of toast and tea to finish, so she stayed in contemplative silence.

Saying that she was alone on the run was an understatement. Life with Phin was stressful after Voldemort's victory, but at least they were together.

In fact, since her first year at Hogwarts, Hermione spent most of her life in the company of others. First, it was her friendship with Harry and Ron, they were always together in the common room or library. The three of them always chatting, studying, or solving mysteries.

Later, as they grew up, the mysteries became more and more serious, but similarly, Hermione's support system grew. Now instead of just having her parents, Harry and Ron, she had the Weasley's, Hagrid, Lupin, Tonks, Mad-eye, Sirius, the DA, and Dumbledore. There were always people around who she cared about and who cared for her.

She lost that entire support system when she Apparated away from the final battle. Then, after Phin died, Hermione felt her isolation like a millstone around her neck. She continued to move from place to place, but she began to wonder what the point of running was. She spent eight long months grieving her deep and profound loneliness and the loss of her love.

An owl flew through the open window in Malfoy's library to deliver him a message. The action woke Hermione from her thoughts. She inhaled sharply when she realized she hadn't thought about her grief and loneliness since arriving at the castle. It felt simultaneously like a relief and a betrayal.

Well, there is one benefit of being acutely scared for your well-being. I haven't had a chance to wallow in my loneliness for two days. She chided herself.

Hermione finished her food and then went to sit on the window seat to read. Malfoy finished his work and walked into the living room. He wore his hair shorter than when Hermione knew him in school, and he was significantly more muscular than before. His robes were tailored to perfection, and his general appearance clean and authoritative.

"Are you ready?" He asked

Hermione nodded and set down her book. She walked to Malfoy, who held his arm out to her.

"We'll Apparate there." He said.

Hermione reluctantly raised her hand to place it on his forearm, but before she made contact, he paused and lowered his arm.

"Hermione, I want you to have a shred of privacy from me. I imagine you want that as well. Unless I feel it necessary, I won't use Legilimency on you." He stated.

Hermione stood frozen. The idea of Malfoy invading her mind terrified her. She would do what it took to avoid that situation at all costs knowing her escape plans required mental privacy.

Malfoy continued, "However, every afternoon, I will review the memories of the guards assigned to shadow you. I will know your every move. Do not test my charity."

He didn't wait for a response and held out his arm to her again. Hermione lightly touched her hand to his forearm before she felt the familiar pull of Apparation. They landed in Hogsmeade outside the Three Broomstick's. Several Death Eaters stood near the café, and one guarded the door.

"Sir." He said to Malfoy

Malfoy ignored the greeting and turned to face Hermione, one eyebrow raised in a challenge. Hermione recognized the command. It was now or never; Malfoy told her she needed to kiss him each day before work. He waited arrogantly, knowing she didn't have a choice but to obey. *He is making me come to him again!* She swallowed her pride and raised up on her toes. As she did so, Malfoy's smile widened.

He reached forward to wrap one hand around her neck and roughly pulled her towards him. His lips smashed against hers possessively. Hermione intended to give Malfoy a peck on the lips, but he clearly had other plans. His tongue tasted her lips and briefly slipped into her mouth. Hermione knew better than to pull away, Malfoy was laying his claim, putting on a show for the guards, and she needed to wait it out. He smelled like expensive cologne and soap. His hand on her neck felt calloused and rough. He tasted of mint. Eventually, he pulled away slightly but buried his hand further into her hair and tilted her head upwards before letting her go. "Good job, love."

Malfoy led Hermione down off her tiptoes by the back of her head and turned to face the guards placing her behind his right shoulder.

"You received the brief that I've taken a witch." He grumped at the guard.

"Yes, Sir." The guard confirmed.

"She is now your top priority."

"Yes, Sir."

Malfoy walked past the guard and opened the door for Hermione.

"Be good." He said as Hermione walked into the café.

Chapter End Notes

Hermione's 14 days end next chapter!

Song choice for this chapter: "Animal I have Become by Hoobastank"

Chapter 4: The 15th Day

Chapter Notes

Hi All! Thanks so much for reading and commenting! Be kind to yourself. If rape fics aren't your thing, this work is not for you. *Trigger Warning* Rape after the last section break. Please heed the tags.

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

Hermione scanned the café and saw several Death Eaters having breakfast and roughly ten witches busying themselves with menus, table settings, and large plates of food. As the door closed many of the café inhabitants turned to face her and it seemed like someone cast Aresto Momentum on the establishment. Hermione's presence garnered the attention of every single person.

"This way." A Death Eater barked to Hermione's right.

Hermione followed him to a server station behind the bar where he handed her an apron and grabbed a woman that walked past on her way to the kitchen.

"Witch, we have a new celebrity recruit. Train her." He spat.

The Death Eater stomped away and left Hermione and the other witch alone.

"My name is Hermi..."

"I know who you are," the woman interrupted. "How long have you been in the castle and who owns you?"

Hermione blanched at the gruffness in the woman's approach. She expected a slightly higher sense of innate camaraderie.

"Um, I arrived two nights ago and uh...Draco Malfoy," Hermione reluctantly admitted.

"You don't need to lie, we've all been through it, no one is going to judge you," the woman stated.

"What? I'm not lying. Malfoy..."

"What I mean is that you clearly didn't arrive two nights ago. Or, did he heal you?"

"Excuse me?"

The other witch stared at Hermione trying to understand the confusion, then she let out an angry sigh. "Great, he Obliviated you. It's going to be really easy to teach you the ropes today."

"What? No. He didn't Oblivate me. Am I missing something?" Hermione asked.

"Look around. Do you see any witch that arrived with you? No. They're all recovering from the warm welcome we receive. If you mean to tell me that *Draco Malfoy* owns you but that you are safe and healthy and able to work on your second day at the castle then I refuse to believe it."

Hermione began to understand. Malfoy's rules weren't the norm. Marcus said so, '*My witch learned quickly because I showed her a firm hand straight from the start.*' Her horrified expression told the other woman everything she needed to know.

"He hasn't touched you yet." She whispered, shocked then anger flared across her features. "Well isn't that nice for you? However, I'd keep that to yourself. Most witches aren't able to work for weeks after they arrive. When I arrived I ended up with a broken jaw the first night and my guy refused to treat me for a day. It still clicks when I open my mouth too wide." The witch spat.

Hermione felt her eyes well up. "I'm so sorry, that is awful." She whispered to the ground.

"Keep your pity. It is what it is. I'm Cadence. Let's go; we can't stand here too long." Cadence said.

"W..wait! Please, does Ginny Weasley work here?" Hermione asked desperately.

"Yes, when she's healthy enough and allowed to leave her quarters." Cadence stated.

Hermione felt a pang of anxiety *When she's healthy enough?*

Cadence bid Hermione follow and sped through the process of attending to customers, filling orders, bussing tables, and billing. Afterward, she assigned Hermione to a section and left her to the role.

Hermione spent the day ignoring the angry looks from the other servers as well as the questioning leers from the patrons.

In the late afternoon she continued to work while analyzing potential avenues for escape. *Death Eaters at every door.* She made a mental note. *No way out without my magic.* Malfoy allowed Hermione the use of her wand when she was alone yesterday but the magic from it disappeared the moment Marcus and Ginny walked through the door. *How is he doing that!?* Draco didn't offer her magic back this morning, she assumed he wouldn't before work and she was right.

Hermione let out an exasperated huff as she walked to another table.

"It's Potter's Mudblood! How the hell did you hide all these years?" Croaked a Death Eater.

Hermione had enough. "I'm Bloody-good at magic, you ugly git!" She spat. She needed someone to lash out at and it felt good to let the asshole have it.

The Death Eater stood up abruptly knocking over flagons of mead. "Mouthy, Bitch! Someone needs to put you in your place! He raised his hand and Hermione stood tall and glared at the man. *Hit me, Fucker, see if I care. Maybe I can get a trip to the infirmary and check to see if Ginny is there. Surely, you'll regret it once your boss finds out, you stupid lap-dog.*

A guard by the back door quickly waved his wand and the Death Eater froze. "This witch is property of Draco Malfoy!" The guard shouted for the whole café to hear. Hermione noticed the panic rise in the frozen Death Eater's eyes. The guard didn't say anything else but released the Death Eater who stumbled over his friends and out the door.

"Watch out, precious, wouldn't want you to chip a pampered nail," sneered a witch as she walked by carrying a heavy tray.

At 4:00 PM Hermione looked up and noticed Malfoy waiting by the door, chatting with a Death Eater, and staring at her. Hermione finished up her last task, made her way to the server station, returned her apron, and walked to meet him. Her feet hurt, and she just wanted to climb into her window seat and escape into a book.

Malfoy guided her outside but instead of Apparating back to the castle, he led her down the street.

"I thought we'd walk." He answered her unasked question.

Yes, just what I need at the end of a long day on my feet.

Malfoy continued, "I understand your day was a bit of a disappointment; no grand escape attempts I see. Don't worry by the way, that Death Eater you set up won't bother you again."

"I didn't set him up." Hermione asserted.

"Sure, you didn't."

Hermione sighed heavily. "As I'm sure you already know, the Death Eaters want to take me down a peg and the witches don't like me because you haven't raped me or beaten the shit out of me...yet."

Her calculated plans for laying low and building trust flew out the window due to her stressful day.

Malfoy paused and turned to Hermione. "Watch it, love." He warned

"Fine, I'm ..sorry, I've had a hard day. Can we just walk?" She asked.

Malfoy glared at her with hooded eyes and then gestured for Hermione to continue down the street. At the end of the town, the road stopped and they continued on the path that Hermione used to travel on happy Saturdays during her time at Hogwarts.

They walked for a while in silence. Hermione listened to the crunch of Malfoy's boots on the gravel path and the sound of distant birds.

"Why me?" She asked, eventually.

Malfoy turned to her and slowed his pace but didn't stop.

"I've wanted to get back at you ever since you punched me in the face. I haven't stopped obsessing about it since we were 13 years old." He said.

"Really?" Hermione asked skeptically.

Malfoy laughed "No. I've had a few other things on my mind over the years what with aiding the Dark Lord."

He paused and then eyed her carefully, seemingly deciding to share more.

"You probably won't believe me but I fancied you from the fifth year on. I wasn't allowed to like you; my father expected me to settle down with a respectable Pureblood girl. Maybe that added to the appeal. However, your passion and intelligence captured my attention. That, and your new teeth, tamed hair and budding chest." He said with a sideways smirk. "It's one of the reasons I hated Potter so much, you were always fawning all over him."

Hermione huffed, "I didn't fawn."

He ignored her and continued, "Malfoys are passionate people as well, Hermione. Flitting around from interest to interest isn't in our make up. Once you caught my attention that was it for me. My parents met at Hogwarts and were engaged before my mother completed her fifth year. I never entertained the idea of liking anyone other than you."

He can't be serious. What game is he playing now?

"I chose my fate and picked sides when I took the Mark the summer after our fifth year. When you ended up on my parlor floor a year and a half later I knew I had to work harder to keep you safe."

Harder?

"Voldemort's vision for the magical community meant that you were in grave danger. I made it my mission to get to you before you were hurt or before someone else, like Flint claimed you. I saw you Apparate from the battle and knew you went into hiding again. I searched for you tirelessly after that, hoping that I'd be the one to find you. Malfoys are nothing if not obsessive about our possessions. I took the Mark because I had to, but I accepted my fate a long time ago. The safest place in Europe for you is with me. You may not like it but you'll get used to your place."

Malfoy stopped and turned to face Hermione.

"However, do not equate my affection with leniency. I am not an altruistic saint. I own you, I desire you, and I will have you."

Hermione didn't buy it. Malfoy relentlessly bullied her, Harry, and Ron at Hogwarts. He never gave a single indication that he cared about her at all. She found it hard to believe that he harbored an unending desire for her over all these years.

"Really? You could have anyone and you chose me?" She asked skeptically.

He grabbed the back of her neck and tilted her head up to face him.

"How many times did I hear in school that you were the brightest witch of our age? Does it surprise you that I want the best?" He said silkily.

He let her go and continued walking. They traveled the rest of the way back to the castle in silence.

Over the next two weeks, life with Malfoy proved incredibly boring. They ate breakfast over mundane pleasantries each morning before he Apparated Hermione to Hogsmeade. Malfoy always took one kiss from her but he kept his word and didn't touch her otherwise.

Hermione continued her plan to keep her head down and observe her surroundings. She constantly thought through all the possibilities for escape, but still did not have a viable plan.

Her most promising hypothesis was that if she found a way to incapacitate Malfoy she could use his Dark Mark to open the wards on the main door. However, she still didn't know how to knock Malfoy out or walk through a castle filled with Death Eaters on the way out.

When she wasn't plotting or working she read in the window seat, usually with a cup of hot tea cradled in one hand. On Hermione's eighth evening she sat in the window seat, as usual. A thunderstorm raged outside and water pelted against the pane. Suddenly, Hermione caught a whiff of her Jasmine tea, and the smell combined with the thunderstorm and the feel of a heavy book in her hands triggered a memory from three years prior.

1999

Hermione sat inside the tent and listened to the hollowing wind and rain, a cup of tea in her hands, and a book in her lap. Phin left four hours ago to scope out a nearby village for news and food and wasn't back yet.

"Twenty more minutes and I'm going to look for him." She said under her breath.

Just then the tent flap moved and Phin stumbled in with blood on his face and hands... laughing?

Hermione rushed forward and asked, "What happened?" While directing him to a chair and scanning his body for the source of the bleeding.

"Mia, I'm fine!" He said.

"You are clearly not fine. What took so long? Why are you bleeding? Stop laughing!"

Phin held out his hands, "It's just a scratch on my hands, I must have touched my face. Honestly, I'm okay." He said.

Hermione gave him a scathing look, muttered the spell to heal his wound then Tergeoed the blood from his hands and face. She crossed her arms and waited for the full story.

"Okay, Mia don't freak out but I ran into a few Death Eaters and was hit by a stray spell as I Apparated away."

"WHAT!?! Did they recognize you? What spell? We have to pack up and go now!" Hermione said quickly as she made to start packing.

Phin grabbed her hand and pulled Hermione unto his lap. He threaded his fingers into her hair and stared into her eyes. "Mia, we're safe. I wouldn't have come back here if we weren't. I would've met you at the school tomorrow if I thought they followed me. That's why we have a safety plan."

She and Phin decided to meet in the school outside London, the one Hermione Apparated to after the battle of Hogwarts, at 4:33 PM the next day if they were ever separated. Having a plan eased some of Hermione's fears. She still felt it was a miracle Ron ever found her and Harry after he left.

Hermione turned and straddled Phin's legs, as she did so she placed her hands on his face and continued to stare into his eyes.

"You dropped into my life and made me love you. I don't think I can live without you anymore. You can't ever leave me." She implored.

Phin leaned forward and kissed her deeply, she felt the heat from their kiss in her core. "We're safe; we have a plan." He said into her lips. "It was just a couple entry-level Death Eater idiots. I love you."

Hermione woke from the memory and stared at her book, her tea cool to the touch. She didn't like to remember times with Phin, it caused a pang of sadness deep within her soul. She put the book down and headed to bed hoping for a dreamless sleep.

Ginny never came to work and Hermione grew desperate for news. On her 12th night at the castle, Hermione approached Malfoy in his library.

"Malfoy?" Hermione asked apprehensively.

Even though their interactions proved typically uneventful she avoided him at all costs unless explicitly ordered to spend time with him.

He looked up, surprised "Yes? Come in."

She took a few steps into the room and said, "The girls told me that Ginny works at the Broomsticks, but I haven't seen her yet."

He stared.

No turning back now. Hermione didn't want to ask Malfoy for anything, even if it was just information, but she needed to know. "It's just....can you tell me if she's...if she's okay?" Of course, she isn't okay Hermione, Marcus is a monster. Why ask Malfoy, he'll probably enjoy telling you about how abused Ginny is.

Malfoy set down a scroll saying, "Marcus bragged to some of the other men that he'd gotten carried away a couple of weeks ago. Apparently, she's been recovering."

Malfoy reinforced Hermione's worst fears and it took the breath out of her lungs. She stared at the bookshelf behind him willing herself to hold it together.

There was a long silence and Hermione turned to leave.

"Would you like me to remove her from his care?" Malfoy asked before she made it out the door. "I could have her trained as a healer. She wouldn't be auctioned off again."

Hermione stood stunned. She didn't know how to respond. *Was he serious?*

"It will take me a few days to arrange. Let's revisit the idea at the end of the week." He held her gaze knowingly.

There it is, conniving Slytherin.

She turned to walk out and he said, "Hermione, remember, when you submit to me willingly I will give you anything you ask. "

Inside Malfoy's quarters Hermione used her magic but Malfoy removed it anytime they ventured out together.

To Hermione's horror, the monotony of her stay began to feel normal. She had a warm bed every evening, she didn't have to put up or take down wards every other day. She didn't have to hunt for food or search for news. She wasn't alone. When she successfully tricked herself into forgetting her terrible situation she felt somewhat comfortable.

The threat of the end of her 14 days caused a fair amount of anxiety but Hermione tried her best to compartmentalize her fears and leave those worries for another day.

However, the night before her fifteenth day at the castle Hermione didn't sleep. She spent the night rolling back and forth and fearing what the next day held. She got out of bed at dawn and tiptoed to the bathroom. She planned to take a shower and get ready for work before Malfoy woke. *Maybe he won't take me this morning if I'm already dressed and ready.*

Hermione cast a Silencio on the shower then set her wand on the vanity to step out of her nightgown. She tested the temperature on the back of her hand and stepped under its stream, brushing the water over her eyes and into her hair. To calm herself she shut her eyes and placed her face under the water. *Breathe Hermione, you can do this.*

Just then she heard the shower door open.

Hermione looked over her shoulder in time to catch Malfoy's silver eyes as he stalked toward her. Her mind panicked, she vaguely registered that her wand wasn't on the counter any longer. He placed an arm around her with his hand on her wet stomach.

"Good morning, love," He said into her ear before brushing her hair off of her shoulder and kissing her neck.

Hermione knew there was no avoiding this moment. Malfoy already gave her significantly more time than any other witch in the castle to adjust.

Fuck, FUCK! He promised to free Ginny. I can do this for her.

She felt Malfoy's tongue lick across her skin as he kissed up her neck to her ear lobe.

Tolerate his advances, free Ginny, find a way to murder Malfoy.

"Put your hands on the wall." He whispered into her ear authoritatively.

Hermione obeyed. If she didn't look at him she could pretend it was Phin. Malfoy moved his hand up her stomach to her breast, rubbed his thumb over her nipple, and slid his left hand down to her sex.

He cast a nonverbal Lubrication Charm and dipped his middle finger into her folds. Hermione stifled a moan despite herself at the feeling of his strong, calloused fingers sliding over her wet clit.

"That's good, sweetheart. Give in to me." He almost growled.

Hermione tried her best to disassociate. *It's Phin, his hand. His hard body against my back. I can do this.*

Malfoy continued to work her clit swiping his wet hands over her folds and coaxing her body toward a precipice. He moved his hand from her breast to her mouth and brushed his fingers against her lips.

"Open up ." He commanded. He pushed two fingers into her mouth and she felt him harden against her backside.

Malfoy pulled his fingers out and placed them back on her nipples pinching them between his thumb and pointer finger and bringing a tingling sensation to their hard tips. He massaged the weight of her breast in the palm of his hand.

"Sweet Salazar you have nice tits." He rasped.

Hermione felt her body unwillingly respond to the sheer physicality of Malfoy's ministrations. The pressure in her lower stomach pushed her closer to the edge.

It's Phin, It's Phin, damnit, why is my body responding to this? Malfoy tricked her body and mind into a sense of complacency with his feigned civility. Hermione tried to hold out, but realizing she didn't control the physical responses of her body, she eventually decided to reluctantly give in to the sensation. A small part of her desired a way to forget her horrible situation, even if only for a moment. She deserved the oblivion after carrying her stress around for weeks. As soon as she made the mental decision to submit to the sensation she came apart.

She opened her mouth in a silent scream of anguished pleasure. His mouth on the crook of her neck, his fingers squeezing her tits and his thumb rubbing against her swollen clit crashed over her.

"Fuck, yes!" Malfoy exclaimed, proud of himself. As he did so, he removed his hand from her clit and grabbed her wrists on the wall. He bent over and sank into her in one hard thrust, all the way to the base of his large cock.

He pulled out again achingly slowly and hovered behind her with only the tip of his thick shaft still lodged within her tight walls and then thrust back into her as the base of his cock and his heavy balls slammed against her oversensitive clit sending an intense spike of pleasure through her.

"That's right, love. I want to feel you cum on my cock." Malfoy said as he set a grueling pace.

The water ran over her body and Malfoy slapped into her core again and again. He held her wrists tight in one hand and cast a Vibrating Charm on her clit bringing her over the edge for a second time.

Malfoy continued to pump into her over and over again. Eventually, Hermione saw lights cross her vision. He gave three more rough thrusts then growled his release. Hermione felt her walls spasming with the aftershocks of two intense orgasms.

He stayed inside of her for several more seconds then pulled out and grabbed the soap.

Malfoy washed her slowly, taking his time over her sensitive skin. As he did so the grief and sadness flooded Hermione's system. Fat tears streamed down her face as she realized what she'd given into.

Chapter End Notes

I know many of you want to see Hermione stick it to Malfoy and I promise she will at some point but I intend for this to be a longer piece so it may take a moment to get there.

Song choice for this chapter: "Bitter Song by Butterfly Boucher"

Chapter 5: Escape Plans

Chapter Summary

Hermione experiences what her new normal will look like. Will she learn any new avenues for escape?

Trigger warning rape

Chapter Notes

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

Two days after Malfoy met Hermione in the shower she lay in his bed, clutching the covers under her chin and staring at the wall. She hadn't been back to work yet. She thought over the past forty-eight hours and seethed.

Hermione cried as Malfoy washed her body slowly and then handed her the soap.

"Turn around and wash me." He commanded. "You're crying a lot for someone who seemed to enjoy herself." He smirked.

She wiped tears from her eyes in an effort to not show any weakness and began to pass the soap over his muscled arms and torso with robotic movements. As she did so she remembered that her wand wasn't on the vanity any longer.

"Where did you put my wand?" She sneered at him

He looked down at her and said, "Just removing the temptation to hex me, love."

"Why bother, you decide when I can and can't have my magic anyways."

He didn't respond but cast his eyes down at her as to say 'Get on with it.' After Hermione finished, Malfoy rinsed off and stepped out of the shower. He grabbed a towel and headed out of the room for a cup of tea. Hermione followed him out of the shower but headed to the closet after toweling off. When she finished dressing she walked back into the bedroom and heard a Floo-call come in through the fireplace in the living room.

"Sir, ...um...your witch didn't show for work." said an anxious, muffled voice.

"Apologies, I forgot to warn you that she wouldn't be in for a few days," Malfoy responded curtly.

"I see. We won't bother you again then." The man sounded highly relieved.

"Thank you for following up. I know you're just doing your job. However, we require privacy. I will inform you before I intend to bring her back." Malfoy responded.

Hermione panicked. She didn't know why she needed to miss work for 'a few' days. She cast her eyes about nervously looking for an escape, though she knew that one didn't exist. Just then Malfoy walked back in and gave her an arrogant smirk.

"Granger, why are you dressed?" He asked.

"Fuck you!" She spat. Hermione couldn't hold it in any longer. She hated him. She hated that he lulled her into a false sense of security. She hated that his arrogant face smiled at her pain. She hated most that she allowed herself to lean into the pleasure.

"Yes, I intend to. Fuck you that is. Watch your tone."

"I will not! I did what you asked, now leave me the hell alone!" She cried.

Malfoy crossed the room in three large strides and grabbed her by the back of the neck. "Did you think that I only wanted you once? Nice try, sweetheart. I'm sure you heard that call. I've waited fourteen days to have you; you'll be on your back until I'm completely sated."

Hermione cursed herself for pushing him; it felt good but now Malfoy was pissed. For a brief moment, she saw his obstinate and petulant fifteen-year-old self. Although now as an adult his anger was not humorous it was terrifying.

He used his free hand to grab at the buttons on her shirt and rip it open exposing her chest. "Get on your knees." He barked. "Sheath your teeth or you can kiss Ginny's rescue plan goodbye."

Over the next two days, Hermione lost count of how many times Malfoy took her. He healed her minor bruises and aches each time and cast the contraceptive spell. It seemed that he wanted her to enjoy herself but Hermione was sick with the thought of giving over to the pleasure again. Now she lay in the bed, healthy, physically, but emotionally distraught. *I have to find a way out!*

The only new information Hermione gained over the past two days was the fact that Malfoy took her wand. *Why now? Why didn't he just remove my magic again?* She spent two days perseverating on this new piece of information. It helped to distract her from Malfoy's hands on her skin or mouth on her...

What if the charm used to bind my magic and keep me from harming Malfoy is effected by surges in magical signatures.

He held her leg over his right shoulder as he pumped into her...

That would explain why he let me use it when I was relatively calm.

The theory showed promise but Hermione remembered that Malfoy let her use her magic on the first night when her magical signature raged. *Malfoy hid behind protective wards that night. I need my wand back so I can run tests.*

"I must work today," Malfoy said while exiting the bathroom fully dressed. He already forced himself on her before showering that morning. Hermione still felt the slow and steady slide of his body against hers and the thought churned her stomach. "I think you should stay home one more day. You look as though you need rest." He added.

She left her eyes on the wall and nodded. Malfoy turned to leave; just then Hermione realized her opportunity. "Can I have my wand and magic while you're gone.. please?" She asked.

He turned around and stood in the doorway with his hands in his pockets, considering her request.

"Yes."

Hermione rolled over to look at him with an air of surprise. "Thank you," she said.

"You certainly deserve it." He said with a grin.

He stalked over to her and leaned down to wrap a hand behind her neck and slide one under her shirt. He rubbed his thumb over her nipple and kissed her soundly. Then he summoned her wand and placed it in her hand saying, "I'll expect you to be appreciative when I return."

As soon as she heard the door to Dumbledore's office close Hermione jumped out of bed and got to work testing her theory. Malfoy restricted her magic in two ways. Firstly, she couldn't use her magic to harm herself or him. Secondly, he had the ability to completely remove her magic at times. *If I'm right, a powerful surge in my magical signature might allow me to either Hex the shit out of him or escape somehow when he least expects it.*

She held out her wand and summoned painful memories from the past two days.

Malfoy fisted his cock and pushed inside her mouth. Hermione felt shame and anger seething through her body as he came down her throat.

Hermione experienced her raw anger again and cast a Stinging Jinx at her foot but nothing happened.

She lay with her back facing away from Malfoy, desperately trying to sleep. He took her a few hours ago and then promptly drifted off with his arm draped over her stomach. The fear and anticipation of him taking her again crawled over her skin. He grunted awake and she instantly felt the renewed lubrication charm.

Hermione raged with hate and cast another Jinx at her foot. Nothing.

Malfoy held her hips and guided her up and down as he met her with slow thrusts. "That's right, love. You look amazing on my cock."

Hermione tried, again and again, to pull agonizing memories forward and let the rage wash over her, but no matter how worked up she got nothing happened. "DAMNIT!" She yelled throwing her wand at the floor.

"Hermione?" a timid female voice asked from the living room.

Hermione froze in shock.

She picked up her wand and crept toward the bedroom door to gaze into the living room. Ginny was standing by the door, her robes looked clean and pressed, and the bruise on her face long gone from the last time she saw her. Hermione looked more closely and noticed that Ginny looked...*Healthy*?

Moving past her shock, Hermione ran to the door, scanning the room for signs of Marcus or Malfoy or anyone else. She and Ginny were alone. Ginny cowered as Hermione ran toward her and Hermione stopped before pulling her in for a hug; she didn't want to scare her.

"What? How are you here?" Hermione asked

"Marcus is dead," she said with wide, unfocused eyes. Ginny's attention turned to Hermione and she started speaking faster. "Death Eaters arrived at our quarters this morning. They dragged him through our portrait hole and I saw them cast the Killing Curse before it swung shut. They came back later and told me that Malfoy wanted me to train to be a healer. Before they brought me here they gave me new clothes and healed my injuries." Ginny started to cry as her shock wore off, "I've been living in so much pain for so long." she gasped over loud sobs.

Hermione pulled Ginny in for the hug that she waited weeks to give her. They sank to the floor and held unto each other, weeping. What felt like an eternity later Hermione sat back and wiped Ginny's eyes with her thumb. "You're safe now." She said.

"How?" Ginny asked

Hermione's lips curled in and she gave a pained shake of her head while maintaining eye contact, "I...negotiated your release with Malfoy."

"What? How? Oh, Hermione, what did he do to you?"

"Nothing I can't handle. And none of that matters now. You're worth it."

They hugged again for another long moment and then Hermione said, "Ginny, please tell me what you know." She pulled Ginny off the floor and led her to the couch while summoning two mugs and some tea bags then casting an *Aguamenti* and warming the water.

Ginny stared at her in shock. "Malfoy lets you use magic?"

Hermione turned to Ginny and sheepishly said, "Yes, sometimes."

Ginny narrowed her eyes and curved her tight lips down in a lopsided frown.

Hermione explained, "Malfoy plays by his own rules. He likes to feel that I am comfortable and happy to be with him. Part of that game is giving me my magic at times."

Ginny nodded. "Marcus never bothered himself with my comfort." she huffed.

Changing the subject, Hermione asked, "How were you captured? How long have you been here? What do you know about the castle Wards?"

Ginny sipped her tea and Hermione noticed that her hands shook.

"They captured me two and a half years ago when the protective Wards around shell cottage finally breached. George and I escaped from the battle of Hogwarts and Apparated to the cottage. We were safe for a year and a half even though we knew the Death Eaters had a rough idea of our location." She placed her cup down on the coffee table in front of them. "We lived off of water and the few vegetables still available from Bill and Fleur's garden. We had to be very careful to save the seeds and sow them indoors throughout the winter months.

I assume the Fidelius Charm failed because Bill must have died." She took a shaky breath and continued, "He was the secret keeper. Death Eaters Apparated through the remaining wards, killed George, and stunned me. I woke up in the Great Hall with several other witches." Her entire body shook now.

Hermione set down her tea and reached for Ginny's hand.

Ginny took a deep breath and continued, "I don't really know anything about the castle wards. Marcus bought me the night of my arrival and...and..." She gasped

"Shhh.." Hermione quieted Ginny. "It's okay, I know enough about Marcus; you don't need to tell me anything more if it's too hard."

The two women sat in silence for several minutes before Ginny said, "I know that doors are activated by Dark Marks, witches don't have wands..." She gave Hermione a pointed look, "and...I heard a Death Eater talking at the café once about a Tracking Charm. I think he must have meant on the witches because another time I heard a rumor that a witch ran away from her work when a guard left his post. The next day the girls said the witch was dead and mentioned a trace." She paused again.

"You can't escape Hermione; it's impossible," Ginny stated coldly.

Hermione chewed her words, "Don't say that, I can't believe that."

"Let it go, Hermione, you're just going to end up dead. There isn't anything out there for you anyways other than constantly running away from an irate Draco Malfoy." Ginny said.

"I have to believe there's hope of an escape. Otherwise, I'll succumb to the reality of this situation and never recover." She pleaded for understanding.

Ginny gave a derisive laugh "Right, Hermione your life here is so tough."

"Ginny!" Hermione scolded.

"No, I'm sorry, but I mean it. When I first saw you, you were waltzing around like you owned the place grabbing drinks and flaunting your independence. Now I see you again and you're allowed to use magic and you look healthy. Let me tell you from experience, Malfoy seems to be the best you could hope for and I don't want to be any part of you trying to get yourself killed, thank you very much. I've seen enough of that." Ginny stood up and walked to the window. She hunched over as if a permanent weight lay on her shoulders, a shadow of her former self.

"Ginny, I know Marcus hurt you deeply and scared you into thinking there is no way to escape but there is always a way. I'm going to find it and I'm going to get us out of here. I already got you from under Marcus' thumb in case you forgot." Hermione implored.

Ginny shot Hermione a look that could kill. "I haven't forgotten that Marcus is gone. That evil bastard deserved to die a horrible and painful death. I'll remember watching him fall to the ground for the rest of my life. You didn't spend two and a half years with that psychotic freak. Don't talk to me about what I know."

Hermione took a deep breath, "I'm sorry, you're right, I can't imagine how hard living in this castle has been for you. I'll drop the talk of escape, I didn't mean to cause you more stress."

Hermione walked to the window and stood next to Ginny saying, "Please, let's sit, we don't know how long we have together or if Malfoy will let us see each other again any time soon."

Hermione and Ginny spent the day sipping tea and snacking on sandwiches and veggies that appeared on the dining table around lunchtime. They agreed to avoid talk of the castle and escape plans and instead distracted themselves with stories of good times together as kids. Ginny eventually offered a faint smile and Hermione felt relief in her bones at the sight of it.

In the late afternoon, the door opened and Malfoy walked in with three Death Eaters. Ginny stood up immediately, placed her hands behind her back, and stared at the floor.

"I see you two enjoyed catching up." Malfoy drawled as he walked to Hermione tilted her head upwards with a finger and kissed her lightly before resting his arm on the lower back possessively.

Neither woman responded.

"These men are here to take you to your new quarters in the hospital wing," Malfoy said to Ginny. "Your education begins tomorrow with Healer Garred. You will obey his instructions and be thankful for your new position. He won't be a threat."

"Yes, sir," Ginny said quietly to the floor with fear in her eyes.

Malfoy walked over to talk to the Death Eaters again and Hermione tiptoed to the dining table. She grabbed a cranberry scone wrapped in parchment and glanced up to ensure Malfoy wasn't looking. Then she cast a wordless charm on the paper before ripping off a piece and

sticking it in her pocket. She walked back to Ginny and gave her the scone with a knowing look. Ginny gave a tiny shake of her head, eyes wide in fear. She clearly didn't want any part of whatever plan Hermione hatched.

"It's just so we can communicate." Hermione whispered almost inaudibly then said louder, "Take this, we didn't eat dinner. I want you to have something comforting. I love you," and then pulled Ginny in for a hug. Ginny stuffed the scone in her pocket and kept her eyes on the ground.

"Hermione, say goodbye," Malfoy ordered.

Hermione gave one final squeeze and let Ginny go. She watched Ginny and the men head out the door and then walked to her window seat.

Malfoy saw the men and Ginny out and then turned back to Hermione. He stood for a moment watching her and then crossed the room and met her at the window seat, waiting. Hermione stared out the window for several more seconds and then turned to face him saying quietly, "Thank you, Malfoy, for getting her away from Marcus." Malfoy raised one eyebrow and glared, urging her to continue.

Hermione turned to face the window again "I...I needed to see her, but I know that you didn't have to do that."

Malfoy carded his fingers through her hair and turned her head to face him again. "You're welcome." He said sounding kind and sincere. *Screw you, asshole.*

"I think it's time you stopped calling me Malfoy. I'd say we know each other fairly intimately now, don't you think?" He paused and gave her his tell-tale smirk. "Draco will be fine unless we are near other people at which point you can call me, Sir." He finished and Hermione nodded.

"Come, I have something to show you." He said as he held his hand out to her and led her off the window seat. They walked to the door closest to them; the one that Hermione never saw open. Malfoy turned the brass nob and walked her into a room the size of his library but filled to the brim with bottles and jars. *A Potion Lab?* u

Turning around to face Hermione at the door, Malfoy said, "I know that you need an intellectual outlet. I can't expect a witch like you to thrive without something to occupy her mind." He said. "You can work on refilling the potions for our hospital ward. However, you will never be in this room without me. As I'm sure you are aware, the doors in our home are protected by wards but if I catch you trying to enter this room without permission you will deeply regret it, is that clear?"

Hermione gaped at him, "Malfoy..." she stopped at the sight of his disapproving expression. "Sorry, Draco, I don't know what to say. This is unexpected."

He's an idiot. Surely he knows what I can do to him with these ingredients?

"Merlin, Hermione, I can see your incredible brain churning! I'm aware that this room is a big responsibility and I know that you're already imagining all the ways you can kill me. Do yourself a favor and don't try anything foolish. I promise that you won't succeed." He chuckled as he stalked towards her and took her hand pulling her into the room. He stopped with his back to a desk and wrapped her arms around his neck.

Hermione didn't understand what angle Malfoy played. *What does he get out of giving me things?*

She steeled herself and asked, "But why? You already own me; you tell me there is no escape. Why do you care about my comfort?"

"Hermione, I've been nothing but clear and honest with you since you arrived. I own you, yes, but I also care for you and desire your happiness, or at least your complacency. You will give yourself to me but I've also told you that when you do, I will give you what you desire. Put those thoughts to rest, love, and just say, 'Thank you Draco for providing me with such an extravagant gift.'"

"Thank you, Draco." She parroted back.

"Good girl," He said before leaning down and placing a slow kiss on her lips.

He pulled away and grabbed her by the waist as he turned them around and deposited her on the desk. Hermione recognized the desire in his eyes and knew that the moment to show her appreciation for Ginny's release, and visit, as well as the potion's lab, arrived.

"Now, tell me to fuck you." He demanded.

Hermione closed her eyes for a moment to steady her raging emotions and then said angrily, "Fuck me, Draco."

"That's it, love." He reached up and placed one hand across her throat while shoving his knee between her legs to open them wider. He placed another large hand at her back and dragged her forward so that she felt his hardened cock against her sex.

Draco slowly undid the buttons of her shirt with one hand, following with hot kisses against her skin. He pulled the strap down her shoulder and grabbed beneath the fabric of her bra to release her breast. Then moved his mouth to her nipple and lightly bit down before standing back up to stare into her eyes.

Hermione's mind shot back to Ginny's words '*Malfoy seems to be the best you could hope for*' as he slid his hand up her skirt and slowly dragged her knickers to the side just enough for him to shove his large fingers into her core. She seethed at the injustice of belonging to a pig like Malfoy and the irony that she was supposed to somehow appreciate her lot in life.

He leaned closer to her and whispered, "I think I'm still in a generous mood. I love watching you come," before slowly dropping to his knees.

He vanished her clothes, removed his fingers, and placed his hands on her thighs opening herself to him further. Hermione shut her eyes tight as he encircled her clit with his hot, wet, tongue.

She felt herself moisten with each stroke of his tongue and she hated him for it. Malfoy sucked on her sensitive clit and brought a fiery heat to her lower abdomen. She held out, not wanting him to have the satisfaction of getting her off but the effort to do so only caused an intense spike of pleasure.

"Come for me, sweetheart." He said into her core; his lips brushing up against her as he spoke.

"Malfoy, please, no."

"Ah, Ah, love I told you what to call me." He scolded and then placed his mouth completely around her clit and sucked hard while continuing to glide his tongue back and forth over her. He continued his assault of her body and despite Hermione's best efforts to resist she came hard, biting her lip to stifle her moans and grasping at his hands on her thighs.

Malfoy stood with a triumphant grin and dragged his forearm across his mouth. He undid his trousers before returning his hand to her throat and thrusting into her hard. Then he leaned over her and whispered "What's my name?" She could smell herself on him as he asked.

"Draco" She spat as he slammed into her.

"Tell me to fuck you; tell me again," He said as he chased his release.

She shook her head and then felt his fingers tighten around her throat. "Tell me."

"Fuck me." She choked.

"Call me by my name, love." He threatened.

She glared at him with venom in her eyes and said "Fuck me, Draco!"

"There it is." He released the tension on her throat further. "Say it again."

"Fuck me, Draco!" You *fucking monster; just get it over with!*

He slid his hands around to the back of her neck and into her hair as he came apart with a groan deep in his chest and then tilted her head up to meet his eyes and said, "Now, thank me."

"Thank you"

Malfoy escorted Hermione out of the lab and warded the door.

"I'm going to take a shower, will you join me?" He asked.

"Do I have a choice?"

"Yes," He said tentatively

"Then, no." She responded quickly.

"Suit yourself." He said as he walked back and kissed her.

Hermione cast a hasty Scourgify on herself while she waited her turn in the shower. She sat on the living room couch and listened intently for the sounds of water starting and the closing of the shower door before dashing into Malfoy's library.

She went to the desktop and grabbed a quill and inkwell then searched in her pocket for the piece of crumpled up parchment. Flattening it out, Hermione dipped the quill into the ink and tapped the excess liquid on the side of the ceramic jar before scrolling out the words "*Ginny are you there?*"

She tapped the quill several times on the desk while chewing a fingernail. *Come on, come on!*

One minute passed, three minutes, five...

Just as Hermione thought to give up and not push her luck with being caught, small crisp writing appeared on the page, "*Hermione?*"

Chapter End Notes

What do you think? Will she get caught?...Wait and see! Also, more Phin to come!

Song choice for this chapter: "Hero by Regina Spektor"

Chapter 6: Leeches

Chapter Summary

Hermione communicates with Ginny, is surprised by one of Draco's memories, and has a rough day at work!

Trigger warning, violence

Chapter Notes

This chapter wrote quickly so here is a second chapter for this week! Enjoy!

Song choice for this chapter: "Never Forget You by Zara Larsson"

Relief flooded over Hermione. *It worked!* She fisted the quill and scratched out her reply.

The parchment is charmed so that we can communicate. The message will vanish after you read it. If you ever need me you can write and I will do my best to help. I'll check for messages from you whenever I can."

She waited again for a response. Hermione stared at the parchment and heard Malfoy exit the shower. She willed Ginny to write back faster.

"Hermione?" Malfoy called from the bedroom.

Suddenly Ginny's response appeared, *"You're tempting the fates! I'm not using this unless it's an emergency! Don't expect me to check this parchment often, it's too dangerous!"*

Instead of responding she quickly shoved the parchment back into her pocket and righted the items on the desk.

She heard Malfoy stomping across the living room and successfully grabbed a glass and filled it full of Firewhiskey just in time before he entered the library with a towel wrapped around his waist.

He eyed her with suspicion. "Did you not hear me call? What are you doing here?" He asked.

Hermione gave him an incredulous look and said, "I felt like I needed a drink after the evening's events, Draco. You've never restricted my movements within your home before."

She held her ground and refused to show an ounce of guilt, choosing instead to come across as slightly swotty with a touch of respect. *I used his name as he asked.*

"Hmm... It's OUR house, love. Come, let's eat dinner." He responded, apparently appeased.

She took a large sip from her drink to do the thing right and set the glass down saying, "I'd like to take a shower before I eat. You don't have to wait for me."

Malfoy scowled, "Be quick, I'll put everything on Stasis for us."

Hermione stepped past him on her way to the bedroom and breathed a sigh of relief.

The days began to pass again with a sense of predictability. Malfoy took Hermione each morning before they both showered and got ready for work. Hermione always tried to test her theory on his wand and magic restrictions when she was alone which mostly occurred in the bathroom. Otherwise, Malfoy was always near or she was working. She decided that she could get away with pulling uncomfortable memories to the surface and Jinxing her foot for about 3 minutes before anything seemed suspicious. So far, the only thing that happened was a slight buzzing in her palm once but because of that Hermione felt certain she was on the right track.

Hermione checked the parchment anxiously whenever she felt it was safe. However, once when checking for messages in the closet while dressing, Malfoy walked in and she barely had enough time to drop the paper to the floor and hide it under her foot. After that she chose to cast a charm, similar to the one she cast on the DA galleon, so that the parchment heated slightly when there was a new message.

In the afternoons Malfoy picked her up from work and brought her back to his house. A few times a week he escorted her to the Potions Lab and watched closely as she brewed. He always had a list for her to attend to and she busied herself with crushing Dittany leaves or slicing pickled Shrake Spines. It felt magnificent to use her skills for something other than survival but she refused to tell Malfoy how much she enjoyed it.

Malfoy typically forced her on her back or to her knees once in the afternoon and each night before bed. Hermione raged at the gods for his unending appetite.

One day while brewing a Shrinking Solution Hermione grabbed a phial of leeches down from a shelf and reached for some Caster Oil as well. She wet her hands with the oil and then scooped a finger into the phial to pull out a leech. Malfoy perked up.

"Caster Oil isn't used in Shrinking Solution." He stated curiously.

"Yes, I know," she responded, "But it's properties have a net neutral effect on the process and it makes it easier to handle the leeches."

"Theodore Nott used to do that in Potions class. He always swore by the results." Malfoy said and Hermione froze, "I can still remember his arrogant, gloating, ass." He continued with a nostalgic smile. "You remember Nott, right? He died during the Battle of Hogwarts. All we ever found were his robes and wand."

The casual mention of Phin paralyzed Hermione momentarily. She knew he staged his death by leaving his robes and Geminioing his wand. "Yes, of course, I remember Nott. He often joined in your bullying of me at school." She recovered before letting on. "Slughorn taught me this trick when I reviewed my notes with him once after class. Maybe that's where Nott learned it. I don't know." She shrugged.

"Honestly, I miss the bastard," Malfoy admitted. "We were good friends from birth."

Hermione continued her work with slightly shaking hands and scolded herself. *I HAVE to be more careful.* She began to make a mental list of all of Phin's idiosyncrasies, cataloging them and determining whether or not they posed the threat of potentially outing their relationship. *Malfoy doesn't get to know about our love!*

In reality, it was Phin who taught her the trick with Caster Oil and leeches, however, it wasn't for brewing Shrinking Solutions, he taught her for ease of brewing Polyjuice.

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Phin looked up from the map he poured over and his long list of notes. He rapped his fingers on the table to the sound of jingle bells, an old habit and something he knew got under Hermione's skin. He stopped and stared at Hermione with amusement as she struggled to tame a leech and add it to her potion.

After Phin secured the tent successfully, Hermione gave in and allowed them to acquire more items from random merchants. Although, she made them Apparate to villages at least 50 kilometers away from their campsite before Accioing products. It was through that process that they came across a small cauldron and several potion ingredients.

Hermione stood over the steaming cauldron, brewing Polyjuice so that they could be safer when venturing out in public. She had to be careful; the ingredients were hard to collect. They only intended to use the potion sparingly.

"Mia? What are you doing?" Phin asked

"Trying to get this bloody, evil, creature off my ruddy hands!" She responded exasperatedly as she pulled the leech back and forth between her fingers, its sticky body latching onto her with each move.

"Care for some help?" He asked while barely holding back a laugh.

"No! Phin, I don't care for any help. I'll remind you that I got an Outstanding in my Potion's O.W.L, thank you very much. I can manage One. Blasted. Leech!" She huffed while

continuing the battle against the slug.

Phin walked up behind her and put his arms around her waist. He brushed her hair off her shoulder and nuzzled his nose behind her ear. "You are a smart, brave, venerable..." He placed kisses behind her ear with each affirmation, "sexy," He moved his hand to slide gently up and down her bare arm, "woman."

He bent to grab a bottle of Caster Oil from their tray of ingredients on the table by the cauldron and spread some of it on his hands. Then he covered her small hands with his large ones. He slid the leech from her fingers and dropped it into the cauldron, Scourgified their hands wandlessly, and turned her to face him.

"I just happen to know a better way to handle this particular situation." He said before leaning down to place a kiss on her forehead.

Hermione flattened her hands on his chest and pushed him away teasing, "Insufferable know-it-all!"

Phin stood, mouth agape, "Me!?" He asked incredulously then said, "That's it!" He reached down quickly and picked Hermione up around her middle, throwing her over his shoulder and bringing her to their large bed.

Hermione yipped, "Theodore Phineas! The potion! I can't leave it right now!" Phin cast a Stasis on the potion from behind his back and pulled her down. She let her body slide slowly down his front and landed with her knees to the back of the bed. Hermione transfigured the bed for them from two cots once they started dating.

Feeling certain the potion would be okay on Stasis she stared into Phin's eyes and leisurely unzipped his jeans. She dipped her hand under the fabric and stroked his weeping shaft as he groaned, "Unggg, How did I get so lucky?"

Hermione vanished their clothes as Phin pushed her down on the bed so that he rested above her with his weight on his forearms. She felt his cock brushing lightly against her wet pussy and savored the sweet tension of anticipation.

"Is this okay Mia?" He asked brushing her hair out of her eyes.

"Gods, yes!" She cried desperately wanting him to sink into her.

"I should've asked. I know you're anxious about the potion and the little ingredients that we've secured." He explained, still hovering above her. She saw his strong muscles flex beside her head as he held his weight.

She felt her sensitive nipples gently touching his chest every time she took a heavy breath. The feeling was exquisite. His large strength loomed above her and she knew he only held back out of his consideration of her needs and wants.

She couldn't wait any longer. She wrapped her arms around his neck and flipped them over so that she straddled his legs. Then she dragged her wet cunt over his throbbing cock and felt

his head crash against her clit as she leaned forward to whisper. "I love you, you gorgeous, caring, man." They gasped together as she slid back and forth again encasing his dick with her dripping, pussy.

"But, stop talking and fuck me." She said as she lifted her hips and sank down on to him. She felt every inch of his entrance as he stretched her channel to fit perfectly within her walls. Hermione took a moment to adjust to the full feeling and let out a shuttered pant as Phin reached his huge hands up and squeezed her breasts then slid down over her stomach.

He pumped into her twice with a growl, the movements pushed and pulled deliciously inside her. Then he wrapped his thick arms around her back and pulled her into a bruising kiss. He tasted of tea and smelled like pine, sensations that Hermione associated uniquely with him. She pulled away for air and placed her hands on the headboard above her so that her heavy tits slid slowly over his face as she rocked. Phin moaned deeply; She knew that it drove him crazy.

She felt Phin's hard cock twitch within her walls. He quickly flipped them over and set a punishing pace. His pelvic bone hitting her hardened nub. As he drilled into her he reached down and encircled her clit with his thumb and Hermione shattered. "Phin, oh god, Phin, ah, ah!!"

Her walls tightened and she continued screaming his name. She felt it drive him over the edge. He spilled into her again and again, finally coming to as they realized that he'd collapsed on top of her.

He pulled himself up and kissed her deeply as they rode the aftershocks of their love-making.

"Holy shit, that was intense." She said through heavy breaths.

Phin held her in his arms for a long time. They laid together, warm and happy under the covers with their naked bodies tangled around each other. Hermione never felt safer than when she was wrapped in his embrace.

Eventually, Phin said, "We should get up. The potion needs more tending and I have something to show you."

Hermione gave in and they both got up to take a quick shower together before Hermione got back to work finishing the Polyjuice with Phin's help. When they arrived at a good stopping spot Hermione asked, "What did you want to show me?"

Phin took her hand and said, Come with me." He walked her out of the tent and down a nearby hiking trail until they came to a small tree-lined lake. The night was perfect. Hermione heard crickets and frogs and saw hundreds of lightning bugs flying below a shimmering starlight sky.

"I found this while out foraging earlier. I knew I needed to show it to you." He wrapped her in his arms again and kissed her slowly. "Happy Anniversary, Mia." He said.

Hermione knew the day was coming but lost track of time with their stress to collect potion ingredients. "Oh, Phin, I'm sorry, I forgot!"

"It's no matter," he said pulling her in for another kiss. "I just didn't want the day to pass without me sharing this beauty with you. You make me incredibly happy." He paused and took a deep breath. "Growing up, my family was...cold... you know that. This year with you is the first time I've ever really felt happy. I love you."

Hermione felt tears well up in her eyes. She loved him more than words. Phin smiled and wiped them away with his thumb.

"Let's go home," He said with a wink. "I don't think we finished earlier."

One week after Malfoy noticed her use of Caster Oil Hermione carried dishes to the kitchen at the Three Broomsticks and accidentally bumped into another witch.

"Watch it, Princess!" The witch sneered.

"Sorry"

Hermione chided herself for being too distracted. Ever since Malfoy mentioned Phin she found herself thinking back to their time on the run. *Pull yourself together, Hermione!*

Cadence and the other witches still hadn't warmed up to her. She speculated that it was partly due to Malfoy's treatment of her and partly due to the simple fact that it was Malfoy who owned her. Someone as careless with their livelihood as he was surely wasn't held in high regard.

How can he care so little for everyone else and claim to care for me? She found it hard to believe, but reflected on the fact that other than when he forced himself on her his behavior was fairly... *nice*? In fact, he was even attentive when he took her. He almost always made sure that she came, which was horrible, but Hermione admitted to herself that it was better than if he were rough or violent.

He stayed true to his word and as long as Hermione didn't fight, he was authoritative, yes, but also kind.

He often held her in the evenings as they drifted off to sleep and told her stories of his life growing up.

"Did you know that I used to sing? I loved singing when I was a child. I would pad around the Manor humming tunes or belting out songs in the ballroom where my voice echoed the most." He stroked her arm as he continued, "That was all before the second war. Hell, I must have been six. My mother caught me once, performing for the elves; I liked singing for them because I didn't know yet that they were forced to applaud my efforts. Anyway, she began to trot me out for the company after that. Can you imagine, me, singing old magical folk-

shanties for budding Death Eaters?" He paused for a long beat, "My life was happy when I was too young to know any better."

At first, those nighttime stories pissed Hermione off like everything else Malfoy did, but eventually, Hermione started to pretend she was in the arms of a lover, listening to him open his heart to her. Her long stay and Malfoy's relative civility began to play tricks with her emotions again. She found that she didn't have it in her to remain enraged all the time. She suspected that Malfoy knew as much.

Hermione hated to admit it but he even made her laugh once.

At dinner a few nights ago Hermione and Malfoy ate in a somewhat peaceful silence when a Floo-call came in.

"Sir, the shipment arrived. It's at the station awaiting your inspection." The Death Eater on the call said.

His eyes searched the living room and landed on Malfoy and Hermione at the dining table. Malfoy quickly Disillusioned Hermione and stomped over to the fireplace. Earlier Malfoy directed Hermione to wear a jersey tank top with a plunging neckline and no bra.

Malfoy finished his call and removed the Disillusionment charm. Hermione scoffed, "You know, you could avoid unintentionally showing me off if you just used Patronuses. Or is it impossible for Death Eaters to think happy thoughts?"

Malfoy stalked back over and flopped down in his chair across from her saying, "Naw, I just don't want people realizing my Patronus is a ferret."

Despite herself, Hermione choked out a laugh. The joke caught her off-guard.

Hermione set the plates down in the kitchen and hung her apron by the server station. It was 4:00 PM but Malfoy wasn't at the door to pick her up. Hermione waited, but he never came.

Eventually, a Death Eater walked in and said, "Let's go. My orders are to bring you back to the castle." Hermione recognized him as the head guard that Malfoy often talked to at the door.

She didn't know what to do. If he's telling the truth maybe I can disarm him and find a way out. Although, if I'm unsuccessful AND I wasn't supposed to go with him in the first place I don't want to imagine what Malfoy will do.

Never one to miss an opportunity to escape Hermione nodded and followed him out the door. The Death Eater grabbed her upper arm rough enough to leave a deep bruise.

"Ouch!" She cried "I can walk!"

The guard dragged her down the street saying, "Shut up, witch!"

Hermione knew something was off. There was no way that one of Malfoy's guards would treat her so aggressively.

"What the fuck are you doing with me!?" Hermione demanded as she stomped on his foot, kneed him in the crotch, and reached for his wand.

"Arrrrgh!" He yelled, doubling over in pain.

Hermione wrapped her hands around his wand and yanked with all her might but the guard pulled away and Hermione felt it slip through her fingers.

"Stupid, Mouthy, Bitch!" He grunted and Hermione blacked out as he stunned her.

She woke an hour later in the hollowed-out shell of what used to be Zonko's. Turned over boxes of Hiccoughing Sweets lay sideways and open on dusty shelves. *Whelp, this settles it, Death Eaters can't take a joke.* She scanned the room and her eyes fell, not on the head guard who took her from the café, but on the angry Death Eater that Malfoy accused her of setting up on her first day at work.

"You?" She asked, confused

"Surprised?" He scoffed with contempt. "Do you know what happened to me that day?" He raged while pacing back and forth in front of her. "Your boyfriend had some guards hex the shit out of me, he stole and relocated my witch, then he demoted me to grunt work and confined me to the castle."

Hermione took note of her surroundings while he talked. *The wards he placed are shitty, they're rippling and unstable. If I can disarm him I should be able to run. Keep him talking...*

"Who are you and how did you get out of the castle today if you're supposed to be confined?" She stalled.

"I heard Malfoy talking to the General earlier this morning. He mentioned he was leaving the castle for the day and that the General needed to pick you up from work and bring you home. I recognized the opportunity and stunned him as soon as Malfoy left. He never knew what was coming. I bought some Poly from the Potions canteen and that was that. Not such an ugly git, huh?"

"I'm Peregrine Derrick, by the way, you obviously don't remember me but Marcus Flint was my best mate and you got him killed!" Derrick placed his arms on either side of the chair she sat in, leaned in, and said hauntingly, "I was right, someone needs to put you in your fucking place!" He spat.

Hermione headbutted him as hard as she could and ran for the door, white lights dancing in her vision. Derrick fell backward screaming. She glanced around to see if she could grab his wand but it rolled under her chair and she didn't want to risk it. She placed her hand on the handle and was just about to run into the street when Derrick grabbed a fist full of hair and threw her down on the ground.

She screamed, "Malfoy is going to kill you just like he did Flint. You're a goner you stupid Prick!"

"Shut Up!" He bellowed as he brought the back of his hand down across her cheek.

She fell back and her head slammed against the floor as she heard him yell, "CRUCIO!!"

Pain laced through her body as her mind shot back to memories of Malfoy Manor. A high-pitched shriek of agony wrenched from her throat as she thrashed around on the floor uncontrollably. Visions of Harry dead, Ron dying, Lupin and Tonks, Fred, Molly, Arthur, all flashed in her blurred vision. Her fingers and toes cramped and her bones disjoined. She knew it was lasting too long. She was going to lose her mind, she was going to die. *Phin, I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm ...*

BOOM!!

Chapter 7: Hermione's Offer

Chapter Summary

Hermione recovers and learns more surprising information about Malfoy. Also, flashbacks to Phin's death.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for reading, commenting and giving Kudos! I appreciate all of you! I would like to get back to you one by one but I worry that I would give away some of the plot unintentionally. lol. This is a chapter full of plot. We will get back to the racey stuff next chapter.

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

The first thing that Hermione noticed when she came to was the smell. Before she opened her eyes she experienced the familiar, stringent, aroma of the hospital ward. She knew that scent anywhere; it was difficult to forget having once spent months there, petrified. Someone fussed around her bed, casting diagnostic charms and pulling the sheets unto her shoulder.

"That's enough." Malfoy's rough voice broke the silence. "She's awake, leave us."

What happened to me? Why am I here? The last thing Hermione remembered was reaching for the handle to the front door of Zonko's and then...*pain*. Everything came crashing back--Derrick, trying to escape, the Cruciatuus, and so much pain.

"Hermione," Malfoy said her name as if to remind her that he was waiting for her to open her eyes.

She rolled towards his voice, shut her eyes tightly, and started to bawl into the mattress. Derrick was deranged, Hermione had no idea how far he planned to take his attack. The Cruciatuus felt like it lasted forever. She thought that she was going to go crazy from the pain and length of the curse. She thought she was going to end up like the Longbottoms or Professor Lockhart. Hermione felt despondent, life with Malfoy already traumatized her and now it felt like he might actually be the safer option.

She felt Malfoy's hand squeeze hers and his thumb run across her knuckles. She opened her eyes slowly, blinking at the light and trying to make out his figure through her tears.

"Draco, he...he..." She took deep heaving breaths

"I know what he did. You're safe now." Malfoy responded through tight lips. Hermione noticed his steely and measured expression. He seemed to radiate energy as he took in her condition. He brushed her hair back from her face, leaned forward, and kissed her tenderly. Hermione froze.

"Are you hungry?" He asked, then without waiting for an answer he ordered Ginny to go get food. Hermione didn't notice until that moment that Ginny stood in the aisle near her privacy curtain.

The food arrived and Hermione nibbled at crackers and broth in silence, her mind churning over the recent events. Malfoy stayed by her side all evening as Hermione recovered.

Several hours later Malfoy asked, "Will you be okay? I'm going to tell Healer Garred that I'm taking you home." She nodded.

Once he walked away Hermione motioned for Ginny to come closer. "What happened?" Hermione whispered. "I heard an explosion?"

"All I know is that a Death Eater tried to kill you and that the guards found you because they heard your muffled screaming through the doors of Zonkos. They must have blasted through the wards to save you. One of them said something about finding the General knocked out in the castle and knowing someone took you. When Malfoy arrived...he...lost it." Ginny looked shocked. She leaned closer to continue, darting her eyes to the curtain. "The guards stunned the Death Eater who attacked you and brought him here as well. Malfoy tore into his mind with Legillimency then he *liquefied* him. I've never seen anything as disgusting as that in my life. Healer Garred ran extensive diagnostics and gave you tons of Potions. Malfoy spent the next two days here by your side until you woke up." She stopped and checked again to make sure Malfoy wasn't returning yet and then lowered her voice and said, "The Death Eaters are starting to talk. Malfoy killed two of them because of you. They're nervous."

"What do you mean he liquefied Derrick?" Hermione asked, confused.

"I mean exactly what I said. Malfoy used some kind of dark magic to turn him into goo. It was horrifying." Ginny responded. Neither woman felt particularly distraught at the idea of Derrick's death but both seemed stunned by how he died.

They sat in silence for a moment and then Ginny said reluctantly, "Hermione, I think that Malfoy likes you. He doesn't behave detached from your well-being as most do here in the castle. He acts like...I don't know. He doesn't act normal."

Hermione didn't know what to do with that information. She knew Malfoy operated differently from the other Death Eaters, he wasn't violent and he seemed to want her to recognize the benefits of his care. Unfortunately though, his behavior was still abhorrent in Hermione's opinion.

Just then, Hermione and Ginny heard Malfoy stomping down the ward. Ginny backed up to her place by the curtain and Hermione rolled over, feigning disinterest. Malfoy entered and eyed both of them knowingly, then said, "I'm bringing you home where you can continue your recovery. Healer Garred will check on you periodically throughout the week." He glanced sideways at Ginny, "I told him to bring Ginny, for her education, of course."

"Thank you," Hermione said, staring at Malfoy critically. *Surely, he knows it isn't necessary for Ginny's education; I'm nearly recovered physically... He's gifting me more time with her. I'll take it!*

When they arrived back at Malfoy's home he walked her toward the bedroom but Hermione stopped. "I don't want to lay in bed. I want to sit in my window seat." She said

Malfoy looked conflicted. "You should rest. Healer Garred..."

Hermione cut in, "I feel fine now, I promise. Can't I just..."

"No." He said sternly then paused. "But if you'd rather rest by the window I'll transfigure you a bed out here."

"Thank you." She replied

Malfoy didn't touch her for a week. He also didn't take her back to work. Hermione spent her time resting on the couch by the fire or napping by the window. Healer Garred advised resting her eyes to allow her mind to continue healing so Hermione didn't baulk when Malfoy wanted to sit with her and read out loud. If he spent time reading to her then he wasn't requiring other things from her.

Ginny came with Healer Garred most days but stayed for hours after he finished examining Hermione. Malfoy allowed the two women privacy so that they could chat together. Hermione felt immense pleasure that she had the chance to spend so much time with her good friend, though she worried what Malfoy might require from her in exchange for his kindness.

One night before Malfoy headed to bed they sat by the fire. Malfoy placed his arm around Hermione and drew her to his side. She didn't bother trying to pull away; it wasn't worth the fight.

"Draco, can I ask you something?" She asked hesitantly.

He turned his head to look down at her. "Yes, of course." He responded.

She took a shaky breath. "On my first day of work, you said that while Bellatrix tortured me you realized you had to work harder to keep me safe."

"Mmm," He encouraged her to continue.

"What did you mean by "harder?" Hermione wanted to know more about Malfoy's supposed affection. She still didn't know if he had ulterior motives for making her believe he cared for her.

Malfoy stared at the crackling fire for a moment before answering.

"I didn't want to follow Voldemort. I knew his ways were evil but I didn't have a choice. My parents sold me into his service to free my father and to make up for his blunder at the Ministry. However, before that, in our fifth year, I tried to extricate myself from the Dark Lord's plans." He stopped and took a swig of Firewhiskey.

"I had this pipe dream, that I could join Dumbledore, you would fall in love with me, we would defeat Voldemort and live ...well you can imagine. I spent all of fifth-year trying to pull Umbridge's attention from your damned 'army.' but she was a witch on a mission and in the end, I couldn't risk outing myself."

At that, Hermione turned around to face him and gave Malfoy an incredulous look. "Come on, you were one of the people who led her to the Room of Requirement!"

Malfoy shifted towards her as well and lowered his arm. "And how did Potter find out about the Room of Requirement in the first place? Dobby was MY elf. He may have been free but he still heeded my word. I told him to show Potter the room and I sent him to warn you before Umbridge and I arrived. If it wasn't for that idiot Edgecombe you all would have been free and clear."

Hermione sat with her mouth open, staring at him in shock. Malfoy seemed convincing in his assertions but Hermione still found it hard to believe.

Malfoy hung his head and continued, "I sent Dobby to the cellar of the Manor to free Potter and Weasley as well. It was all I could do to potentially save you from Bellatrix's wrath."

Hermione threw caution to the wind and contended, "Come on, you can't expect me to believe that you wanted to join the Order? You're proud of this army you've built for Voldemort! Don't forget you not only lead his British regime but you also enslave hundreds of witches and damn them to a fate worse than death!"

"Hermione you've known me since I was Eleven," He said exasperatedly. "I'm nothing if not a self-preservationist. I wanted something for my life that wasn't to be. My parents tied my hands. I did what I could to save them and you but he ended up winning the war. After that my fate was sealed. I told you, I accepted my place a long time ago. I've done what I had to do to stay alive. Anyway," He stood up and turned his back to her to face the fire. "The policy of enslaving witches wasn't my design."

"You told me it was," Hermione challenged.

"I wanted to intimidate you into behaving." He shot back pointedly. "Voldemort wanted me to gift the witches to the soldiers to reduce the chance of revolution and to build back the British wizarding population. After the war, our numbers were dangerously low and he knew none of the witches who fought against him would willingly procreate with Death Eaters. The effort failed though. Whether due to stress or secret use of contraceptive spells, there haven't been many babies." He gave her a sideways glance over his shoulder and Hermione thanked the gods that Malfoy used contraceptive spells with her.

He stared at the fire for a long moment in silence and then walked back and kissed Hermione's forehead while setting his glass on the coffee table. "That's enough for tonight. I'm headed to bed. You can sleep out here for a few more nights but I want you back with me soon," he said, then he walked to the bedroom and shut the door.

Hermione couldn't sleep. Malfoy left her hours ago and her mind still raced. *What if he's telling the truth? Regardless it seems it is a truth that he believes. Did he really want to join the Order? Did he really try to protect us? me? I can't imagine what it would be like to have parents who gave you over to the Dark Lord. Would I do anything to survive if I was in his shoes?*

No, Hermione, stop it! He is a rapist. He is YOUR rapist.

No matter how much she turned his words over in her head she didn't find clarity.

What does it even matter? It doesn't change my situation any; I'm still stuck here with him.

It matters a great deal. If he's telling the truth then maybe there's still some good in him, even if it's buried deep within his hard exterior. Maybe.

She warred with her emotions for hours and eventually, fell into a fitful sleep.

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"It's got to be at Hogwarts," Hermione said.

Phin looked up from their notes and nodded. "Yeah, you're probably right. Like always." He said frustratedly, shoving the notes aside. "Should we just break down the door then? I'm sure Draco would welcome me home with open arms."

"I think we should try at least. We don't know for sure what's there and we don't have any other leads. It's been years!" She pleaded

Phin shot her an angry look and said, "Yeah, Mia, great idea. Let's go on a suicide mission. That sounds much better than finally leaving the country and starting our life together in earnest."

They were having the same argument that they always had. Phin wanted to try to escape to America, or Canada, somewhere far away where they could marry, raise children and grow old together. Hermione refused to leave until they found the last Horcrux. Ever since they first met on the run they worked together to find the missing Horcrux so that Voldemort's terror might finally come to an end.

"Someone else can fight the good fight, Mia. We've done the best we can do. Let's cut and run before something happens to one of us." Phin held her hands and looked deep into her eyes.

"Who? Who else can fight the good fight? We are the only ones left who know about the Horcruxes. We've not seen another Order member in nearly three years."

Phin brushed his hand through his hair angrily and asked, "Mia, if you're sure it's at Hogwarts then how do you suggest we get in to check? The rumors are that Death Eaters swarm the old place."

"We have enough Polyjuice for one of us. You stay here, I'll go and find a way in." She suggested.

"You're out of your goddamn mind." He growled.

"We can't both go, Phin!" She cried

"Then for FUCK SAKE, I'LL GO! I'll claim to have risen from the dead or some shit." He shot back at her. Hermione recognized his anger rising to his breaking point.

"Look, I'm sorry, calm down. We can find another way. I'll make you a deal. We stay in Europe for one more month and try to find a way to SAFELY break into Hogwarts. If we can't...I'll leave with you, I promise." She pulled his hands up to her chest and placed them over her heart. "I have to try everything I can to defeat Voldemort, but I won't risk losing you."

"Do you mean it? You'll leave?" He asked hopefully while moving his hands to her cheeks.

"Yes."

They went to bed, after spending the evening in each other's arms, outside around a campfire. Phin dropped off to sleep more peacefully than he had in weeks. Knowing that Hermione offered to leave with him calmed him greatly and he looked forward to a future where they led normal lives with normal responsibilities.

Hermione waited until she felt his steady breathing and then she crawled carefully out of bed and slipped on a pair of jeans, a long-sleeved gray shirt, and her trainers. She walked to the table and cast a Silencio so that the noise of her writing a note didn't wake Phin, then she slipped out of the tent and Apparated to London.

She needed to check Hogwarts and she needed to go alone. The thought of Phin being caught terrified her. She wasn't willing to put his life in any more danger. She was the one who fought against Voldemort with Harry and Ron. Phin didn't have that experience AND he was supposed to be dead.

Unbeknownst to Phin she had been planning this course of action for the last few months. She knew it might come to this and wanted to be prepared with plans for what to do where to go, and more. She was Hermione Granger after all.

She found her way to King's Cross and ducked into an alley to transfigure her appearance. She planned to hop a train to Hogsmeade and find a way to sneak into the castle. Once inside the station, she made her way to platform 9 and 3/4 and slipped past the barrier. Hermione stood in shock just inside the magical platform and took in the sight of hundreds of Death Eaters marching around waiting for the train. She knew she would need to evade some Death Eaters but didn't expect this many.

"Hey! Witch!" One of the Death Eaters yelled at her. "What the hell are you doing here. Grab her!"

Hermione turned on the spot to Apparate away but nothing happened. She cursed her foolishness and ran back through the barrier as spells flashed past her head. Back in the main train station she hid among late-night travelers and ran out into the night air, ducking into the back alley again and successfully Apparating away after crossing the barriers.

Hermione landed in a park and shook with fear at her close call. She decided she couldn't risk going back to Phin in case the Death Eaters had some way of following her. She found a park bench and curled up on it, willing herself to get some sleep.

The next day Hermione Apparated to the gym at the abandoned school at 4:33 PM per her and Phin's backup plan. She scanned the room for him and as her eyes met his she recognized the intense fury in his expression.

"Are you fucking kidding me!!" He shouted and sparks flew from his wand. "Do you have ANY idea how terrifying it was to wake and find you gone, knowing you left me to try to BREAK INTO A DEATH EATER NEST!" He railed at her.

She ran to him with open palms pleading, "I'm an idiot, I'm sorry!" Hot tears ran down her face in shame. "I'm a stupid Gryffindor, I don't know what I was thinking." She tried to grab his hand.

"Don't touch me! I can't even look at you! Did you lie to me about leaving just so I would drop the subject last night?" He asked

"No!!" I meant it, I'll leave. I just had to try and I didn't want to risk losing you." She cried and Phin huffed.

"So you left me and went on a suicide mission! DAMNIT, MIA!" Phin yelled as he kicked at an old bucket in the middle of the gym floor. The clang reverberated around the walls loudly.

"Well look at what we have here," said a voice from across the room.

Phin and Mia looked up to see two Death Eaters standing in the doorway. "We got a tip that there was magical activity in this old building. Looks like we just got lucky!"

Phin lunged for Mia and shoved her behind his back just as the two Death Eaters sent curses one green and one white at them. Hermione lost her balance and righted herself just in time to see Phin drop to the ground, eyes open, staring off into space. Dead.

"NO!!!!!" A scream of utter agony wrenched from her throat as she ran to Phin. However, the Death Eaters approached and sent two other Killing Curses at her one after another. She didn't have time to say goodbye or grieve his loss. She turned on the spot and Apparated away.

The dream shifted to endless snippets of Hermione's excruciating life after losing Phin.

Rain pelting the roof of the new tent she had to steal as she lay in her lonely, cot heaving great, fat, tears.

Sitting by a lake all alone thinking of the life she nearly had and screaming into the void.

Missing meal after meal because the food tasted like ash.

Endless days and nights of nothing but deep, searing, loneliness.

Hermione woke with a jolt from the nightmare of reliving the day she lost Phin. Her breath caught in her throat at the memory and she choked down tears. *Phin is gone. He is never coming back. There's nothing for me outside this castle any longer.*

Malfoy busied himself with work the next day but he kept a wary eye on Hermione. She stayed in the window seat the entire day and didn't say a word.

In the evening, after it was dark, Hermione got up and took a shower before walking back out to the living room and grabbing a drink from the library.

"Draco, will you come sit? We have a lot to go over." She said after an entire day of silence.

He walked to the couch, looking curious. Hermione sat in one of the leather chairs across from him. She took a deep breath and asked, "Were you telling me the truth last night?"

"Yes, love, What's this about?" He asked

"Would you take Veritaserum to prove it to me?" She continued.

"That depends, why?"

"If you're telling the truth then I imagine my offer will appeal to you."

He raised his eyebrows and stared at her intently.

"I will give myself to you willingly and wholeheartedly, you won't have to force me to come to you, I'll actively participate in our relationship and to your advances. I'll never try to run away, I'll accept my fate." Malfoy sat forward hungrily and Hermione continued. "If you end the policy of enslaving the witches in this castle. You said you would give me anything and that is my price."

Hermione spent the entire day considering her current circumstance and Malfoy's confession. She determined that she might be able to secure a better life for the witches in the castle if Malfoy told the truth. She knew that escaping her situation would be a long and messy business and she wanted to do all that she could to help others in the meantime. She would participant willingly, wholeheartedly may have been an exaggeration.

Malfoy sat back and considered her proposal. "That will take some time but I believe Voldemort gave up hope on the repopulation efforts a while ago. I think I can sway him as long as the witches stay here. I can get them away from the Death Eaters that's the best I can do.

Hermione thought through what he said, *at least they will be free from sexual slavery. That is something good I can do for them.* She nodded.

Malfoy smiled, sat back, and stretched his arms across the back of the couch. Then he drawled arrogantly, "Done. Now, prove it."

Hermione walked forward and sat next to him on the couch. *It's now or never. Come on, I can do this. I need to make him believe I'm sincere.* She tucked her feet under herself, brushed her fingers against his neck, and leaned in to whisper in his ear, "Take Veritaserum and I'll gladly prove it to you." She tried to make it sound like a demand, not a request. "Would you like me to strip," she lowered her hand to toy with the strap of her tank top, "or use my mouth?" She slid her hand over his stomach down to his crotch and squeezed lightly. *Come on, If this is what you want then, say yes and be done with it!*

Malfoy took a slow, deep breath and shifted to make room for his growing erection. Then he took Hermione's hand and placed it back on the couch, chuckling to himself and standing with a sigh. He stomped over to the Potions Lab and disappeared for a moment before walking back and holding out a bottle of Veritaserum like one would a fine wine. Hermione read the label and nodded

Malfoy knocked back a couple of swigs and said, "If you give yourself to me, willingly, and participate in this relationship as a proper lover, I will do everything in my power to free the

witches in this castle from sexual slavery. I'll give them jobs and make sure they aren't harmed by the men anymore, even though it will likely mean I'll have a Death Eater uprising on my hands."

Hermione's eyes widened in surprise.

"While we're at it, so you'll stop second guessing me," Malfoy added, "I've had feelings for you since fifth year, when I desperately hoped to join the resistance, marry you, and spend my life buried inside you. Happy?"

"Y...Yes," Hermione whispered. She couldn't believe it, he agreed to her demands. Hermione tamped down her excitement for the witches; she'd think about the consequences later.

"However," Malfoy leaned down and caged Hermione in with his large arms while staring intently in her eyes, "the proof I want isn't sexual," he reached his hand down and caressed her sex slowly through her jeans, "nor is it obtained with Veritaserum. I want to feel your motivations and sincerity..."

".I want you to grant me access to your mind."

Chapter End Notes

Will Malfoy see all of Hermione's secrets? Will he actually free the witches? Stay tuned!

Song choice for this chapter: "Natural by Imagine Dragons"

Chapter 8: Exposure Therapy

Chapter Summary

Hermione brokers a deal and learns to tolerate the terms.

Chapter Notes

Hopefully you are all healthy and sane on this crazy day for our democracy. Here's a chapter to aid as a distraction!

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

Hermione felt anxiety creep up her back. She hadn't expected Malfoy to request to use Legillimency but she knew that if she refused him, her shaky deal to free the witches was off.

His arms flexed by her shoulders as he awaited her response. It was a challenge and they both knew it. She took a deep breath, quieting her racing mind, and said, "Okay."

Malfoy stood and reached out a hand to her. She took it and he led her to the library where he picked her up and placed her on the desk. With their eyes now level he gave a predatory smirk and grabbed the back of her neck.

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"Stop it! Phin! How am I supposed to concentrate?" She shrugged away from him as he dug his fingers into her ribs tickling her.

"I'm sorry, was I bothering you?" He said with a flirtatious smile. "Let's try again," He offered as Hermione sat up straight and smacked his hand away. Phin pressed into her mind and shifted through her memories easily, pulling some racier ones to the forefront and examining them with lasciviousness. He ran his hand down her legs this time and brushed against her inner thigh, laughing deep in his chest.

"Phin!" She cried, exasperated.

"I'm sorry, Mia but honestly you're terrible at this. I might as well have fun. Didn't Potter ever teach you?" he teased.

"No, Harry was shit at Occlumency. It's one of the reasons Sirius Black died."

Phin looked at her quizzically, "What? You never told me that. How come you didn't learn on the run?" he asked while sitting back. "You had plenty of time."

She shook her head at him, "Who would have taught me? Ron? Ha! I didn't have any books on the topic either, so I couldn't teach myself. Why do you know anyway?"

"I'm a Slytherin," he responded matter of factly.

"And what? You just teach each other in your common room between sessions of plotting and scheming or learning how to smirk like an idiot?" she chastised.

Phin smirked at her arrogantly. "You mean like this?" He asked while leaning in again, tilting her head to the side, and sucking on her neck. Hermione felt a tingling sensation sweep down her body and gave a quiet moan.

Pulling away, Phin looked satisfied with himself, Hermione glared, so he gave a conciliatory shrug and sat back.

"No, in all honesty, Pureblood kids tend to learn from their families out of necessity. Especially Death Eaters' kids. We learn to wall off our emotions and hide our true feelings at a very young age. You, my love," he tapped her nose, "—wear your heart on your sleeve. It's one of the reasons I love you. But, if you want me to squash that doe-eyed innocence. I will try my best."

"I'm NOT doe-eyed!" Hermione grumped as she leaned forward on the couch and whispered into Phin's ear, "And you know better than anyone that I'm not innocent either." She pulled his earlobe into her mouth and sucked lightly.

"Are you sure you want to learn right now?" he smiled.

"Yes." She sat up, eagerly and Phin immediately pictured her back in the front row of Charms.

Phin knew there was no point in arguing. Hermione looked determined. Instead, he adjusted himself and asked, "Okay, first off, do you know what disassociation is?"

"The process by which one removes an association to and from an object or emotion." She recited as if from a book.

Phin smiled at her.

"Yes, well first you need to disassociate from the memory and emotions you want to hide. Visualize yourself letting go of it. I like to imagine the memory falling into a black hole behind me, getting smaller and smaller. Then you have to take that emotional attachment and place it onto a decoy memory." He explained.

Hermione furrowed her eyebrows in concentration. "Okay, let's try again!"

Malfoy slipped into her mind with ease giving Hermione just enough time to prepare her memories. She and Phin practiced repeatedly for years and she was fairly confident in her ability to disassociate from the important memories and hide them away, but she knew that Malfoy was a Master Legillimens.

He dove straight for her memories of arriving at the castle. He lingered over the moment she saw him for the first time. He took his time with her life under his command. Hermione let him see all her rage and disgust. She needed Malfoy to believe her. She gave away her attempt to escape from Derrick and felt Malfoy grip her tighter as he realized she wasn't just trying to break free from Derrick's attack but she also tried to run from him as well.

She hid her memories of charming the parchment for Ginny in the hopes that they may still communicate if Malfoy ever restricted their visits. Luckily for Hermione, he seemed disinterested in her life before the castle; it made hiding Phin easier. However, she felt Malfoy searching for something and knew she had to give up a bigger memory. That's when she offered up memories of testing her magic restrictions. It hurt to admit to him but she made her decision to give into Malfoy. She wanted to save the witches so there was no reason to continue down the path of escape...*for now*.

Lastly, she brought to the surface the thought process to make her offer to Malfoy. She left out all the memories of Phin and replaced them with more memories of how sad she was to be alone on the run.

Satisfied, Malfoy drew from her mind. He stepped back and stared at her with a possessive intensity then he held his hand out to her in a silent demand. She pulled her wand out of her back pocket and gave it to him reluctantly.

"You won't need this anymore."

Malfoy made a show of locking her wand in his desk then turned around and walked out of the room. Hermione gave him a minute before following. She didn't see him in the living room but she noticed her bed no longer sat near the window. She walked back to his room and into the closet before she found him.

He stood in the center of the room unbuttoning the cuffs of his shirt and staring at her.

Hermione wasn't sure where they stood with their deal. Did Malfoy find what he was looking for?

She walked up to him and stopped his hands. She knew he expected her to prove herself further. They stared intently at each other and Hermione noticed the subtle change in his expression from curious to challenging.

Hermione began to unbutton his cuffs for him. She maintained eye contact and pulled his shirt out from his waistband. She slowly unbuttoned the rest of his shirt and swept her hands under the fabric to feel his strong muscles. Stepping back she unclasped her bra from behind her back then dropped it to the ground and felt her heavy breasts rub against the thin fabric of her tank top; her nipples tight and her chest rising and falling with anxiety.

"You tried to escape with Derrick." He said dangerously.

Hermione nodded.

"You also tried to find a way to escape by using your magic," he accused. She nodded again.

"Yes, Draco, you've known me since I was Eleven." She repeated his words from earlier. "Did you presume I *wouldn't* try?" She remembered Malfoy's words from her first night '*You can exercise your intellect within these walls, but you will obey me.*' Malfoy permitted her intellect, or in other words, he didn't expect her to be a mindless drone. Nonetheless, he expected her to obey. She moved the strap of her tank top to the side and reached into her shirt to softly pinch her nipple. "I showed you; you saw my memories. You know I'm telling the truth. There's nothing for me outside the castle. You treat me decently. I can get used to a life together with you if it means the freedom of the women in this castle," she stated convincingly.

She wrapped her hands behind his ears and threaded them into his hair to seduce him further. Then she reached up and placed a kiss under his jaw. Malfoy slid his hand under the hem of her shirt as Hermione whispered, "Take me to our bed."

Malfoy growled and grabbed her wrist. He stepped forward and slid a hand over her throat. Bending her backward over the marble countertop. "I'll agree to your offer."

Hermione let out a sigh of relief.

"However," His fingers squeezed tighter around her airway as he sneered, "I will expect you to give over your memories whenever I ask; lovers don't keep secrets. I know you evaded my probing, my little Occlumense. I shouldn't be surprised, you do seem to excel at everything, don't you. I'll leave it for now, but if I find out you are still trying to escape..."

Hermione choked out her response, "Yes, okay, I hid a few things; nothing of consequence, little moments with Ginny that I want to keep to myself. You said yourself that I should have some privacy. You don't need to threaten me. I'm not lying about my commitment to this deal. I won't try to escape; give me Veritaserum if you want."

She stood up from the countertop and removed his hand from her throat then placed it on her chest. She knew that to give herself over to him and stay sane she needed to assert herself more as an equal. He narrowed his eyes and leaned into her; she felt his hard cock through his pants. He slipped his hand down into her shirt and brought her breast out over the fabric of her tank top before running his thumb across her sensitive nipple.

"I'll accept it for now. It's not as if you have a chance at escaping anyway and I'm sure you know that the deal is off the moment you try," he reminded her.

Hermione stood on her tiptoes, wrapped her arms back around his neck, and pulled him into a kiss. She never initiated a kiss with Malfoy before, completely independent from his demands, and therefore it started tentatively but Malfoy groaned and captured her mouth with a blistering intensity.

He picked her up as she wrapped her legs around his middle. Malfoy walked them over to the bed and set Hermione down taking his time with her clothes, removing them slowly, and ghosting his fingers over her skin.

Once naked, Hermione dropped to her knees. She found the idea of taking Malfoy in her mouth preferable to other options at the moment. Malfoy unclasped his belt, lowered his zipper, and pulled his heavy dick out while fisting her hair and tilting her head up. "I remember telling you once that I'd like to watch you cum on your fingers," he said.

Hermione nodded and then opened her mouth and licked a long trail up Malfoy's cock. She swirled her tongue over his head and then took his entire length into her mouth and down her throat. Malfoy shuddered and Hermione slid her hand down and into her wet folds. She rubbed her middle finger through her pussy, feeling the safe, familiarity of her practiced hand. *I can do this.*

She needed to play her part convincingly. She wasn't afraid to touch herself and therefore learned a long time ago what felt good and what made her come apart. She knew what pressure to apply, how to start slow, and build up her movements. She knew when to dip her fingers into her channel and wet them so that she could rub against herself with more ease. As she worked herself over she brought memories of Phin to the surface to entice her desire further.

She set a rhythm, circling her clit while moving back and forth over Malfoy's throbbing shaft. She felt the dull ache of pressure begin to grow and rocked slowly, using her middle and ring finger now to provide more for her swollen nub. The friction felt exquisite. She slowed her movements and pinched her clit lightly.

Malfoy's cock felt rock hard in her mouth and she knew he enjoyed the show. She pulled her hand away for a moment to slide up and across her chest. She brushed her fingers against her nipples circling them one by one then returning her hand to her core.

He watched as she took her time, working over her cunt and pulling out her orgasm. She ran her fingers through her folds and imagined it was Phin's dick spreading her wide and moving over clit. Hermione's rhythm picked up and Malfoy shuddered as she sucked harder on his cock. Her cheeks hollowed and her tongue ran against the bottom of his length as she sucked again and again.

Malfoy growled his approval and held her hair tightly with one hand as he guided her movements. He wet his fingers then reached a hand down and rubbed them over her hardened tits. Hermione moaned and her humming clearly sent a shock straight to Malfoy's tight balls because she heard him groan again. She felt him holding off. She was close and she suspected that he wanted to watch her cum with his cock shoved down her throat.

Malfoy pinched her tit harder and Hermione moaned again. She rocked faster over her hand and felt her hot, wet, pussy glide beneath her skilled fingers. A tightening in her core broke and she slammed down over her hand as she whimpered, sucking hard and humming deep in her throat. "Mmm, mmmhhhhh ah, mmm!"

At the vibrations from her intense orgasm, Malfoy gripped her hair harder and gushed down her throat. Her wide eyes met his and he commanded, "Take it, ugghh, swallow it all!"

After several moments he pulled out of her mouth and wiped his thumb over her bottom lip, catching some cum and dipping it back into her mouth. "That's it."

Malfoy offered a hand to Hermione and helped her to her feet before divesting himself of the rest of his clothes and settling into bed. He tucked her under his arm and guided her to rest her head on the crux of his shoulder. Hermione stared at the art on the wall, it was an abstract piece that she thought looked a little like a wave. *I'm doing this for the witches!* She reminded herself while her eyes welled up.

"Draco?" She asked as he stroked his fingers through her hair.

"Yes?"

"How will you do it? How will you...free them? I mean how long will it take? Can you.."

"Shh, Hermione, I told you I would do it. Leave it to me. Quiet your mind." She made to lift her head and respond but he held her firmly. "No, Hermione, I mean it. You've been fighting and running for the past six years, that's enough. I'll handle it. I won't hear anything else about it. I'm your main concern now."

She let the topic go not wanting to shake the foundation of their new agreement.

"Draco?" She asked again quietly.

Malfoy let out a heavy sigh, "Yes?"

"Why don't you live at your Manor? Why here? I know that you need to keep track of the training operations but couldn't you use the Floo and stay in your home?" She wanted to understand as much as she could about him to hopefully find additional things to exploit.

He took a while to respond before admitting, "The Manor isn't my home. It's just a place where my parents courted a dictator." He paused for a beat then continued asking, "Did you hear that they died? He killed them, my parents, Bellatrix, Rodolphus, he questioned their loyalty in a fit of rage and that was that. Cursed them all at a dinner party. My parents had many faults but," he paused, "Mother could be kind. She cared for me; might be the only one who ever really did." He stopped and Hermione raised up to look at him, his expression showed a sincere loss.

"My relationship with my parents was complicated. My home life as well. Hogwarts was different. I could just, be myself." He looked at her and laughed, "I know I was a shit to you mostly, but I was happy here. I had friends in Slytherin, no one required too much of me. Until sixth year."

Hermione saw the way Malfoy missed his mother even though he clearly had complicated feelings regarding his upbringing. She missed her parents deeply. In moments like these Malfoy seemed more understandable. *If I'm doing this I need to see him as someone worthy*

of affection. She leaned over and kissed him; Malfoy's breath caught in his throat, obviously surprised by her tenderness. When she pulled away he raised his brows and asked, "What was that for?"

"I don't know, you seemed sad and I know what it is to miss your family." She responded, hovering over him and trying to sound sincere.

Malfoy stared at her a moment longer then said, "Your parents are safe and happy Hermione; you did right by them." He held the back of her head and caressed her neck.

It was her turn to feel surprised. "W...what are you talking about?" she stammered.

"In Australia, they're happy. They own a practice and have a house by the beach, their porch has three of those wind chimes, the kind that plays soft notes in the breeze." he continued.

She shot up to turn and look at him. He raised up as well and rested against the headboard.

"What are you talking about!?" She demanded

"I found them, a year after the war ended. I followed their trail to Australia hoping to find you with them," He explained.

Tears instantly welled up in her eyes and fell down her cheeks. "You didn't hurt..." She whispered terrified.

"No, love. They're fine, they're happy." He assured her while brushing her hair out of her eyes.

Hermione couldn't breathe, she felt the panic rise in her throat. "How do I know, you're telling the truth?"

Malfoy reached forward and held her jaw. "Hermione, breathe. Breathe, love. I'll show you." She gave him an incredulous look. "Stay here, I'll be right back." He kissed her, stood up, pulled on some pajama pants, and walked out of the room. Hermione pulled the covers up under her arms and sat confused awaiting his return. She heard him cross the living room and then walk back a few minutes later. He entered the room holding Dumbledore's Pensieve. Hermione remembered seeing it in his office years ago.

Malfoy sat on the edge of the bed holding the Pensieve, he raised his wand to his temple and drew out a silvery memory placing it in the bowl. Hermione eyed him with suspicion as he handed it to her gently as to not slosh the liquid.

"Go on," He said with an upward nod of his head.

Hermione dipped her face into the bowl and felt herself fall into the memory. She landed on a sandy road near a palm-tree-lined driveway leading to a quaint, pale blue, cottage. She heard quiet rustling and turned to see Malfoy in Muggle clothes. He walked up the driveway and headed to the door. Hermione heard the chimes in the wind playing sweet songs and smelled the sea breeze. Malfoy knocked and waited.

After a pause, the door opened and Hermione's mom smiled, "Brandon! What a surprise, what are you doing here? Come in, we were just going to sit down to dinner on the back porch, would you like to join us?" She asked happily.

"No, Monica, thank you, I don't want to be an imposition. I just came to chat briefly with you and Wendell." He smiled back.

"Come in, Come in. Wen! Brandon's here" She yelled to the back of the house.

Hermione's dad walked through the door to the porch and marched jovially toward Malfoy, "Brandon! How's it going?"

Hermione felt her heart in her throat. She walked up to her mom and placed her hand on her shoulder lightly. "Mom, I love you!" She whispered through her tears.

As her parents and Malfoy made small talk Hermione took in the home. *It looks like our home.* Though the cottage itself looked nothing like Hermione's childhood home, her parents' style remained. She noted their imprints in the color choices, artwork, and *smell, god, it smells like them.*

"So to what do we owe the pleasure?" She heard her dad ask.

Malfoy cleared his throat, "Well, I wanted to tell the two of you personally that I've decided to cut my stay short. It's been a lovely month, thank you for showing me Perth and allowing me to make a few bucks while vacationing. Unfortunately, my employer called and they need me at home. It looks as if my sabbatical is up." He smiled and grabbed her mom's hand.

"Oh, no! Brandon, that's such a disappointment. We enjoyed having you around and hoped you'd stay longer." She hugged him, "It felt like we had a son for a moment there; that was nice for us, two childless old folks." She cried.

"Now, Monica. Don't make him feel guilty. The man has a life to live," Hermione's dad said while shaking Malfoy's hand and patting him on the back. "We'll miss you though," he added. "You're always welcome here."

There were more hugs and handshakes and Malfoy turned to leave. Hermione didn't budge. She desperately wanted to stay with them. As he closed the door she walked further into the room and sat in a living room chair as the memory slowly dissolved around her.

"Hermione?" Malfoy asked.

She looked up and wiped away a lingering tear.

"I don't understand." She croaked

Malfoy grabbed her hand. "When I found them, I asked Voldemort for time off. I told him I wanted to hunt down rogue Order members. I intended to stay and wait for you to show up. I posed as a traveler on a sabbatical in Australia for a year. I pretended to meet your parents at their church. They took me under their wings and let me work at the front desk of their office a few hours a week. After a month it was clear that they had no memory of you and that you

were nowhere to be found. Voldemort became antsy and I knew I needed to return home. That was my departure." He paused and cleared his throat. "They are very lovely people, Hermione. You're lucky."

Malfoy vanished the Pensive from Hermione's shaking hands and watched as she took a shuddering breath.

I saw them again. Malfoy was right, they looked happy. She struggled to hold in happy tears. She thought that she may never see them again. She looked up after a moment and caught his eye then she crawled across the bed and into his lap, wrapping her arms around his neck. She brushed off her confused emotions and allowed herself to feel grateful for the opportunity to see her parents again.

"Thank you," she whispered into his lips then she kissed him.

Malfoy growled deep in his chest and kissed her back with searing passion. She felt him harden beneath her and he reached between their bodies to pull himself from his drawstring. She took a deep breath, gathered her resolve, and lowered herself down on top of him, slowly sheathing him in her tight embrace.

Malfoy froze and closed his eyes at the sheer pleasure of Hermione's acquiescence. Then he wandlessly vanished his clothes and grabbed her hips pulling her up off of him and guiding her back down again. "Fuuuuuccck" He breathed.

Hermione knew Malfoy's appetite, she forced herself to find ways to gain control. She moved over him again, letting her full breasts rub against his bare chest and feeling him fill her completely. She kissed the side of his neck and rolled her hips with his renewed entrance. At that, Malfoy flipped her over and pressed his weight into her. He held the headboard with one hand and sank into her with a groan.

He took his time, moving slowly and dragging out his release, licking her nipples and running his fingers through her folds and circling her clit. He eventually came with a roar before pulling out and dragging her to the end of the bed where he sank down unto his knees and buried his face in her legs. He lathed at her slowly for what felt like ages. Finally, he reached up, swiped his fingers across her tits, and sucked down on her clit hard. She shattered while biting down on her forearm draped across her face.

Afterward, he led them to the shower and washed her sensitive skin with care before wrapping her in a soft towel and falling asleep with her tucked under his arm.

Ten days later Hermione woke to the sound of Malfoy walking out of the bathroom after a shower. He sat on the bed and brushed the hair out of her eyes saying, "Good morning, love," before bending down and kissing her.

"Good morning," she yawned. "Am I going back to work today?"

Malfoy's face fell. "Not yet," he responded.

Hermione pleaded "Draco, it's been almost three weeks. Ginny stopped coming when Healer Garred stopped his check-ups. When you work, I sit here by myself all day. I want to go back, please."

Malfoy hung his head and rubbed the back of his neck. "Hermione, someone tried to kill you," He said.

She placed a hand on his cheek and turned him to face her. "And, they're gone now. You saw to that."

"No. I'm not ready." He said with finality. He got up and walked to the closet to dress. She let out a disappointed sigh.

Hermione had a sudden thought. "Okay, then can I go for a walk through the castle? It would be nice to see Gryffindor Tower and the old classrooms,"

He stopped and turned to face her again.

"Something to do," she shrugged.

He raised his eyebrows at her, "By yourself?" He asked incredulously.

"Yes?" She chanced.

Malfoy turned back to the closet laughing. "Did you think I'd say yes to that?" He asked while walking away.

"I thought it was worth a shot!" She yelled in his wake.

After the night that they came to their agreement, Hermione held up her end of the bargain. She forced herself to lean into Malfoy's advances and even initiated their interactions a few times. She chose to seek out his company during the afternoons, opting to read in the cushy chair in his Library while he worked as opposed to the window seat. It was hard to be near him so often but he seemed to appreciate the gesture. She often caught him staring at her approvingly from behind his papers and correspondences.

It's like exposure therapy; increased engagement with the undesirable object will eventually lead to increased tolerance.

On several occasions over the past ten days, Malfoy brought out the Pensieve in the evenings. Each time he pulled Hermione unto his lap and held her as she took her time with his memories of her parents and each time he took her passionately afterward. Hermione felt exceedingly grateful for the chance to spend time with her parents again, even if through memories. She grudgingly participated in their interactions, as promised and her skin crawled less and less each day, an increasingly worrisome fact.

Malfoy promised that he planned to talk to Voldemort soon about the witches and in the meantime he required that the Death Eaters cease all forms of physical violence towards them under the guise of supporting the repopulation efforts. It wasn't perfect but it was a decent step in the right direction.

Hermione got out of bed, showered, and dressed after Draco left for the day. She found a new book to read and camped out in the living room all morning. At lunchtime, Draco arrived home early and held the door to Dumbledore's office open to her.

"Well, let's go," he smiled briefly.

She looked up from her book saying, "Excuse me?"

He smirked and said, "I thought you wanted to do a nostalgia tour through the castle. I took some time off, I'll take you."

Hermione hoped to go alone so that she could hunt for the remaining Horcrux but decided that any chance to get out of the house was better than nothing.

She jumped up and said: "Well let's go!"

Chapter End Notes

She promised not to try and escape but maybe she can still work to find the missing Horcrux!

Song choice for this chapter: "On and On and On by Wilco"

Chapter 9: tap, tap, tap...

Chapter Summary

Four months later and Hermione is on the hunt for the remaining Horcrux.

Chapter Notes

Hi Everyone! I want to give a HUGE shoutout to 32Star for helping as a sounding board this week! Your feedback was priceless!

Happy reading!

Song choice for this chapter: "Lost Boy by Ruth B"

"Can I get you anything else?" Hermione asked a surly Death Eater. He took up residence in a booth at the beginning of her shift and hadn't moved yet. It was nearly 4:00 PM.

"Gillywater and a Cottage Pie" He grumped, eyeing her curiously.

Hermione made her way back to the kitchen to put in the Death Eater's second order of food for the day. *I can imagine plenty of better ways to spend your day than sitting here reading the Daily Prophet from morning until night.*

After four solid months of requesting to go back to work, Malfoy finally gave into Hermione with the stipulation that she now had a personal bodyguard in addition to the regular guards who stood post at the doors. Hermione didn't mind the added detail. She was just happy to be able to get out of the castle again each day. The manager of the Broomsticks, however, made his opinion clear on the topic.

"Any more bloody on-duty guards in the building and we won't be able to accommodate customers," he often complained or, "Least he could do is allow them to eat and drink on the job."

Hermione could care less about the profit margins of a Death-Eater-run café. She enjoyed the faux freedom and the company of people other than Malfoy. The witches warmed up to her once Malfoy demanded that the Death Eaters stop using violence against them and now they included her in small side conversations between table runs.

"What the hell is that Death Eater doing? He's been here all damn day," Cadence asked Hermione under her breath.

"I don't know. I never saw him before this week and now it's as if he lives here," Hermione responded with a shrug of her shoulders. "Doesn't matter though, he seems harmless enough." Cadence offered Hermione a rare smile and continued her shift.

As she walked the Death Eater's second order to his table she noticed Malfoy at the door. She left her customers for the day and hung up her apron while watching him dismiss her security detail.

He held his arm out to her as they walked out of the café. "Would you like to work in the Potion's Lab this afternoon or tour the castle again?" He asked before Apparating them back to the castle.

Since the first time that Malfoy offered to walk her through the castle he periodically gave her that option in the late afternoons. He added it to their rotation of acceptable activities and Hermione put on the act that she wanted to visit old classrooms, the owlry, the Great Hall, and more all while exploring different places that the final Horcrux may be hidden. She racked her mind for potential locations to try.

She had to be careful though and often found herself scanning rooms, or acting as though she was particularly interested in the contents of a closet. She made sure to behave as pleasantly as possible on their walks to keep Malfoy distracted from her true mission.

One time while headed to Filch's old office Malfoy asked, "Really? What could possibly be interesting to you in here?"

Hermione gave a small laugh and tucked her hand under his elbow, pulling him gently into the room. "I don't know, I never got into much trouble with Filch, I just thought it would be fun to peak through his filing cabinets and see what dirt we can dig up on our old friends." She needed to be careful not to lay it on too thick. She didn't want to draw suspicion.

Hermione had plenty of time to speculate what might be hidden and where over the five years on the run. Although she harbored an extensive mental checklist of locations she felt herself running out of new possibilities.

She experienced an eager sense of suspense on each of their many trips through the castle. She desperately wanted to find the blasted item so that her five-year mission might finally be complete. However, so far she ended up empty-handed. It was hard to search with Malfoy on her heels everywhere she went. She appreciated the distraction of the Horcrux hunt though because many aspects of the castle no longer resembled her educational years and the stark contrast depressed her.

In fact, the first time they ventured out, Malfoy walked her up to Gryffindor Tower, per her request, and Hermione nearly collapsed from shock at the sight of her old home-away-from-home. She originally asked to go there, not because she thought there was any chance of it being the location of the Horcrux but simply as a ruse for her interest in the tour.

Unfortunately, the drastic change in appearance caused her to regret that decision immediately.

She stood in the mouth of the portrait hole and gaped at the room now in ruins. The fireplace lay cold and empty. Few torches endured the harsh years, leaving an eerie darkness to the space. Graffiti covered the walls with phrases like *All Hail the Boy-Who-Died!* and *Fuck the Statute of Secrecy!* Several couches, chairs, and tables remained but stood on their sides or in pieces haphazardly around the room, and scorch marks marred most of the surfaces.

"We use it as a combat training room now. No one wanted to live in Potter's old house." Malfoy explained.

The searing pain of her old life hit her as she grieved the loss of Harry, Ron, Fred, George, and others. She found it hard to reconcile this cold, bleak room with her warm memories of studying under the alcoves, laughing together on the couches, or watching Harry and Ron play Wizard's chess by the fire.

"Hermione, love?"

Hermione didn't respond, instead, she walked resolutely towards the stairs to the girls' corridor leaving Malfoy behind. She marched down the hall and pushed the heavy oak door to her dormitory open with a sense of dread. The fourposters looked as though they hadn't been touched in years, thick piles of dust adorned the sheets and the ripped hangings swayed in the draft from the windows. One bed lay ascew in the center of the room, sheets laden with what looked like dried blood. The air smelled moldy and the floorboards squeaked with disuse.

"You have no idea how many times I fantasized about you in this room," Malfoy said from the doorway.

Hermione turned around to face him realizing he followed her. *Of course, he did. He can't give me one moment to myself.*

Leaving the isolation of his home broke the illusion Hermione built for herself. Over the past few weeks, Hermione found a way to tolerate their interactions but once again she saw Malfoy for who he truly was. *I sold my soul to a sodding rapist!*

She knew before making the deal with Malfoy that it would be a tough pill to swallow but recognized that her life meant nothing when compared to the safety and well-being of the hundreds of witches enslaved within the castle walls. Now the thought of her self-inflicted complacency sickened her and her skin crawled as she took in his form leaning against the door frame. She glared at him. Words escaped her as he pushed off from the wall and stalked towards her.

He towered over her and said, "I used to imagine you, tucked away behind your curtains, gliding your fingers through your..."

"Stop it." She scolded and stepped around him towards the door.

Malfoy suddenly grabbed her wrist in a vice-like grip. "Excuse me?" He asked threateningly.

"Can't you fucking give me a moment?" She snapped back attempting to pull away. She knew that her outburst pushed her luck. Malfoy treated her kindly these days but his authoritarian tendencies lay just below the surface.

He tightened his grip and circled his other arm around her waist pulling her towards him roughly. "Careful, love." He warned. "You wanted to go on this little trip. Don't make me regret indulging your request."

She let out an aggravated sigh as he kissed her commandingly. When satisfied he pulled back saying, "I can see it's hard on you to witness these changes. Should I take you home where you are obviously more comfortable or can you remain appreciative of my charity?"

"I'm sorry, Draco" she responded, adopting a passable tone of remorse. "You're right, I'm just having a hard time with all this."

That evening, once they arrived back at his home, Hermione found the act of willfully engaging in his advances repellent. She scolded herself for leaning into his manipulative kindness and questioned her sanity as he thrust into her. *How could I let down my guard around him?*

Since that night Hermione spent hours picking apart her reactions and emotional responses to her predicament. After much analysis she determined that her responses mirrored that of the grief cycle, recognizing that she vacillated between anger, depression, denial, and acceptance.

She knew that she couldn't maintain anger, she needed to find some comfort in her terrible circumstance, but the thought of dipping back into acceptance frustrated her. She chose instead to take the view that she controlled her fate. *I chose to use Malfoy to save the witches. I choose to engage with Malfoy to maintain a tolerable living arrangement. I Choose!*

Back in Hogsmeade, Malfoy interrupted her thoughts, "Hermione? Tour or brew, sweetheart?" He asked again brushing her hair behind her ears.

"Tour. I had a thought actually." She stated.

"What's that?" Draco asked.

"Can you take me to the Room of Requirement? Harry found an old textbook of Snape's in our sixth year. It had a bunch of notes in the margins that allowed him to ace his Potion's class. It's how he learned Sectumsempra." She touched his chest lightly feigning slight concern.

Malfoy grimaced at her skeptically and pulled her hand away. "And?" He asked.

"After you two dueled and he cursed you, Harry hid the book in the Room of Requirement. I never approved of his use of the book to cheat in class... or curse you! But, it would be

interesting to review Snape's notes. Can you take me to find it so that I can test out his advice while brewing next time?" She finished.

She hadn't checked the Room of Requirement yet and the more Hermione thought about it the more it made sense. The room of hidden things seemed as good of a place as any to hide a treasured object.

An hour later she waited on the seventh floor as Malfoy paced back and forth in front of the wall near the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy. When the large door appeared in the wall he stopped and held his hand to her. He pushed the door open and held it for her as she walked into the vast room.

Towers of discarded items filled the space and Hermione immediately smelled a strong aroma similar to the standard fragrance of any antique store or old library.

"Where did he hide it?" Malfoy asked with a slight cough. Thick dust hung in the air and coated the surfaces.

"He told me that he left it near the broken vanishing cabinet. I believe you should know where that is."

She eyed him critically as he sighed and said, "This way."

They walked through a maze of tight aisleways, careful not to disturb the contents of the room. Hermione kept her eyes peeled for any sign of a potential Horcrux but came up empty. Eventually, they turned a corner to find an impressive ornate, black cabinet.

"Here you go," Malfoy said as he turned to look at her with an irritating smirk.

Hermione felt her heartbeat in her throat. This cabinet and Malfoy's use of it facilitated Dumbledore's death and subsequently won Voldemort the war. Dumbledore died before providing answers to many questions. She, Harry, and Ron weren't able to make up the difference and in the end, their learning curve was too great.

Hermione shivered as she searched the surfaces around her for the Advanced Potions book. After looking for what felt like half an hour, her ears began to burn with a whisper and high-pitched ringing. The sensations were faint but persistent. Suddenly Hermione gasped.

"What's wrong?" Draco eyed her closely.

"Nothing," she replied hastily, "I thought I saw a mouse." She lied.

The ringing was so quiet that most people wouldn't notice. However, since Hermione spent months wearing a Horcrux, she now considered herself highly attuned to their magical properties.

She tried to look inconspicuous as she searched for the cause of the noise but didn't find it at first. It wasn't until she looked up and saw another large cabinet with a stone bust resting on top and a... *Diadem!*

Her eyes widened as she noticed the Potions book beneath the bust. She walked over to the cabinet noticing the shiver in her spine deepen and the noise become increasingly frantic.

Holy Fuck, I found the Horcrux! It must be Rowena Ravenclaw's Diadem.

Hermione extensively researched the artifacts that Voldemort potentially chose, first with Harry and Ron and later with Phin. She knew the Diadem was a possibility but thought it was a slim one at best.

"I found it," she said shakily.

"What's that?"

"The book. I found it." She grabbed the book from beneath the pile praising her luck and wishing she could grab the Horcrux and run. *I'll come back, I will! I'll find a way to destroy it and then Voldemort will be mortal again!*

Later that evening, Hermione's mind raced. Finding the subject of her five-year search and then leaving it without any clear idea of when she might retrieve it felt excruciating. *The wretched thing is here in the castle! It was here all along and I can't leave this bloody living quarter by myself!*

"Hermione!" Malfoy barked

She looked up startled. They sat at the table eating dinner and Malfoy clearly tried to get her attention numerous times.

"Yes? Sorry." She answered absentmindedly.

"Where is your head? I asked you about that damn book three times."

"Sorry!" She grumped back defiantly. "What did you want to know?" Irritation flooded her system with the idea that she wasn't allowed a moment to herself to think.

Malfoy glared at her and raised an eyebrow. He set down his fork and wiped his mouth with his napkin. He rose from the table and walked to his library where he poured two glasses of Fire Whiskey and walked back to her holding out a glass for her to take.

Hermione huffed, "No thank you. What did you want to know?"

"You seem distracted, here, take the drink, let's start over." He held the glass out to her and waited for her to take it. His eyes seemed kind but his expression brooked no argument.

"Fine," she grabbed the drink, slyly sniffed it, looked for signs of swirling potion in the mix, and seeing none took a sip. Malfoy acted strangely but Hermione ran over her checks and balances *Veritaserum has no smell but any potion leaves an iridescent swirl if you look close enough. It's safe.*

"Happy? I don't understand how you still have a liver." She joked darkly, trying to reduce the tension. She needed to be more careful; Malfoy was incredibly suspicious by nature.

He sat and they talked for a while in relative congeniality. He seemed to move past his frustration as Hermione paid more attention to him. She described some of the fascinating notes Snape made on Potions crafting and he listened attentively. Malfoy eventually vanished the plates and poured them each another drink. Warm shortbread biscuits arrived on the table and he walked them over to the fire to finish their conversation.

Hermione's head swam a little as they talked and she began to regret the second drink. She didn't like the feeling of being out of touch with her reactions and senses and therefore rarely drank much. From time to time, Phin talked her into partaking. He always said she was a funny drunk, but in those rare circumstances she insisted he stay sober on the odd chance a Death Eater horde stormed the tent.

They sat together on the couch, Malfoy's arm hanging over her shoulders. Their conversation moved along pleasantly enough although Hermione noticed that Malfoy asked a lot of questions.

"So, you never used the book to cheat sixth year?"

"No! I earned my grades."

"Well, of course, you did. Did you at least give it to Potter for using the book?"

"Yes! I made his life miserable that year with all my nagging." She responded with a smile. *Slow down on the drink Hermione, you're getting punchy!*

Malfoy sat forward and offered her another biscuit. She shook her head. He turned toward her and asked innocently while taking another sip, "Are you currently devising any new escape attempts?"

Fear lanced through her body instantaneously. She glared daggers at Malfoy and thought, *You Mother Fucking, Wanker!*

She panicked, casting her eyes around for something that could save her.

"Hermione?" He asked, dangerously.

She didn't want to give him the satisfaction of an answer. "No!" she shot back. She mentally kicked herself for not checking the second drink as closely.

"Are you considering any previous escape attempts?" He asked, dropping the act.

"No! And I thank you not to drug me! You promised you wouldn't! Sorry if I got the impression that your word meant something to you!" Angry tears welled up in her eyes as she spoke.

He ignored her outburst and asked, "Why are you so distracted lately?"

Fight it, Hermione! Find a truth that you can share with him!

"Being back in the Room of Requirement brought up a lot of memories. I miss Harry and Ron. I miss the adventures that we used to work on together. I don't want to be stuck here without control over my bloody life!"

She watched Malfoy's eyes darken but she continued, knowing that she needed to work herself out of the hole she dug. "I'm not trying to escape; I know the deal I made and I'm behaving the way I promised, am I not?"

He didn't respond.

"It's easier to be around you lately. I don't want to be miserable all the time." She was rambling and she knew it. Terror and anger whirled within her as she fought not to admit her discovery of the Horcrux. "I've appreciated our time together, in fact!" She stopped, eyes wide in shock.

Malfoy smirked arrogantly.

What the hell!? How is that true? I've tolerated him, I've accepted my role, but appreciated?? I guess what I mean is that I've enjoyed not fearing for my well-being all the time! ugh!

The last sentence did the trick. Immediately Malfoy's gaze and body relaxed. He stood up and offered his hand to her. She accepted it begrudgingly. Then he walked her to their room and began to undress her.

She waited in silent anguish, afraid to talk as he pulled her blouse over her head and removed her skirt.

"Draco please, don't. You drugged me; the Veritaserum is still in my system. I can't right now. I'm too panicked. I'll do as you ask but please don't ask it of me tonight." She pleaded shakily.

Malfoy held her naked breast in the palm of his hand and ran his thumb across her nipple. He took a deep breath and said, "Okay, not tonight. But, I want to feel you against me as we sleep."

He paused, "Here," he waved his hand and Hermione felt her voice leave her throat. "Now you don't have to worry that I'm going to ask you anything else."

Hermione let out a sigh of intense relief. It was the first time in her life she appreciated being silenced.

He watched her all the next day as she moved about the café. She looked more subdued today than yesterday but overall she looked good, content, healthy. *Damnit.*

He arrived early today and therefore watched as Draco Malfoy dropped her off and heartily kissed her before leaving.

She milled around serving customers and taking orders as guards watched her every move.

"I see you're back. How can I help you?" she asked.

"Tea and toast." He grunted.

She eyed him with frustration and took off for the kitchen. Five minutes later she arrived back at his table with his food. He pulled out a copy of the *Daily Profit* and set to reading. He glanced over the paper now and then to keep tabs on her, just like he had every day for nearly a week.

It was nearing 4:00 pm and once again the surly Death Eater hadn't left his booth all day.

Hermione thought back over the previous night as she worked. She loathed that Malfoy drugged her with Veritaserum but was happy that she was able to hide her discovery of the Horcrux by telling other truths.

Life with Malfoy over the past few months was okay. They found a rhythm and Hermione felt good about her decision to choose to make her situation more tolerable. However, she needed to remember that Malfoy was a devious Slytherin and that she shouldn't let her guard down around him, ever.

Hermione walked back to the surly Death Eater to finish up his order before taking off. "I'm leaving soon for the day. Is there anything else you need before I go?" She asked.

He didn't respond and instead tapped his finger against the tabletop. tap, tap, tap....tap, tap, tap...tap, Tap, tap, tap, tap. The sound instantly brought Hermione back to days and nights in the tent on the run.

Just then Hermione looked down at the table, the Death Eater rapped his fingers against a napkin where he'd scrolled the words. "Fuck the Order of the Phinix."

Hermione needed to do a double-take. He misspelled the name of her beloved resistance. *What an idiot. He's trying to insult me and he can't even spell..* tap, tap, tap....tap, tap, tap...tap, Tap, tap, tap, tap.

PHOEnix, asshole not PHINix...tap, tap, tap....tap, tap, tap...tap, Tap, tap, tap, tap.

Suddenly her eyes shot up to his. They stared at each other intently for a long moment, Hermione with a question in her gaze.

Then almost imperceptibly he nodded and Hermione felt her world drop out from under her as Malfoy called from the door,

"Hermione?"

Chapter 10: Part II: Honeyduke's

Chapter Summary

Hermione offers up a memory and makes a decision.

Chapter Notes

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

Hermione's heart beat fast and her hands shook as she walked numbly along the streets of Hogsmede with Malfoy. She listened to the crunching of her feet on the gravel as if through water and her ears rang.

Step, crunch, step, crunch.

riiiiiiiinnnnnnnnngggggggg

"We got a tip that there was magical activity in this old building. Looks like we just got lucky!"

Phin lunged for her and shoved her behind his back just as the two Death Eaters sent curses, one green, and one white at them. Hermione lost her balance and righted herself just in time to see Phin drop to the ground, eyes open, staring off into space. Dead.

Step, crunch, step, crunch.

"NO!!!!" A scream of utter agony wrenched from her throat as she ran to Phin. However, the Death Eaters approached and sent two other killing curses at her one after another. She didn't have time to say goodbye or grieve his loss. She turned on the spot and Apparated away.

Step, crunch, step, crunch.

The ringing continued and Hermione shook her head to clear it. Her blurred vision focused and suddenly adrenaline kicked in. She began processing rapidly. The shock wore off and her Gryffyndor spirit took over.

I didn't see what I thought I saw last year. Phin is alive, I'm certain of it. No one knew my nickname for him or about his obnoxious tendency to tap out that rhythm on surfaces.

Holy. Shit!! Her hands felt shaky and her breath moved in rapid shallow pulls.

Why is he here? He's an idiot! This is the most dangerous place for him in all of Britain! They killed all those men from the train. Why did he write, "Fuck the Order of the Phinix?" He

could have alerted me some other way. It's a clue, it has to be...

She gasped as she realized why he stated the message the way he did and what she needed to do.

"Draco," she said as she stopped in her tracks.

"Yes?"

"I...I want to show you something." She croaked.

"What's that, love?"

"I know I said we should walk but can you Apparate us back?"

Draco held out his arm to her and in the blink of an eye, they stood in his living room. "What's this all about?" He asked as he pulled her robe off her shoulders and settled her onto his lap in one of the leather armchairs.

Careful, Hermione.

"I felt myself receding into my thoughts and I didn't want you to get suspicious again. I had a frustrating end to my day, that's all. Can you look please?"

Hermione saw the hunger in his eyes as he took in her request.

"Please don't drug me again. I'll try to be more transparent about my thoughts and feelings. It's just that I don't want to anger you. Sometimes when I'm quiet I'm wishing that I wasn't here," She said and the smile fell from his face.

She hurried to finish her sentiment "But, I know this is the safest place for me. It's not about you per se. I just wish the war never..." She took a deep breath.

He placed his hand around the back of her neck and stopped her. "What did you want to show me?" He asked darkly.

"Do you promise to let me continue working?" She hesitated.

"Not necessarily."

She paused. *I hope, this is a good idea.* "It's nothing big, it's just that sometimes the Death Eaters try to bait my anger. It gets old after a while. I was thinking about it a lot as we walked home and I didn't want you to think that..."

"Show me," He cut her off.

She nodded in resignation and raised her eyes to meet his. Malfoy slipped into her mind with practiced ease and Hermione brought the memory to the surface of the surly Death Eater's tapping and the note he wrote. She shared her feelings of anger and frustration and then pulled back before giving away the rest of the memory.

Malfoy frowned and furrowed his brows but his eyes showed relief

"The idiot can't even spell," He joked.

Hermione let out a frustrated sigh. "I know, right!" She gave a short laugh before saying, "That's all. It was just a frustrating moment that drew my attention."

"I'll make sure he doesn't bother you again." He said running his hands up and down her arms.

"Please don't; I'm fine. Maybe just... I don't know, come eat at some point?" She grimaced.

"What?" He asked, shocked but amused.

"Maybe if the customers see me with you it'll remind them that I'm yours and they'll lay off?" She shrugged.

There was a beat of silence then Malfoy's eyes darkened with lust at her words. He threaded his large hand into her hair and growled, "You're what?" He bunched up her skirt and pushed aside her panties to brush his fingers against her pussy, teasing the outside of her and then dipping his finger between her tight lips.

She hoped that the admission might distract him. Now she needed to finish the job. She feigned resignation and sighed saying, "Don't make me say it again Draco, come on." She rolled her hips against his finger which caused him to glide over her clit again.

He pulled her hair and tilted her head back to face him. "You're what?" He demanded as he removed his hand from her sex, unclasped his belt, and unbuttoned his pants. He pulled out his throbbing cock and fisted himself, rubbing a thumb over his head and wiping away several drops of precum. He then repositioned her to face away from him and straddle his legs.

"Yours," she whispered over her shoulder adopting an air of frustration.

A shudder of pleasure rolled over Malfoy's shoulders as he closed his eyes briefly then slowly dragged her down on top of him. He grabbed her jaw and kissed her hard, laying claim over her as he whispered into her lips. "I don't eat with the men at the café." He swelled inside her and she felt his consuming presence everywhere, holding her head, attacking her mouth, and lodged inside of her with what felt like no intention of moving.

He let go of her jaw and cupped her right tit while guiding her up and down with his left hand. Facing towards the window, Malfoy had complete access to her clit; he moved his right hand down her body and flicked her quickly over and over again while rocking back and forth within her tight cunt. He moved her hair off of her shoulder and bit down gently then sucked on her neck while he took the time to bring her over the edge. He rasped, "That's right, sweetheart, I love the way you mewl when I make you cum. Slide your wet pussy over my cock. I want to feel myself bottom out against your fucking cervix. Unghhhh."

Malfoy held her for a long stretch, breath heaving. Then he ran his hands over her hardened tits one last time and said, "I'm not going to eat at the café, but, I have a better way to remind the men that you're mine."

-----Phin-----

Phin sat against a wall in the tunnel below Honeyduke's. He thought over his interaction with Mia and hoped to the gods she picked up on his plan. *Come on, my beautiful genius. Figure it out,* he implored, banging his head on the wall in frustration and fear.

Phin knew two people better than anyone in the world, Mia and Draco. He knew his presence would shock Mia and he knew for certain that Draco was a suspicious son of a bitch who excelled at Legilimency. He wrote the message to give her cover, planning for Mia to act as though she was frustrated due to an asshole Death Eater.

If she gives up that memory she may be able to mollify Draco. She'll still be able to come to work then. When I approach her with my escape plan she won't make a scene and we can get away.

Phin felt as though he hadn't slept in two weeks. Fourteen days ago he hiked over the green, rolling, hills outside Hogsmeade on a mission to find the last, damn Horcrux. The train was too risky so he Apparated to a nearby hill instead. The process took forever, forcing him to make multiple stops over several days to avoid Splinching himself in the international travel.

Mia told him about the secret passage under Honeyduke's so he broke in and set up camp in the tunnel. The tunnel itself caved in during the Battle of Hogwarts; Phin realized quickly that it wasn't going to provide a way in. Instead, he Disillusioned himself to do some reconnaissance work and tried to find another way inside the castle.

Phin lurked in Honeyduke's, Disillusioned and staring out the window. He spent three days watching Death Eaters come and go, he recognized only a few of the men. That's when he saw her. It was the fourth day and Malfoy Apparated in front of the Three Broomsticks with Mia in tow; the sight of her took Phin's breath away.

What the hell is she doing here!?

He leaned forward and pressed his hands to the dirty window as a deep sadness hit him right in the gut. He spent a year trying to find her, looking everywhere she may visit. He Apparated back to the gym every day at 4:33 pm for six months, always landing and crouching behind a forgotten dumpster where he could see in the window and know if she arrived.

When she never showed he finally admitted to himself that she must think he died. Either that or, someone caught her, an idea too horrible to consider.

Now that horrible possibility stared him in the face.

The glass strained as he leaned into it, subconsciously trying to get as close to her as he could. He watched as Draco tilted her head up with a finger and kissed her.

You Bloody Bastard!!

Phin stomped across the store to the door with his wand drawn. *I'm going to fucking kill him!* He reached for the handle and heard the lock click before his hand froze in fear. He came to his senses realizing that as much as he wanted to Hex Draco into oblivion, he needed to do so strategically.

Phin stalked down to the tunnel instead, slammed his fists against the wall, and roared in anger.

Every day after that, he watched Draco and Mia arrive at 9:00 am; he watched his former best friend kiss the love of his life and then leave. The entire scene repeated at 4:00 pm and every day he seethed with anger at the sight.

Roughly a week ago he had enough. He grabbed an unsuspecting loner of a Death Eater, pulled the bottle of Polyjuice out of his backpack, and went full Barty Crouch Jr. on him, pulling out a number of his hairs and placing the Death Eater in perpetual sleep. Mia used an undetectable extension charm on their backpack four years prior; they used it to carry their tent and supplies and because they tried to stay out of sight, the bottle of Polyjuice was still full. Phin only used the potion when visiting the café but even still he snuck sips from a flask nearly every thirty minutes because it was old and unreliable. He watched Mia at work and stewed over how to escape. *Fuck the Horcrux! I'm grabbing her and we are getting out of here!*

Today was the day he decided to make his first move. He calculated that he had one more day of Polyjuice left so it was now or never. He waited all day, nervous that when he revealed himself she may react in a way that drew attention. He should have known she was smarter than that. Instead, she looked him in the eye and he saw the realization wash over her before Draco walked in and interrupted their reunion. *Wanker!*

Once he snuck back into the tunnel he woke the sleeping Death Eater, Confounded him, and sent him on his way. *If Draco wants revenge, he can have it!*

-----Hermione-----

The next day Hermione dressed and met Draco at the dining table. She eyed him hesitantly and he nodded with a scowl. "So, I can go to work today?" She asked.

"I suppose. I've got a busy day; I'm working on something, I'll share it with you this evening when I pick you up," He stated ominously.

"Okay," Hermione said warmly as she placed a hand on his. "Did you call for breakfast already? If not, I think I'd like an omelet." She pretended to read the cover of a *Daily Prophet*

on the table as she spoke. *Take your time with whatever it is you're planning. I have a busy day of my own!*

Draco dropped her off at work an hour later and Hermione felt pins and needles all day as she searched for the surly Death Eater or anyone tapping their fingers. Her attention drew to every slight movement of a hand or anytime the door opened. She felt a migraine developing from the stress of it all. Several hours passed and she began to feel increasingly anxious.
Where is he?

Just after the lunch rush, she took her fifteen-minute break. As usual, that meant grabbing a book and sitting on an upturned crate in a corner of the kitchen. She hung up her apron and headed down the dark hall to the bathroom before sitting down to read. Just as she placed her hand on the bathroom door to push it open, however, the door to the nearby mop cupboard opened and a hand dragged her in.

Strong arms enveloped her, his familiar scratchy stubble rubbed on her cheek and she smelled pine; it felt like home. Tears flooded her eyes instantly as he soothed her, "Mia, Mia, I found you. I'm here now, you're safe."

Safe? She cried harder. *How is THIS safe?* She pulled away to look him in the eyes and tell him to run but he crashed his lips against hers and she tasted tea and passion. She wanted to ward the door and hide away in the cupboard with him forever, wrapped in his arms and buoyed by their unending love.

"Phin," she croaked through sobs, "I'm so sorry. I never should have left without you. I...I... I saw you die!" She shoved her face back into his shoulder and let all the tears of the past year escape.

"Shhh! It's okay, I'm just glad I found you. I'm okay. I'll explain more later. We have to go." He placed his hand on her cheeks and kissed her wet lips again. "Shhh!, Mia, we need to go, calm down so we can sneak out of here. I found an open door in the back if we move quickly we can make it."

Hermione tilted her head back to look him in the eyes. She saw sincerity, fight, and anxiety swirling in their midst. She wiped her tears away, took a deep breath, and shut her eyes, steadying herself. "I can't," she moaned.

"What? What do you mean?" He brushed her hair out of her face; concern etched across his features.

"I can't go with you. I can't escape." She said, her voice stronger with resolve.

He held her at arm's length and searched her expression. "The fuck you can't!" He shot back "Let's go!" He pulled at her arm and made to open the door.

"Stop, Phin! I can't go. There are hundreds of witches whose livelihood and safety depend on the deal I made with Malfoy."

"What deal?" Phin demanded with a growl.

She turned her eyes to the ground and shook her head. Suddenly, Phin looked nauseous. Hermione noticed anxiety shoot through him and knew that he felt an increased sense of urgency to grab her and leave. "Damnit, Mia, No! I don't give a flying fuck what deal you made with Draco. I don't even care about the other witches. We are leaving. Now!" He grabbed her arm tighter.

Anger spiked within Hermione as she pulled her arm from his grip and spat back with venom, "Don't you dare manhandle me!"

He dropped his grip on her arm immediately, shocked by his behavior.

She continued, "You think I don't know about that open door in the back? Do you think I haven't analyzed every possible escape route? What are we going to do Phin, run? There are anti-Apparition wards for miles and thousands of Death Eaters at Malfoy's disposal. They'd find us in an instant! Not to mention the fact that he literally holds my magic somehow and I may have a trace! No witch ever escaped successfully and I DO care about those other women! It's people like Ginny! You haven't seen how abused they've been and my deal with Malfoy brought them some comfort already with the promise of more. So, I CAN'T!"

Phin stared at her, momentarily stunned. She took a deep breath and calmed herself, urging him to listen, "But you have to." She felt her resolve deepen. "You HAVE to go! Now that I know you are safe and alive I can't lose you again. You have to run. Maybe someday I'll escape," Tears streamed down her cheeks again now and her voice shook with her attempt to calm her nerves. "and if I do I'll come find you in Canada. Move to Toronto as we planned and I'll find you, I promise."

She reached up on her toes and kissed him hard, trying to infuse all her love for him in that goodbye. His hands held her tenderly, one at her waist and one on her cheek. Forcing him to leave her when all she wanted to do was run away together and escape this world, wrenched her soul completely apart. The sheer intensity of it took her breath away. She knew that if she didn't leave now she never would. So, she quickly pushed away, not waiting for a response, and left the cupboard for the darkened hall.

Hermione knew that grief and anger shot through Phin. She felt as he made to follow her but just then they heard a guard bark, "Hey! What are you doing?"

Hermione heard her bodyguard stomping around the corner and had just enough time to kick her foot back against the bathroom door so that it opened briefly and shut again as he caught sight of her. "I'm clearly going to the restroom." She stated condescendingly.

"Took you a while, though, didn't it!" He grumped.

She stared at him and said, "And?" before raising an eyebrow and continuing, "Would you like me to go into details over why?"

The Death Eater seemed taken aback by her forwardness and said, "Sweet Salazar. No, just get the fuck back to work." Hermione stomped past him towards the kitchen.

"Actually, I'm on my break, leave me the hell alone."

Hermione didn't see Phin again that afternoon. She tried her best to hold it together and make it look as though her life wasn't crashing down around her. *I chose to turn away the love of my life for Draco, bloody, Malfoy.* She gasped at the thought and stopped in her tracks while delivering food to a table. She wanted to throw down the tray and run out the back door, consequences be damned. Instead, she smiled meanly at her bodyguard who eyed her closely and continued her work.

When Malfoy came to pick her up, Hermione tried to brush off her irritation with his mere presence so as not to give herself away. They Apparated back to his flat and Malfoy walked her to the Potion's Lab giving her a list of items to brew. She pulled down phials of Asphodel, Wormwood, and Valerian Root as he rolled up his sleeves and rested against the thick molding below the window.

Despite herself, Hermione asked, "Draco, when are you going to free the witches? It's been four months already. Have you talked to Voldemort yet? You promised me..."

"Watch yourself," He warned.

Hermione turned around and caught sight of Malfoy, his forearms bare and his Dark Mark standing out visibly as a tangible reminder of the danger within her midst. He noticed her staring at him and smirked arrogantly.

"Calm your mind; I told you that I'd handle it and I will. I never said it would happen quickly." He cleared his throat and continued, " Anyways, I spent the day pulling together arrangements for a feast," he said, breaking the silence.

"Oh?" She said over her shoulder as she turned away to prep the ingredients and hide her frustration. *If I turned Phin away and you don't hold up your end of the deal...!*

"Yes, you mentioned that you'd like to find a way to show the Death Eaters that you belong to me. I think they'll get the idea if I parade my willing and adoring witch out in public."

Three days later, Hermione moved around, soullessly. She felt it harder and harder to play her part with Draco in her current state of apathy. Phin hadn't shown up again, which Hermione knew was for the best, but it didn't stop her from scanning the customers constantly every day for signs of his return.

Luckily, Malfoy proved mostly absent, which was a welcome departure from the norm. He fucked her each morning before work, picked her up at the end of the day, and promptly left again. He returned late each night exhausted, but ravenous. She often fell asleep before his return and therefore woke to the covers sliding off of her slowly or a hand between her legs.

Hermione knew something was up because Malfoy seemed to be working out his stress on her body. He took her roughly, affixing her arms to the headboard or plowing into her from behind while she lay across the dresser. He held her throat as he pumped his thick cock in and out of her cunt and asked her to beg him, which he knew she hated.

Hermione feared that maybe he found out about her reunion with Phin and he was waiting for her to admit it so he could punish her but somehow that theory didn't fit. Malfoy wasn't mad at her, he wasn't suspicious, he was just extremely frustrated and stressed.

She didn't have to wonder too long though because on the third day Malfoy picked her up from work and Apparated her back to his house like usual. Once they arrived, however, he left her and headed to the library.

She heard him talking to someone and walked to the doorway, curious to see who it was. As she crossed the threshold her eyes fell upon the guest in shock and horror.

"Hermione, love, you remember Theodore Nott. Apparently, he's back from the dead."

Chapter End Notes

Next week we hear from Phin and Draco!

Song choice for this chapter: "Transatlanticism by Death Cab for Cutie"

Chapter 11: Interrogation

Chapter Summary

Views from how Phin and Draco spent the last few days.

Chapter Notes

Hi Everyone, thanks as always for reading and leaving Kudos! I love all the comments and speculating!

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

-----Phin-----

Phin stopped himself from running after Mia when he heard the guard. He waited long enough to determine she was safe and then snuck out of the café, fuming, and stalked back to his makeshift campsite under Honeyduke's. Once there, he railed against the universe, kicking over supplies, which clattered along the rough dirt floor.

He ran his hand through his hair angrily and cursed the day he fell in love with *that Stubborn, Wanna-be-Martyr, Bloody Gryffindor!!* In Phin's opinion, she was out of her mind telling him to run. There was no possible way he would leave her to be used and abused by a Death Eater army!

He stretched his back and heard a loud crack. Waiting all morning in the mop cupboard left Phin aching and starving. *The witch has a bladder of steel! Why couldn't she go to the bathroom earlier? At least that way I could've come back here and eaten sooner rather than standing hunched over in that sodding closet all day waiting for her to BLOODY LEAVE ME AGAIN!*

He stomped around for a few more minutes spitting fire, then calmed down slightly and walked over to his backpack. He pulled out a can of pork and beans that he stole from a muggle supermarket in Otterburn and an old chocolate frog he found behind the counter at Honeyduke's. He popped the top of the can and flopped down on the ground angrily, ready to develop his next move.

Phin thought all night about what Mia said and how he could help her escape. The way he saw it he had one real option. Leaving wasn't a possibility; he didn't give it any thought

whatsoever. Instead, he packed up his items and left Honeyduke's early the next morning. He hid in the alley next to the post office and waited for Draco to drop Mia off at work. As soon as she entered the café, and the door closed behind her, Phin stepped out of the alley, into the light, and called, "Drake! Hey, wait!"

Draco stopped in his tracks; he turned around slowly and took in Phin's appearance standing near the post office. His expression showed shock and confusion and he immediately drew his wand and held it at his side. The guard at the door to the café asked in a shaky voice, "Sir?" but Draco waved him off.

"Woah, Draco, let me explain," Phin said holding his hands up to show that his wand was still in its holster.

Draco surveyed the scene suspiciously and sneered, "What did your Mother send you in March of our sixth year?"

Phin crinkled his nose in disgust. "Come on, man, you had to go there?" Draco said nothing but gave him a pointed look. Phin shifted his weight uncomfortably and said, "Betrothal papers from house Bulstrode. Satisfied?"

Seemingly so, Draco marched over to Phin, grabbed him roughly by the collar, and Apparated back to the castle. They landed in Snape's old office. Phin looked around confused and noticed all the potion ingredients missing and an iron gate instead of a door.

Okay, he didn't try to kill me yet and I'm in the castle. So far so good. Phin's moment of appreciation wore off quickly; his anger rolled within him at the thought of being so close to the man who held Mia captive. He forced himself to tamp down his rage and his desire to rip Draco to shreds.

He planned to join Draco's army, find a weakness and get Mia out, if he killed his former best friend in the process, great. He knew that Draco wouldn't welcome him into the ranks without a full explanation of where he was all these years, but still. Phin rolled his eyes and steadied his emotions.

"A jail cell, really?" He asked arrogantly, moving to stand near the window. He wasn't threatened. Draco may lead Voldemort's British Army but he was still the same person that Phin used to hock loogies with over the parapets at Malfoy Manor when they were five years old.

Draco propped his shoulder lazily against the stone wall and said, 'Give me your wand.' He stared at Phin with an unspoken challenge. If Phin didn't comply, his chance of making nice was over.

He grabbed his wand, furious, but face calm and teased, "Sure, Asshole, whatever you want." He tossed it to Draco feigning nonchalance.

Draco pocketed it and said gruffly, "Out with it."

Phin took a deep breath and started his practiced explanation, "I faked my death..."

"Really?" Draco interrupted smugly, dripping with sarcasm.

"Alright dick, can I finish?" Phin snapped back; Draco swooped his hand out in front of him with a smirk, indicating the floor was Phin's.

"I couldn't do it, Drake, I couldn't join Voldemort. If I remember correctly, you didn't want to either! I avoided the Dark Mark up until that point and wasn't interested in taking it after the war if I could help it." Phin paused, "My dad, is he still alive?"

Draco cut him off and answered curtly, "No."

Phin let out a short sigh of relief and stared out the window before moving on. *At least I don't have to worry about running into that Bastard.* "I Gemono'd my wand, left my robes, and Apparated away when Potter died. I thought about coming back once I realized how hard it was out there but," He stopped and glanced down at his knuckles.

"I met a Muggleborn witch on the run. We lived together for years until she left me." He continued.

Phin knew the moment he fell for Mia that, if captured, he needed to be able to hide his memories of her. Mia's association with Potter made her a person of interest and if any Death Eater found her with Legilimency, they would surely hunt her down. The idea that he may lead to Mia's capture kept him up at night.

He spent years honing his Occlumency skills and altering memories. He decided it was too hard, if not impossible, to completely fabricate replacements so he instead tried to keep much of them the same. Each night he worked on the day's events as he drifted off to sleep with Mia in his arms, her hair brushing his face. He systematically poured over each moment with Mia and disassociated the memory from her, replacing her with a generic Beauxbaton witch he met during his fourth year at Hogwarts.

"You met a Muggleborn?" Draco asked skeptically.

Phin shot back, harsher than planned, "I'm sorry, are you above Muggleborns?" He stared at Draco pointedly before turning back to the window. "I saw you with Granger; looks like you finally got what you wanted." *You Fucking Piece of Shit.*

Draco smiled and confirmed, "Sure did."

Phin seethed, he took deep breaths through his nose to calm himself. He stared at a training session down on the castle grounds for a moment, unable to continue. Mia's mention of the "deal" she made with Draco ripped at his insides. *I'm going to kill you for what you've done to her.*

Luckily, Draco said, "I just never heard you talk about any witches, it's hard to imagine."

Phin appreciated Mia's assets in school but never thought about her seriously for three reasons, Potter, Weasley, and Malfoy. Mia hardly ever spent any time without the Golden Boy and Weasley. On top of that Draco made it clear to Phin that he wanted her, not so much

in his words but through his actions. Phin knew Draco well, so he recognized the possessive glint in Draco's eye when he mentioned her or the way he watched her every move. Phin knew it wasn't worth considering her given the various competition. He chose instead to enjoy meaningless moments with various witches.

"I wasn't interested in bragging about my conquests."

"Why'd you come back after she left you? Draco asked.

"Isla left me for some Wizard who promised he could get her out of Europe. After that, I spent seven months on my own. I realize now that there's no escaping Voldemort's regime. I can either spend my life on the run, sleeping on rocks and eating stolen canned food or I can suck it up and join your ranks...If you'll still have me."

Draco pushed off from the wall. "That's still to be seen."

He immobilized Phin with a wave of his hand, marched over, and dove into his mind, painfully.

---Draco---

Over the next few days, Draco scoured Theo's memories. He sifted through his mind aggressively, looking for any sign of deceit or evasion. He waded through boring memory on the run after boring memory on the run but knew that something lay below the surface. *It doesn't make sense. Why would he run from Voldemort only to come back? If he or I were anyone else he'd be dead already.*

When Draco heard Theo call out to him in Hogsmeade he experienced several different emotions at once. He was shocked to hear the voice of his best friend, someone who presumably died at the Battle of Hogwarts, and someone who he sincerely grieved over. He felt concerned over whether it was a trick of some sort and then once he confirmed Theo's identity Draco became incredibly suspicious wondering why he was here, why now?

Draco spent years missing Theo's friendship, therefore, due to his strong desire to have Theo back in his life, he had to be certain that something wasn't amiss. He missed having someone in his corner and hoped he might have that again. He searched fastidiously, knowing full well that Theo was tired and suffering from the intense interrogation but choosing not to acknowledge that truth.

Draco spent two full nights and days as a ball of irritation and nerves. He postponed all his other responsibilities and spent every moment he could conducting his interrogation. His nerves were on edge and he caught himself barking orders unnecessarily at Death Eaters in the halls several times. The only thing that calmed him was Hermione.

He knew that Hermione wasn't happy to be with him, but they developed a genuinely pleasant form of interaction and Draco hoped that eventually, those pleasantries might turn into real affection.

He lusted over Hermione in school; he longed to be with her and away from his violent life. She represented goodness in the world and the potential for happiness and he wanted a part of that. As time wore on his lust turned into more. He began to appreciate her cleverness and the way she always helped others and he salivated over her loyalty to those she deemed worthy; Draco sincerely wanted to be worthy. But most of all he just wanted her.

After the battle at the Ministry of Magic, everything changed. Draco arrived back at the Manor for the Summer holiday and walked in to find his parents cowering in the corner of their drawing room and Voldemort standing by the fireplace with Nagini draped over his shoulders.

Draco heard his mother weep, "We're sorry, love," before thick hands grabbed him, wrestled his wand away, and then held him down while Voldemort branded the Dark Mark into his arm. The process was excruciatingly painful.

From sixth year on he was a marked man. Draco still hopelessly desired Hermione but now, more than anything he feared for her safety. He knew Voldemort's plans and that she was in trouble. Knowing what the Dark Lord tasked him with, Draco gave up hope that he'd ever be able to join her in the light. Voldemort made it clear; Draco needed to kill Dumbledore or he would kill Draco's parents, slowly, while Draco watched, and then kill him as well.

He felt incredibly relieved when he finally found Hermione. He knew she would be safe with him, even if she hated him for it. Since her arrival at the castle, Draco realized she was exquisite; her fight and passion were astounding. Yes, she was plotting escape plans at first but he honestly didn't expect any less. He knew this life would be a shock for her.

When Derrick attacked her, Draco saw red. He just returned from a visit with Voldemort in Paris when the guards fire-called him to report that Hermione nearly died. He spent years trying to find her to keep her safe; he finally had her under his watchful eye and protection and then Derrick dared to hurt her. Liquifying him was taking it easy in Draco's opinion. It happened too quickly.

The attack wasn't a total waste though; it sped up Hermione's acclimation to life in the castle. After that, it didn't take her long to see that Draco kept her safe and treated her well. She came up with a plan to save the witches and Draco could have praised the gods then and there. Her loyalty and kindness to others were still a shining light and he found it irresistible.

Draco couldn't get enough of her. He spent so many years on his own or in the company of madmen. Now, he woke with her wrapped in his arms each morning and came home to her sleeping innocently in his bed each night and instantly, every time, his cock strained with need.

He enjoyed so many things about her but he'd be lying if he didn't admit he loved that she gave herself to him willingly. The idea that the brightest witch in Europe acquiesced to his demands and his control was, in Draco's mind, incredibly erotic. So much of Draco's life growing up was out of his control. He may belong to the devil now but at least in adulthood he dominated and dictated his environment including her.

Under normal circumstances, when he wasn't so stressed and irritable, he could easily spend hours talking with Hermione in the evenings then take her slowly before bed. However, during the last few days, all he wanted to do was fuck her, hard. His interactions with Theo made him question himself and his authority. He wanted to exert his power over something and Hermione's willful acceptance fit the bill. Sinking into her and feeling her wet channel welcome his hard dick was all Draco needed to right his world. He began each morning and ended each night with her wrists tied to the headboard, watching her full tits bounce with each thrust, and each time it felt amazing.

After multiple days of hunting and searching through Theo's memories, Draco still hadn't found anything incriminating. His story checked out, He fell in love with a witch, hard from what Draco saw, spent years on the run with her, and felt devastated when she left him. In many of the memories Draco saw a table covered in maps which caused him to pause critically, but ultimately he decided the maps were to plot a way out of Europe since most of their arguments revolved around leaving the country.

Draco thankfully decided that Theo was telling the truth, or at least didn't have much to hide and that it was time to figure out what he was going to do with him.

It was midday on the third afternoon when Draco pulled from Theo's memories and cast a Tempus. He needed to go pick up Hermione from the café but he also needed to talk with Theo. He grabbed Theo's shoulder and Apparated them to his and Hermione's home then directed Theo to the library.

"I need to go get Hermione, I'll only be a minute," Draco stated flatly.

Theo took a seat and nodded, his face showed exhaustion and his hands shook with slight tremors.

"You're free to walk around our home if you like, you're no longer my prisoner. Here." He tossed Theo back his wand. Theo caught it and tilted his head back briefly in a silent display of appreciation. "Don't fuck up my stuff." Draco barked and then Apparated away.

-----Hermione-----

A half an hour later she stood in shock and horror as Malfoy said, "Hermione, love, you remember Theodore Nott. Apparently, he's back from the dead."

Phin looked horrible. He leaned against the back of the chair and held his wand limply in his right hand. Obviously, something traumatic happened to him over the past couple of days. The sight of his condition caused a spike of pain to Hermione's chest. *What are you doing here!? You were supposed to RUN!*

"I see that. Hello." She responded unaffectedly and dragged her eyes away from the *Stubborn Idiot* that she cared more about than anyone in the world. She focused instead on Malfoy. Hermione felt her strength weakening. She gave Phin up to save him and here he was, putting his life in danger purposefully. She felt despondent.

Phin nodded at her with tired eyes and raised his wand hand slightly in a shallow wave.
"Granger," He grunted.

She walked to Malfoy, who sat at his desk across from the door. "Can you call for a tea service?" She asked kissing him lightly on the cheek. Hermione wanted Malfoy's attention on her and not on her interactions with Phin. As she pulled away he grabbed her hand and dragged her back, kissing her chastely on the lips.

"Sure, sweetheart." He crooned, clearly pleased with her.

Hermione walked away stiffly saying, "He looks a little beat up, Draco. You should probably send him to the hospital wing," as she headed back to the living room. She grabbed the tea from the table, picked up a book from a random stack on the mantel, and plopped down on the couch so that she could hear their conversation.

"She's right, as always; you look like shit," Draco said, sounding muffled.

Hermione heard Phin cough and then his deep familiar voice respond, "Hmm, I wonder why that might be." He was harder to hear but straining her ears she caught what he said. *Wrap it up Malfoy, he is clearly injured. He needs the hospital wing!*

"Are you any good at dueling these days?" Draco asked and the two began a long conversation around what role Phin would take at the castle and what the position entailed. Hermione tried her best to listen along but some parts didn't carry. From what she gathered Phin would join a training program and then become a guard. The idea of Phin in the castle gave her heart palpitations. She didn't want to hear about his new supposed job. She wanted him gone, catching the nearest Portkey out of Europe.

"If you prove yourself trustworthy, which is a big 'if', it'll be good to have you around for strategy. You always were a highly strategic thinker." Malfoy paused and Hermione heard the clinking of ice in a glass. "That is unless your Muggleborn witch ruined you. I don't know, you could be worthless now." He finished.

"Piss off, Asshole." Phin spat back his retort and Hermione distinctly heard Malfoy chuckle.

"Alright, well as fun as this reunion has been, I think you should head to the Hospital Wing. I have a witch to attend to. I expect you to report for duty tomorrow. I'll have someone bring you information about your living quarters."

Hermione tried to look inconspicuous as Malfoy and Phin exited the library and headed to the door. As they walked past, however, she caught eyes with Phin for a brief moment and the world stopped. Watching him walk away was agonizing.

She heard Phin say, "Thanks, Draco." and Malfoy respond with silence. Hermione knew it likely took all of Phin's willpower to act appreciative. If the roles were reversed she would kill anyone who threatened Phin's autonomy and safety. Moments later he was gone and Draco stood towering over her with his hands shoved into his pockets and his sleeves rolled up.

"You're not at your window seat." He stated matter-of-factly.

Heat ran to the back of Hermione's neck. "I thought I'd do something different for a change." She responded quickly.

"And, you're enjoying my copy of *Tactical Errors from the 1990 Quidditch World Cup*?" He asked arrogantly.

Fuck!

He tilted his head and said, "upside down."

Hermione changed tactics. "I admit, I was listening. It's not every day someone comes back from the dead. I was curious." Malfoy didn't seem too upset. "I bet you're happy he's back. You told me you missed him." *Remember that and stop hurting him!*

"Mmm, maybe, we'll see. Enough about Theo." He held a hand out to her saying, "Come." and walked them to the bedroom.

"I'm sorry I've been wound up lately." He said while removing her sweater.

That's a nice way to put it. You try getting fucked from behind while your cheek is shoved into the mattress and someone has their hand on your head.

"Thanks," Hermione said, coolly.

He dragged her bra straps down her shoulders and bent his head to suck lightly on her neck.

Hermione shivered; she didn't want to be there with Malfoy. She wanted to run after Phin and yell at him for not heeding her advice. She wanted to chase him down and then keep running. She wanted to flee to Toronto and live happily, away from all this terror and heartache.

Malfoy vanished the rest of their clothes and got into bed. He pulled her on top of him straddling his hips. She felt him harden as he wrapped a hand around the back of her neck and pulled her in for an excruciatingly slow kiss.

Hermione's mind stayed on Phin. She wanted to know what Draco did to him and if he was okay. She wanted him to hold and comfort her. She wanted to know what the fuck his plan was for joining the Death Eaters.

Malfoy guided her to turn around and straddle his hips with her back to him. He ran his hands up and down her body and pinched her nipples lightly before bending her over and telling her to suck his cock. She wet her lips and took his full head into her mouth, setting a quick pace. She wanted this over with. Being fucked by Malfoy was hard enough. Being fucked by Malfoy knowing that Phin was in the castle was worse. It felt like a betrayal.

"Woah, love. Slow down. I want to take our time tonight." He said and Hermione felt his thumbs caress and part her pussy lips before he swept his fat tongue along her clit. She felt her body's learned response to Malfoy's attention and despite herself, moaned quietly as she

sank her head back down Malfoy's shaft taking him further down her throat. He hummed his approval into her cunt and set to work laving at her delicate folds.

Her hard tits brushed against his skin as a tear ran down her cheek. She didn't want this; holding up her end of their deal was much harder now that she knew Phin lived.

To make it through the act and cauterize her emotional wounds, Hermione decided to disassociate and lean into the sheer sensations.

She focused on his thick cock in her mouth as she moved back and forth over him. She felt his hot, wet tongue circling her clit bringing her closer to the edge. He worked at her for what felt like forever as he thrust his cock in and out of her mouth lazily. He let the intensity build and build between their synchronized movements.

After a long while, He picked up his speed. "Fuck," He growled into her, licking harder and faster. "I'm close. Suck me off, love, you know how I like it. Unngg, just like that."

He flicked the tip of his tongue against her clit quickly and she started to explode. Hermione reached down and cupped his sack lightly; her own orgasm caused her to suck harder on her mouthful of cock. He shot down her throat and growled out in pleasure before planting his lips around her clit and sucking hard. He brought her over the edge intensely. She came on his tongue feeling her pulse beat rapidly with each lick. She rode the high swallowing every last drop of his cum as he crooned, "That's it, mmm, that's my girl."

Hours later Malfoy kissed her and said he needed to go get some work done that he neglected during the week. He apologized for leaving her and told Hermione not to wait up for him because he may not be back before morning. He showered, dressed, and kissed her forehead before leaving. Hermione waited long enough to hear the door shut before carefully scooping up her clothes and pulling out the small piece of parchment from her pants pocket.

-----Phin-----

Phin lay in the hospital wing staring at the ceiling. A troll-like Death Eater came by around dinnertime and told him that his living quarter was in the old DADA classroom. He handed Phin a temporary password written on a small, rolled-up piece of parchment. Phin opened it to see Draco's writing and the word "Bulstrode."

He didn't get to sleep in his assigned quarter though because the grumpy Healer said that he had to stay the night. It was nearly midnight and no matter how tired Phin was he couldn't sleep. He kept playing Mia's kiss on Draco's cheek over and over in his mind, torturing himself.

It was two days since Phin and Mia kissed. Phin sat in a large armchair in the tent, his legs spread wide and his forearms resting on his knees as he polished a silver knife they found. He planned to use it for brewing Potions once they had enough supplies.

Just then, Mia walked in through the tent flap and gave him a tight smile. She wore muggle jeans that rode low along her hips; Phin's cock twitched and he adjusted his posture so as not to look indecent. He didn't know why any witch or wizard ever thought robes were high fashion, clearly they didn't know the wonders of muggle jeans. Ever since the kiss, Mia avoided him, which Phin found incredibly frustrating. He wanted nothing more than to kiss her again and see how far they might get at removing those heavenly pants from her gorgeous body.

Mia grabbed a book and turned to walk out of the tent again but Phin stopped her saying, "We need to talk."

"No, we don't, lets just forget it." She snapped over her shoulder.

"Granger, stop!" He barked. She stopped and slowly turned to face him. She stared, not saying anything, and raised an eyebrow. "That's enough! Why are you avoiding me?" She rolled her eyes and he growled at her in frustration, "Mia!"

"Fine! Because we kissed and it screwed everything up! We have a good thing going here, maybe we shouldn't tempt the fates. It's just the two of us and if we start something more intimate and then later decide it doesn't work, we are stuck on the run together and that sounds miserable."

"So, let's make sure it works."

"Nice Phin, sure. Let's just make sure it works."

Phin knew he likely sounded crazed but he didn't care. The past few months on the run were the happiest in his life. He felt more like himself than ever before. She didn't expect him to behave a certain way. Mia accepted him for who he was, no questions asked. He didn't have to pretend to care about family lineages or damned blood purity. He could just be a man with a witch, on a trip. He honestly felt like he was more "Phin" than "Theo."

Once they picked their location each day they spent hours upon hours discussing a magical theory or wizarding history. Phin knew the intellectual discussions were a distraction Mia used to avoid thinking about all that she lost but he didn't mind, he loved how her brain worked. She was the strongest witch he ever met.

At night, before he stole the tent for her, he often heard her crying in her sleep. In those moments he took to walking across the fire to where she lay on the ground, using her sweater as a pillow. He always stretched out his large body around hers, claiming it was for heat. His presence dried her tears every time. He was her source of comfort and for that, he fell for her harder and harder with each passing day.

He got up and walked to her, closing the tent flap. Then he took her hands and walked her back into the living area.

"I got this nice, warm tent for us and you still want to be outside." He teased, standing in front of her and brushing her hair behind her ear. "It's okay to feel some happiness and comfort in the midst of all this. It's okay to sit on chairs inside instead of on the ground by the fire. It's okay to feel desire. Let me be that for you." He stared into her eyes and saw her warring emotions, her want and her fear.

"Kiss me." He demanded quietly.

She stared a moment longer then raised on her toes and kissed his cheek lightly while winding her small hands into his hair and then sliding them along his neck.

When she lowered back down off the balls of her feet her eyes smoldered with a silent challenge.

Phin closed his eyes briefly, savoring the pleasure of her seduction. He held the back of her neck gently and leaned forward saying, "You're going to tell me to stop if you're truly uncomfortable." She nodded and kissed him passionately.

Somewhere around 2:00 am a nurse entered through his privacy curtain and walked over to check his vitals. Phin looked closer at the witch and was shocked to notice it was Ginny Weasley. She cast a diagnostic spell and handed him some potions to take.

Then just before she left she leaned down and grabbed his hand, whispering, "I don't know what's going on, but she threatened to out this parchment to Malfoy if I didn't hand it over to you. Leave me the fuck, out of whatever this is, please!"

Phin nodded confusedly and noticed the terror in Ginny's expression. He felt a piece of parchment in his hand and fisted it tightly as Ginny left.

Once the curtains closed he opened his hand to find the parchment blank. He stared at it for a long moment, and then eventually picked up the quill from the ink well on his bedside table and wrote, *Are you there?*

There was a long pause. Phin started to worry that Ginny set him up. However, after a few minutes, Mia's handwriting scrolled across the parchment.

Theodore Phineas Nott, you complete and utter arse!

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter:"Young and Beautiful by Lana Del Rey"

Chapter 12: Parchment

Chapter Summary

Hermione and Phin chat and then Malfoy gives Hermione more gifts.

Chapter Notes

Here's an extra chapter for this week. Happy Holidays!

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

-----Phin-----

Phin stared at the message for a minute in confusion; he had several questions but decided to start with, *Where is Draco? Are you safe?* He watched as his message remained for a moment then vanished slowly.

Malfoy left for the night. He said he had to work.

Phin let out a sigh of relief. He desperately wanted to talk to Mia so that they could plan an escape but the idea of Draco walking in on her while she scribbled secret messages to him was terrifying. Mia was quite possibly the most formidable witch in Europe. Her intense depth of knowledge, astounding magical ability, and surprising Muggle cleverness made her a true powerhouse, Phin adored her. He found the idea that she was reduced to a captive, defenseless, and beaten down, gut-wrenching.

Lost in thought, Phin paused before responding which gave Mia enough time to add more.

You were SUPPOSED to LEAVE! How am I to handle trying to free the witches AND keep you safe!? It's too much! I can't take it!

Phin's anger flared. He wanted to stomp back up to Dumbledore's office and shake some sense into her! In his opinion, Mia's biggest fault was her inability to accept help. Her savior complex and independence were what caused their separation a year ago.

Damnit, Mia! I thought you would've realized last year that you shouldn't go it alone!

There was a long pause before Mia wrote back.

That's unfair. I'm sorry for last year, you know I am. I'd give anything to change what I did. You don't know how hard it was for me, thinking you died.

I can imagine. I spent a year without you too.

Phin shot back, bitterly.

I'm sorry. I love you. Are you okay? What did he do to you?

Phin read her anguish in the subtext. He saw how her handwriting looked strained and hurried.

I love you, too.

He said to calm her nerves.

I'm fine. He searched my memories, that's all. He didn't find anything.

Phin paused again, he hesitated before asking about something that was burning a hole in him,

What deal did you make with Draco?

Phin asked the question despite himself. He needed to know.

Mia didn't respond for a very long time. Phin felt his heart clanging inside his chest. He prayed to the gods that his suspicions were off. Surely, Draco wasn't that evil. He hadn't changed so much since they were at school together. Draco was a product of his surroundings. He never believed in blood purity and wizard domination, he just wanted to survive the war.

You know what deal I made with him. Please don't ask me to tell you.

Phin's stomach dropped. He stared at the privacy curtains and fisted his sheets violently, the muscles in his arms straining. Eventually, he wrote back.

Has he...

He stopped, he couldn't finish the question.

Yes.

Of course, he has.

He heard his pulse hammering in his ears.

Mia, tell me what deal you made right now or I'm throwing strategy to the wind, hunting him down and killing him.

Stop it! Fine! I told him that I would give in to his demands and stop trying to escape if he freed the witches.

AND YOU BELIEVE HE WILL KEEP HIS WORD!?

He regretted the last statement immediately. It wasn't Mia's fault that Draco was a psychotic Bastard. The desire to storm upstairs, grab her and run shot through his veins. Logically, though he knew, she had little choice but to do as Draco asked. Phin certainly didn't want her to refuse Draco and to have him hurt her to force her compliance. The thought made Phin sick.

Mia wrote back deliberately.

He told me himself, he built the strongest magical army within these walls. He holds my magic, he holds the fate of hundreds of women. Making the deal was my only shot at being able to do anything positive with my current situation. He would've had me anyway. Do not yell at me again. You have no idea the situation I'm in.

I'm sorry. We are getting out of here. I'm going to find out how to get you you're magic and we're leaving.

Sure, Phin. That sounds nice. I'm not leaving without freeing the witches so, you should probably get to work on that too. Please leave the parchment with Ginny. I need to be able to know she can reach me if she is in trouble. I won't be able to write again anyway unless it's an emergency. This is an anomaly; Malfoy never leaves me alone.

Mia, don't go. I'm sorry. Please.

I love you.

I love you too.

She didn't write back.

He Silcencio'd his private corner of the hospital ward, gripped his hair, and roared. After calming down he removed the charm and rang for Ginny to return. When she did he eyed the now crumpled up parchment that lay on the nightstand and said, "Take it. She wants you to keep it."

Ginny kept her gaze on the floor and stuttered, "I don't know what you are talking about, but if you'd like me to clean up your nightstand I can do that for you. Do you need anything else?"

"Right. No." He grunted.

---- Hermione----

Hermione slammed the quill down on the desk in Malfoy's library. She felt furious and distraught. Over the past nearly six months she learned to hold her mental health together by a thread. Phin's reemergence shattered her balance of apathy and strength, now all she wanted

to do was forget. Forget, her life with Malfoy, forget that her soulmate lay in a hospital bed two floors away and there was no way to reach him, just forget.

After Malfoy left it took Hermione nearly two hours to get Ginny to agree to give Phin the parchment. Hermione regretted it but she had to threaten Ginny to garner her help, and for what? To fight with Phin.

Hermione marched back to the bedroom and flopped onto the bed, she lay staring at the ceiling until she heard the front door open around 4 am. Malfoy changed and then stretched out in bed. He pulled her close and nuzzled his nose behind her ear. His heavy arm lay over her side and his fingers skimmed along her stomach where her silk tank top met her pajama shorts. Hermione's heartrate still hammered in her chest from the risk she took contacting Phin. *I need to watch it or Malfoy will become suspicious.*

The next afternoon Hermione busied herself at work waiting tables. She thought about how Phin reacted to her situation with Malfoy and seethed. *Who is he to tell me what to do. He's not held captive. He has his magic.* At a quarter to one, the door opened and Phin walked in. He sat alone in Cadence's section and Hermione tried not to notice his presence, she didn't want to draw attention. After placing his order, he got up and headed to the restroom, giving her a knowing look as he passed. Hermione waited a minute and then despite her better judgment she asked another witch to cover and went to the loo.

As she expected, she found Phin in the cupboard near the women's restroom. Upon entering he grabbed her and pulled her in, wrapping his arms around her tightly as he'd done a few days prior.

"I'm an Ass, I'm sorry. Forgive me. I get that you are trying your best to help the women enslaved here. I'm not mad at you for the deal you made with Draco. Honestly, it's admirable. Your ability to put others first is astounding."

He tilted her head up and kissed her slowly. His tenderness made everything right. *He's not mad at me. He's still here for me. Oh, God!*

"He forced me, I didn't have a choice. I'm so.." She started to cry. His comfort meant everything to her.

"Shh! I know he did. Do not apologize, you've done NOTHING wrong." He kissed her again, brushing her hair out of her face and dragging his hand down her arm to entwine their fingers. "I know how dangerous this situation is. I'm not going to do anything rash, I'll be safe," he stared into her eyes with resolve, "but, I am going to find a way to get you...and the other witches," he added reluctantly, "...out of here. Trust me to do that for you."

"Okay." She breathed a heavy sigh. *Phin's here. If he won't leave then at least he may be able to help. I'm going to be okay.* She finally let herself accept his comfort and support.

"I'll come to the café as often as I can without drawing suspicion."

"I won't be able to meet you here." She gestured to their surroundings. "I shouldn't have risked it now."

"I know, I just want to be near you and for you to know that I'm here for you. I'll try to find ways for us to communicate."

"Please be careful," She implored.

"I will, I love you." He kissed her deeply, squeezed her hand, and then walked out of the cupboard. Hermione waited for a bit and then followed him out. As she went back to work she felt like she could breathe easier for the first time in months. *Phin is alive, Malfoy doesn't suspect anything, we are going to come up with a plan together, all hope isn't lost.*

Later that evening, after dinner, Malfoy asked Hermione to put her robe back on and then he held out his arm to her as if ready to Apparate. "Where are we going?" She asked, shrugging on a robe to be more presentable in public.

"You'll see." He smiled at her.

Hermione didn't like surprises. She wanted to know what to expect where Malfoy was concerned. However, he looked content, so she figured the trip would likely be safe. She placed her arm on his and felt the pull of Apparition. They landed in the Hogwarts library.

As Hermione knew from their many tours around the castle. The rooms now rarely looked how they did when she was in school. The library, however, looked exactly the same, apart from dust. The stacks of books stood as if Harry himself may walk in any moment and pluck one off the shelf to read, not that he did that often.

"I thought you might enjoy picking out some new books to bring home. Our library selection is limited and I wouldn't want you to resort to actually reading my Quidditch play-by-plays." Malfoy teased.

"Thank you, Draco. This is wonderful." She admitted honestly. He nodded at her and kissed her forehead.

"Leave whatever books you want on this table and I'll send them upstairs when you're finished. I'll be over here if you need me." He pointed to the circulation desk.

Hermione spent over an hour searching through all her old favorite texts. She thought about re-reading her entire educational collection but decided instead, to search for items she never got around to perusing while in school. She pulled *Blood Brothers*, *My life amongst the Vampires*, *The Adventures of Martin Miggs*, *the Mad Muggle*, and a second edition of *Most Macabre Monstrosities*. She noticed what looked to be an empty spot on a shelf in the back only to realize it was the *Invisible Book of Invisibility*, thrilled, she brought that forward to the table near the door as well. When she finished she had twenty books in all.

Malfoy sat reading through a scroll of training notes but looked up when she approached. He scanned her pile and said, "That should take you a couple of days."

Hermione gave a lopsided smile, "Yes, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to visit this space. It was like my second home."

"I know, love. I'll bring you back anytime you wish." He vanished the stack of books and sent them to their living quarter then held his arm out for her to Apparate them back as well.

When they arrived Malfoy walked her through the bedroom and into the closet saying, "I have one more gift." There, hanging on the tall rack were four beautiful sets of dress robes. She looked at him quizzically.

"Go ahead, try them on. I want to see what they look like on you. The feast I'm planning is next week, I want to show you off." He explained.

Hermione got to work trying on the different options. She pulled off her robe and muggle clothes down to her black lace bra and panty set and then chose the first selection and slid it on. It felt like heaven. The fabric skimmed over her skin and hugged her curves in all the right places. Hermione never wore anything as luxurious in her life. It was a purple organza robe with a plunging neckline and chiffon sleeves and skirt. The empire waist accentuated her full chest and the delicate, lace flowers over the torso, gave off an air of sophistication that was a true feat due to the amount of skin the robes showed.

Hermione thought back over her afternoon with Phin and felt more at peace than she had in the last few days. Phin was in the castle, Malfoy didn't find anything incriminating in Phin's memories and Malfoy seemed happy and content again which made Hermione's life much easier. She allowed herself to wonder what Phin might think of the outfit if he ever saw her in it, under different circumstances, of course.

"You're magnificent." Malfoy's deep voice broke her reverie.

She cast her eyes to him remembering he was there with her.

"Thank you."

Hermione tried on the other three options while Malfoy watched hungrily. When taking off the last dress robe, a deep green silk item, Malfoy stopped her hands. He picked her up effortlessly and placed her on the island in the center of the room.

He slid his large calloused hand up her leg bunching the fabric as he went. Hermione closed her eyes and tried to think of happy times with Phin. Then, she let herself imagine escaping with Phin to Toronto but only for a moment, hope was too dangerous it made her vulnerable.

"Draco, we'll ruin the fabric," She protested.

Malfoy unbuckled his belt, fisted his cock, and slid into her. He pulled her breast out of the robe and bra then licked her nipple. "It's called magic, sweetheart." He said looking up at her with hooded eyes. "It will clean. Plus I like the idea of you wearing a dress that was covered in my cum and your arousal." He set to work, thrusting into her languidly.

Hermione chose a memory of Phin to distract herself.

2001

Hermione stood at the sink in the tent washing up the last of their dinner dishes while Phin dried. It was a domestic act and a muggle one at that but the two of them enjoyed the ritual. When finished Phin set down his towel, stood behind her, and slowly slid his hand behind the buttons of her blouse. Hermione savored the feeling of his expert hands.

She turned around and their eyes met, she saw the deep desire in his gaze. She loved that he still looked at her that way after years together. Hermione helped him undo her buttons and then reached up to pull his shirt over his head. Phin picked her up and brought her over to the dining table. He vanished her panties and pulled her skirt up her legs, exposing her sex. Then he slowly reached between her legs and circled her wet clit with his thumb. "Mmmmm," She moaned closing her eyes.

"Mia, I want to hear you. You make me so hard when I hear you come apart." Phin towered over her with his strong arm shoved between her legs.

She shook her head. "It isn't safe to be too loud, you know that."

Phin chuckled, "Give me a break, we are so heavily warded in this tent, people wouldn't be able to hear you if they stood by watching."

Phin looked in her eyes as he spoke and when he finished his sentence he noticed a flush to her cheeks. He leaned down to whisper in her ear, "I think you like the idea of being watched."

Hermione thought about it for a moment. She bit her lip and shook her head. "I wouldn't like it in reality." Phin searched her face skeptically. "But thinking about people watching as you fuck me, is hot, I have to admit."

Phin pulled himself from his jeans and stroked his weeping shaft. Hermione reached down and swiped her thumb over his head before positioning him at her core and rubbing her cunt against his cock enjoying the jolt of pleasure it brought.

"Who's watching?" He asked playing along with the fantasy. "A witch or a wizard?" He spread her folds and sank into her.

"Both"

"Fuuuuuck!" Phin growled in ecstasy.

"The wizard is hard watching your cock sink into my pussy and the witch is running her finger across her tits."

Phin picked up the pace on Hermione's clit, He rubbed her sensitive nub and bent his head to gently bite her hardened nipple. They moved together pulling out each other's climax and relishing in the intimacy that they built up over the years. After a long while, they came together hard as Hermione screamed out her release.

"AHHhhhh! Yess!" Hermione yelled as Malfoy bottomed out in her core. His hand at her clit slowed and he gave two more hard thrusts before shattering inside her.

"Yes, love! Fuck! Let me hear you."

When Malfoy pulled out he grabbed her cheeks in both hands and kissed her hard. "You truly are Magnificent. That was amazing. I think you'll wear this one next week. This is a memory I want to recall. Hermione Granger, screaming out on my cock."

Hermione bent her head and nodded realizing her disassociation gave him the wrong idea. She never acted that into sex with him before. "I'm going to take a shower." She said quietly and hopped off of the counter. Malfoy grabbed her wrist, turned her to face him, and reached out to rub his thumb along her still exposed breast. He shivered and tucked her back into the bodice of the robe.

"Sure, sweetheart, whatever you wish. I have some more work to do; I'll meet you in bed." He cast a cleansing charm over himself and tucked his softening dick back into his pants.

Hermione scrubbed her skin raw in the shower and cursed herself for participating so willingly. She let the hot water scold her skin and after a long while, exited the shower and towed off. She chose a longer nightgown to wear to bed and walked into the bedroom exhausted.

Malfoy stood in the doorway leaning against the frame looking calm but furious and holding a small crumpled piece of parchment.

Hermione's voice caught in her throat. Fear spread over her skin like fire.

"What is this, love?"

She shook her head. Tears welling up in her eyes. It was clear from his ire that Malfoy suspected correctly.

"I went to the library to finish my correspondence and guess what I found on my desk?" He asked dangerously.

She shook her head again.

He ignored her distress and continued, "Several drops of ink staining the wood. So I thought to myself, who would make such a mess of my desk? Surely Hermione wasn't in here writing notes," He glared at her. "Then I found this hidden in your jeans pocket on the floor of the closet." He turned over the parchment as if to examine it. "Now, why would you have a need for a bit of parchment in your pocket?"

Hermione's eyes darted past him to find a way through the door. Malfoy caught the look and commanded, "Come. Here."

Chapter End Notes

How will Hermione get out of this sticky situation and what will the consequences be for her actions?

Song choice for this chapter: "Renegades By X Ambassadors"

Chapter 13: Sanctimonia Vincet Semper

Chapter Summary

Malfoy tightens his hold and gives Theo a promotion and a gift.

Chapter Notes

I saw another author say that they were motivated by comments and kudos and it is so true! Thank you all for sending me the motivation I needed to get these chapters done this week! I hope you all had a great long weekend. See you next Tuesday!

Also, it's a reoccurring theme here but this chapter contains DV, rape, and extremely dubious consent. Please proceed with caution.

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

-----Hermione----

"I won't ask you again." Malfoy threatened.

Hermione forced her feet to move one step at a time. Disobeying his request at this moment meant danger. *Think, Hermione! What can you do?*

She arrived in front of Malfoy as he stared down at her with an angry eyebrow raised in a challenge. She took in his broad shoulders and muscular arms. She felt keenly aware that Malfoy was twice her size. So much changed in the time it took her to shower and dress. Earlier Malfoy was positively pleased with himself and her as well. *Why didn't I pay closer attention last night!? I can't let my emotions get the better of me, it's dangerous.*

Hermione quickly designed her safest course of action. "I wanted a way to know Ginny was safe. You don't need to be so up..." Hermione started to explain but Malfoy shut the door behind him wandlessly, wrapped a thick hand around her throat, and turned to press her against the wood.

"Tread carefully, little witch," he warned holding her tightly but not restricting her airway. "I suggest you speak to me respectfully." Hermione squirmed under his hold as her heart rate increased. She cowered over the fact that Malfoy was madder at her than she ever saw before and his cool, calm, anger was terrifying.

"Draco, please..." Hermione whispered. She tried to pry his hand away from her neck to provide relief but Malfoy's grip felt like stone.

"Let's go with Sir. for the moment. Be. Still." He growled. She stopped moving and dropped her hands to her sides, quietly waiting for his next demand. Once she settled, he asked, "You obviously gave her the parchment before you lost your magic. When was it?"

"The day you killed Flint...Sir." She croaked. *This is humiliating.* Hermione felt a rush of emotions with terror being the strongest force. She was afraid of what Malfoy might do if he found out about Phin, pissed at herself for the moronic mistake, and irritated that he chose to exert his power over her so brazenly. She foolishly assumed they were past his need to dominate and intimidate her. Malfoy seemed almost kind at times. She knew who he was ultimately but day to day it was easy to forget. "I..," she stopped and turned her eyes upward, silently asking for permission to continue.

"Go on,"

"I was scared for her that day, I know you said you wouldn't have her auctioned off again but I had to know she was safe. I'm sorry. It's what I hid when you searched my memories. Here, I'll show you." She opened her eyes wide in invitation.

Malfoy leaned in and said acerbically, "I do not require your permission." His hand around her neck squeezed a little tighter. "I will search your mind when I am good and ready. Until then, you will answer my questions. Do you understand?"

Hermione turned her eyes to the ground in submission, "Yes." *You smug bastard.* She needed to keep cool and do as he said if she wanted to have a chance at hiding her relationship with Phin. It hurt to lose her means of communication with Ginny, but ultimately Malfoy promised to free the witches and Ginny was in a good place in the hospital ward. Hermione could take whatever Malfoy threw at her in anger as long as Ginny stayed safe and Phin remained a secret.

"How often do you write to her?" Malfoy asked.

"I only wrote the night I gave her the parchment, I had to make sure it worked. Then again last night. I wanted to check on her. I hadn't seen her in a while. Ginny always thought communicating was too great a risk though so we ended up arguing. I slammed down the quill in anger and didn't notice the ink stains. I'm sorry. Please, I wasn't trying to escape, I just wanted to talk to my friend."

"The friend who, per your request, I relocated to safety, provided with a fulfilling job, and allowed you to see regularly during your recovery." Malfoy pointed out.

"Yes. I'm..."

"Enough. If you apologize one more time for the fact that you were caught you will sorely regret it."

"Yes, Sir."

Malfoy fisted her hair, tilted her head back, and dove into her mind. Hermione noticed that despite his anger, he still sorted through her memories without causing pain. He pulled up the memory of the day Flint died and watched as Hermione charmed the parchment from the scone and tucked it into Ginny's pocket. He watched Hermione's conversation with Ginny that evening, including her evasion and pretense that she was in his library to get a drink. Hermione offered up several memories of checking the parchment only to find that Ginny hadn't written.

Lastly, Hermione offered up the memory from the previous evening. He watched her frantically move to the library and write, *Ginny, are you there? Please I need to talk to you. I may not get this opportunity again.* In the memory, Hermione waited anxiously for a reply. Nothing happened. Hermione wrote again, *Ginny, please, I want to know that you are okay. I haven't heard from you in a while. Malfoy is out for the night, he won't find out. Please.*

Hermione felt Malfoy dig further with a renewed sense of anger and frustration. He watched as Ginny wrote back and felt Hermione's irritation at the words. *Hermione! I told you I didn't want to use this blasted thing to communicate! I'm fine, leave me alone. I'm not interested in anything you have to say right now or in getting in trouble over this!*

Hermione shared a spike of frustration and anger and used those strong emotions to hide the fact that she jumped forward in time significantly. She then pulled up the memory of her slamming the quill down on the table and storming out of the library. She felt Malfoy pull from her mind and relaxed slightly.

He stepped back and stared at her with malice. "Had you asked for a way to communicate with her I would have provided it. However, you chose to lie to me. Let me be very clear, you cannot hide anything from me. I will ALWAYS find out." He stared at her menacingly.

"I'm... I understand" She said, bringing a tear to her eye and casting her gaze to the floor. In actuality, her tear was one of intense anxiety and relief. She praised the gods that she successfully hid Phin, but what Malfoy said made her incredibly anxious about any future interactions with him. Hermione thought about how Malfoy already killed two Death Eaters because of her. She cowered over the fact that if he got this mad about communicating with Ginny she didn't ever want to experience what he might do if he found out about Phin, especially if he saw their stolen moments at the café.

Malfoy loosened his grip from her neck and Hermione let out a sigh of relief. However, the moment passed quickly because next she felt him reach down and heard him unbuckle his belt.

"Get in bed and show me how *sorry* you are!"

-----Draco-----

Ten days later Draco walked down the castle corridors, pissed. He thought back over the night he took Hermione to the library and fumed. That evening Draco felt like he was finally making headway with her. She appreciated that he brought her to the library; when she

thanked him her eyes held a sincerity he rarely saw. Most of the time she was so guarded. Then later when he took her on the Island in the walk-in closet, she actually screamed out in pleasure, a far cry from her typical disaffected consent. He left her to shower and walked out of the bedroom high on the thought that "more" might be possible for them at some point.

All of that came to a screeching halt the moment he saw the ink splotches on his desk. Draco knew they weren't from him and he couldn't think of any *good* reason Hermione had for writing at his desk. He thought back to the fact that she openly hid something from him when he searched her memories and internally raged. He barked out, "Accio, Hermione's letter!" and after a moment heard a rustling coming from the bedroom. When he stomped toward the quiet noise he found her jeans moving on the floor of the closet, where he removed them from her an hour ago. Draco bent down and picked up the jeans and a small piece of parchment flew from the pocket and into his hand. It was clearly stuck trying to get out.

When he examined the parchment and found it blank he instantly knew that Hermione must have charmed it to communicate with someone and the only person he knew her to want to communicate with was Ginny, Bloody, Weasley. Draco instantly felt furious with her. He would have given her a way to communicate with Ginny if she asked. Granted, he would have highly monitored their correspondence—but still.

As soon as Hermione caught sight of him in the doorway holding the parchment he knew all his suspicions were correct. Her expression confirmed it. Draco recognized that he got a little carried away with her and felt a small pang of remorse. Not for how he reacted necessarily, Hermione deserved his wrath. She needed to learn her place in this world if she was to remain his and safe.

Voldemort only agreed to let Draco have her because Draco assured him that he would keep Hermione under his command. No, his remorse was more because the incident was going to set them back weeks if not months in their interactions. He knew that reminding Hermione she had a lot to fear in him was a double-edged sword. On one hand, she would think twice before disobeying him further but on the other hand, he broke the small amount of trust he built with her since she arrived.

Lost in his thoughts Draco arrived at his destination and hammered on the door a bit louder than intended. He heard someone coming to answer and then stood in front of a surprised-looking Theo.

"Drake, hi. Come in."

"I wanted to check in and see how things are going with your training," Draco replied. *And hang out with a friend of mine since I am pissed at my witch and need to vent some steam.* "General Sellers tells me that you're very impressive in the fieldwork you've engaged in recently. Apparently, you've put many of our Death Eaters to shame. You must have been busy on the run."

"Thanks. Uh, do you want to come in for a drink?" Theo asked while darting his eyes around the corridor to see if Draco was with anyone else.

Draco wanted nothing more than to drink Firewhiskey with his friend. Life in the castle lately felt like it was slipping from his control and he just wanted to sit and be himself for a moment. "Sure, if I have to," he grunted.

Theo opened the door wide and Draco entered. The old DADA classroom was always one of Draco's favorite rooms in the castle. The high windows, winding stairs, and gothic pulpit gave it a unique character. He considered taking it for his own living quarter but it was much too small and didn't have the same gravitas as the Headmaster's chambers. Theo set-up the space nicely though, Draco noticed a desk under the window and a large sitting area in the center of the room. There was a dining table to his right and a fireplace and sink behind the table. Draco knew Theo's bedroom and ensuite were upstairs in the old DADA professors' office. The space was homey, it had a certain Jena se qua.

Theo stood at the bar cart under the steps, pouring drinks. When he finished he walked one over to Draco and they both sat, Theo in an armchair and Draco on the couch.

"So you clearly kept up your training on the run." Draco grumped over his glass of whiskey.

"Yeah, well, running for your life will do that." Theo took a drink as well.

"Sellers says that you're a cocky sonofabitch."

"Maybe so. You know me, I've always preferred brains over brawn. It's one of the reasons why I always took off when Crabbe and Goyle hung around. I couldn't stand the sounds of their tiny brains churning."

Draco chuckled and scratched the back of his neck. "Yeah, they were terribly dim. Still are, they work in the dungeons now with the prisoners."

Theo paused for a long moment. He looked to be considering his next statement. "Some of the men Drake, they're pretty upset with you. They say you killed two Death Eaters over Granger... What happened there?"

Draco leaned back and ran his hands over his face. With Hermione acting out and the men grumbling, he worried things were becoming unstable.

"The first was Flint. He was in charge of the treasury here and skimming off the top for months. He thought I didn't know. He also owned Ginny Weasley. When Hermione arrived I introduced her to the couple to give her a clear picture of what her life might be like with other Death Eaters. She got the idea but Flint decided to appreciate her figure a little too closely in front of me. When Hermione begged me to free Ginny, I saw an opportunity to kill several birds with one stone."

Theo took a sip of his drink and leaned forward, listening intently.

Draco continued, "The second was Derrick." Draco stared at the ceiling in frustration. "The shit kidnapped Hermione out from under my General's nose while I was away. He took her to an abandoned storefront on Main Street and kept her under the Cruciatus for almost twenty

minutes. She likely would've died without the serious medical attention our hospital ward offers."

Theo asked with tight lips, "Why? Why would he do that?"

"He sought revenge for Flint. They were mates. I publicly eviscerated Derrick in the hospital ward so I can see why the men are talking about it."

Theo continued to stare at Draco with what looked like *mildly concealed rage*? But as soon as the expression came it was gone and Draco assumed he imagined it. He needed help, most of his focus moved to Hermione once she arrived at the castle and he needed to keep the men in line or Voldemort was going to start to notice. *Might as well throw caution to the wind.*

"I'm promoting you to my personal advisor." Draco decided on the spot.

"What?"

"You are an expert dualist, you understand strategy, you have your ear to the ground with the men. I need to keep the men in-line and quell the current discontent. To make matters worse I may be taking away one of their main forms of entertainment in the next year. You have a high desire to stay in my good graces. You owe me. "

Theo huffed a short laugh. "Well, I guess that's true."

"From now on you will report to my office each morning at 9:30 am," Draco said as he placed his hands on his knees and stood up.

"Okay, Drake, sure. Whatever you need."

"That's all," Draco said as he passed Theo his empty glass. "I'll see you at the feast tonight."

-----Hermione-----

Malfoy's mood did not improve significantly from the night he found the parchment. He stalked around his home barking demands at her like, "Take off your work clothes, you've lost the privilege to work for the time being." Or, "I want you out of the window seat. If I'm home you are to be with me." Or "Get on your knees."

Hermione tried her best to hold her tongue and obey his demands. She needed to get back to work so that she could see Phin again. She also needed to make her life with Malfoy more tolerable. Before he found the parchment their interactions were pleasant. Hermione wanted to get back to that in order to reduce her stress and make life easier. Malfoy was much easier to be around when he was happy.

She stood in the walk-in closet in white lingerie, complete with a garter and stockings, awaiting Malfoy's instructions. Just then, he entered the space buttoning his cufflinks. He looked commanding in his dark, Death Eater robes, and full regalia.

"Which one did you want me in?" She asked.

"The green one. As I mentioned before, I liked the memory we created in it." He offered gruffly.

Hermione walked over to Malfoy and placed her hand on his arm. "I did too."

Over the past week, she thought a lot about this night. They were headed to Malfoy's feast, he wanted to show her off and Phin would be there. It would be the second time Malfoy saw her and Phin together. Hermione desperately didn't want to raise any of Malfoy's suspicions. She needed him in a good mood.

He stared at her skeptically.

"Things were beginning to feel nice between us. You gave me luxuries and freedoms I didn't expect and life in our home was pleasant. I'm sorry I ruined that with my deceit. I should've trusted you to provide for me. I see that now. I sincerely hope that you'll forgive me."

Malfoy removed her hand from his arm and brushed his fingers through his hair, staring beyond her into the floor-length mirror at one end of the room. "I tire of teaching you lessons." He moved his gaze to her and demanded, "Get dressed."

Hermione left Malfoy and pulled her dress attire from the hanger. she let the fabric slide over her body and then walked back turning to face away from him. She met his eyes in the mirror in a silent request. Malfoy brushed her hair onto her left shoulder slowly. He dragged her zipper up her back and then bent his head to kiss her shoulder, keeping his eye locked on hers.

"The deal that we made was for you to behave as a proper lover." A cold shiver shot up Hermione's spine from his hot breath on her skin. "In my estimation, you've only tolerated my advances *and* you've lied to me." He straightened up, pulled a gold choker out of his pocket, and placed it around her neck. He pulled out his wand and tapped the necklace; Hermione felt the clasp magically seal.

"That changes today or our deal is off." He kissed the back of her neck where the necklace lay and stalked out of the walk-in closet.

Hermione watched him leave and then walked to the mirror to examine the necklace in more detail. Upon closer look, the chain showed intertwined serpents and the words, *Sanctimonia Vincet Semper*. "Purity will always conquer?" She whispered the translation. *What? That can't be good.* She held her fingers to the necklace softly and paid close attention to its magical signature. Despite the way it sealed, it didn't seem to be humming with any sort of nefarious magic. Hermione didn't bother checking to see if she could remove it. It was obvious that Malfoy would need to do that.

She cautiously walked out to the living room to find him standing at the door. "Draco?" She asked.

"Yes, love."

"Can you tell me more about this necklace?" She asked and then hurried to add, "It's beautiful, thank you."

"You wanted a way to let people know you are mine, did you not?" Malfoy asked dangerously.

"Yes." She knew it was the only acceptable answer.

"Then let's go."

The feast was a celebratory affair. The Great Hall shown with the splendor of Hogwarts days past and the food was delicious. Malfoy brought back the tables including the head table on the large dais where he and Hermione sat front and center.

Hermione felt a strong sense of nostalgia and wished for days long gone. The Hall may look and feel the same but the world she lived in now was very, very different. At the beginning of the event, Malfoy stood, raised his glass, and said, "To our continued success at securing and holding strong the Dark Lord's British reign! And to a fruitful future! Enjoy your meal!"

Many shouts of "Here, here!" and loud whistles filled the large hall and then the crowd quieted down and set to eating the spectacular meal.

Hermione felt surprised to find Phin sitting on Malfoy's right. She wondered what changed for Phin to build trust with Malfoy so quickly. His placement indicated a vote of confidence and a new position. It was clear the other Death Eaters noticed, she caught many cagey glances in Phin's direction. She herself avoided making eye contact with Phin and kept close to Malfoy by returning his small touches and acquiescing to the way he ate with his left hand possessively draped across her thigh. *I guess I should be thankful he isn't marking his territory in other ways.*

Most of the men had witches at their sides, much to Hermione's dismay. She looked closely at the faces of the women in attendance and noticed that they looked healthy and well cared for despite their fearful or angry expressions. While scanning the crowd she saw many of the witches from the café including Cadence who sat with Gregory Goyle. *That figures.*

After the pudding, Malfoy stood and announced to the crowd, "Now that we are all fed and satisfied, let the celebration begin!" The tables disappeared and much like at the Yule Ball, a dance floor arose out of the center of the room, the lighting dimmed and loud music began. Hermione noticed that unlike the Yule Ball, a large bar appeared in the back corner as well. She watched as Death Eaters secured drinks and began to mill around the dance floor chatting. It seemed that despite the atmosphere Death Eaters weren't predisposed to dancing.

As the head table disappeared, Hermione chanced a glance at Phin and noticed a pained and angry expression. Malfoy grabbed her hand and led her down the steps. He sent a Death Eater to get drinks for him and Hermione and then stood waiting as numerous men approached with well-wishes or words of thanks.

"Thank you for the wonderful evening, Sir."

"Congratulations, Sir."

"Thank you, Sir. Congratulations. Many Blessings."

Malfoy kept a strong arm around Hermione's waist and grunted his responses or nodded to the men as they approached. Hermione thought it strange the number of men congratulating Malfoy but hoped it wasn't a bad omen. After several minutes Phin approached and said, "Congratulations, Drake. You both look very happy. When do you plan to hold the ceremony?"

What!? This isn't good. She could tell by Phin's words that he was trying to tip her off to something.

Malfoy responded more naturally with Phin than he did any other man so far. "Thank you, Theo, we are. I secured approval from the Dark Lord and am planning on sometime in the next couple of months. I think Christmas might be nice."

The two men talked for quite a while before Malfoy drawled, "Merlin's Balls, here comes Rockford. I need to have a word with him about a failed military strike last week." He turned to Hermione and demanded, "Stay with Nott. I'll be back in a few minutes." Then he eyed Phin and said, "I want her here when I come back and keep the other men away."

"Yes, Sir," Phin said as he bowed his head slightly in deference.

Malfoy stomped away toward a scared-looking general and Hermione stood anxiously next to Phin. She asked under her breath, "How are you?"

"Where have you been this past week, why haven't you been at work?" He asked angrily.

Hermione blanched. Phin barked at her and she didn't know why. "Why are you so upset? Malfoy found the parchment and he is punishing me for it. I was able to hide our conversation but nonetheless, he has been a right bastard about it."

"You two look plenty friendly tonight." He shot back.

They both kept their eyes on the crowd and spoke under their breath. However, at that statement, Hermione turned to face him and said, "Excuse me? I thought we talked about this already. I'm doing what is expected of me." Catching herself, she glanced around nervously and noticed Malfoy in a heated conversation and not paying her any attention.

"Keep your voice down. I'm sorry, Mia. I'm just terrified by this new complication, it's going to force us to pick up the speed."

Hermione watched Malfoy and determined he was likely finishing up his conversation. She assumed he would walk back to them soon and with the parchment gone and her restrictions from work she didn't know when she would get a chance to talk to Phin again.

"What new complication? No. Nevermind, I need to tell you something. I haven't told you yet but I found the Horcrux. It's in the Room of Requirement. Ask the room to materialize as the Room of Hidden Things. It's Ravenclaw's Diadem. You need to destroy it."

Phin glanced at her in indignation. "Mia, I don't give a shit about the Horcrux anymore. We have to get you out of here before you are bonded to Malfoy for life!"

"What!?" She found it harder and harder to maintain a stance of indifference while standing next to him. "What are you talking about?"

"You are wearing the Malfoy family betrothal jewelry. He is signifying his intention to bond you to him in magical marriage. Pureblood, unbreakable, marriage."

Hermione felt her heart race in her throat. Her ears began to ring again. She watched Malfoy march back over to the place where she and Phin stood near a tall stone pillar.

"Thank you, Theo. You should go and enjoy yourself."

"Of course, Draco. I'll try. Although, I don't know many of these men yet." Phin responded, Hermione heard the soft edge of rage in his tone.

"Speaking of your loneliness and my happiness..." Draco started jovially. "I think it's time you got over your muggle love and took a witch. I happen to have the perfect one for you, Hermione recently decided that Ms. Weasley needed to be relocated from her role in the hospital ward. I'll have her sent to your quarters tonight."

Hermione's eyes shot to Malfoy furiously. She couldn't comprehend all this terrible news at once. Malfoy planned to soul bond with her AND he intended to place Ginny back with a wizard as punishment for her lies. She started angrily, "What? I thought..."

"Careful, love." Malfoy interrupted with a dangerous glint in his eyes.

FUCK!

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Heathens by Twenty One Pilots"

Chapter 14: Scar

Chapter Summary

Hermione works out her pent up tension and Phin learns a secret.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Here is the latest installment. I am going to move my update day to Saturday. I think that will work better for my writing schedule. I'll try to get out a chapter by the 12th but if not I'll see you all on the 19th. Thanks as always for reading and commenting!

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

-----Hermione-----

FUCK FUCK FUCK!

Hermione spent the rest of the feast churning over what she learned from both Phin and Malfoy. She wanted to scream out in anger, not stand meekly beside a psychopath as he played host to a room full of sycophants.

She needed to find a way out but she couldn't risk planning escape because Malfoy might randomly drug her with truth serum. She wanted to rip into him and tear him to shreds but she didn't have magic and didn't want to invite further punishments. *At least Ginny will be with Phin, he'll keep her safe.*

The party raged on and the crowd became rowdier. Some Death Eaters took to challenging each other to duels, others downed several flagons of Meade while leering at the women. The witches looked increasingly anxious as they surveyed the scene and Hermione guessed it wouldn't be an easy night for them. Sometime around 1:00 am Malfoy put an arm around her waist and escorted them back to his chambers.

As they entered the living room Hermione stated, "Draco, I want to do better as you said, but I need something from you."

He considered her carefully while removing the outer layer of his robe. "And what would that be?"

"I want you to give me the same gift you offered my first night here. I don't need the whole night but I need an hour to speak my mind. I have to scream and yell or I'll explode. I can be what you want from me but I need to let off some steam. Our life together goes against my Gryffindor nature. I have to let out my righteous indignation."

He raised an amused eyebrow at her but continued listening.

"You and I barely tolerated each other since you found the parchment. The tension is awful; I prefer us when we are happier. Once I have my say and it's out in the open I can focus on being better for you. I just can't go down without a fight. I want this deal to work between us. I want the witches to be safe," She noticed his eyes darken and knew that he wouldn't grant her request if he thought her motivations were only for the witches. She plowed on, "...and you. I want to be safe with you." *From you!* "You always tell me to ask for what I want. Please."

'Twenty minutes.' He countered while rolling up his sleeves and unbuttoning the top button of his collar.

"Fine, but I want to speak freely, carte blanche with zero repercussions."

He grabbed a drink from the library, walked back, and sat with his arms outstretched on the couch. He nodded his approval and said, "Go on then."

Hermione stood in front of the fireplace took a deep breath and steadied herself. *Here goes nothing!*

"YOU ROTTEN, ARROGANT, MACHIAVELLIAN, BASTARD!"

"—the *Fuck!*?" He sat up in surprise.

"Shut up. I've got twenty minutes." She glared at him and he scowled back as if entertaining a child. He sat forward, ready to pounce, and cast a Tempus, letting it hang in midair so that he and Hermione were both aware of her remaining time.

"You captured me, forced me into submission, and took away all my rights to my own destiny. I found one way to communicate with my friend and you punished me for it. I just wanted to know she was safe in this backward hellhole! You claim to care about me but how can you, then turn around and do that to my friends!?"

Hermione kept it up for fifteen minutes It felt amazing to get all her bottled up thoughts and feelings out. She was sick of holding her tongue. She chastised Malfoy for taking her magic, for forcing himself on her, for limiting her movements, and more, all the while Malfoy waited looking increasingly predatorial.

Seventeen minutes in Hermione said, "And, you expect me to marry you!? How dare you make that decision for me! Who the fuck do you think you are?"

At that Malfoy stood abruptly. He vanished the clock, stalked to her, and hissed, "Enough."

"My time isn't up! You. . ."

Malfoy cast a Silencio on Hermione and her voice died in her throat.

"Yes, it is!"

He met her at the fire and towered over her then motioned for the armchair with a pointed look. Hermione sat. "Now, I've been very patient, but I'm done entertaining this outburst. I hope you got that out of your system because if you ever talk to me like that again you will be lucky to ever get your voice back. Do not ask it of me, I won't grant it."

Hermione sat in fear hoping that he would do as he said and not punish her. She had to admit though, it felt remarkable to scream at him. She felt months of pent up aggression leave her body.

Malfoy crouched down so that he was eye level with Hermione. He fisted her hair, tilted her head back, and said condescendingly, "And I'll tell you who I am. I'm your lover," he brushed her hair off her face and behind her ear. "I do care about you," He fingered her betrothal jewelry, "and you will marry me," he flattened his hand around her neck and leaned in, "because I'm Draco Fucking Malfoy and I own you."

Hermione stared past Malfoy to the wall. *Well, that was fun while it lasted.*

Malfoy returned her voice and stood up straight.

After a long pause, Hermione said calmly, "Thank you for that." She took a big breath, "I needed it. I feel better."

"Happy to oblige." He muttered sardonically while walking towards the fire and staring at the flames.

Hermione assumed Malfoy would permit her a moment of rage. He liked it when she still showed some of her fight. She just had to walk a fine line. She was glad he allowed the 20 minutes but he was clear that she shouldn't do that again. She wouldn't get away with it twice.

Thankfully though, the outburst let out the tension that built between them over the past ten days. It also provided her a necessary cover. Hermione knew she needed to warm up to Malfoy but was also aware that he wouldn't believe her change in behavior unless something drastic happened.

To give Phin a chance at accomplishing whatever he planned she needed to lean into Malfoy and get back on his good side. She needed to lower his suspicions and increase his trust in her. She needed to distract him. She needed to be a 'proper lover.'

"Draco, Ginny..."

"Will be fine." He interrupted. "Nott is a good man. I got a first-hand view of how he treats women when I interrogated him. I doubt he'll... be rough with her." He paused and stared at the flames "You had to know there are consequences for your actions. I picked someone I think she can live with."

Hermione stood and walked up behind Malfoy, she slid her hand up his back and onto his shoulder. "Okay," she said, "I understand." Malfoy raised his arm to wrap it around her shoulders but she ducked her head under it and slunk in front of him so that they faced each other. She stared into his eyes and saw frustration etching his features.

Hermione racked her brain to come up with a way to maintain the momentum. "I don't know much about magical bonds. What will change when we are married?" She asked trying to divert the focus back to a topic he might like.

Malfoy placed his hand on her cheek and said with desire, "We'll be connected permanently. Our magic will intertwine and make us stronger. We'll be able to feel each other's emotions." He kissed her lips. "I'll always be able to know if you are scared or in trouble and if so, I'll be able to find you instantly no matter where you are in the world. No one will be able to take you from me or hurt you."

Well, that's terrifying.

"Okay." She said cautiously then threaded their fingers together and said, "If it will keep me from men like Derrick. I can handle that. I wish you would've asked me though." She lifted their hands to her chest. "I know you *own* me but I need to feel like I still have some choices in life."

Malfoy let go of her and slipped his hand around her back to pull her zipper down. "Hermione Jean Granger, will you allow me to protect you from this dangerous world? Will you make your home with me? Will you bond with me for life?" He asked, placating her.

NOOOOOOOOO!

"Yes."

He glared at her hungrily and vanished her robe. Then he reached forward and wrapped his fingers around his betrothal jewelry. It tightened uncomfortably and forced her to lean closer to him.

"Good choice." He said silkily. "Get used to this necklace, love. It's not coming off." He leaned down and kissed her neck over the chain and whispered, "Every single wizard in Britain will recognize my claim on you now."

He placed a hand at her lower back and walked them to the bedroom then directed her to the bed. Malfoy positioned Hermione on her back at the edge of the bed with her legs hanging off the side. She watched as he unbuttoned and removed his shirt then unbuckled his belt saying, "Now, touch yourself."

Hermione did as she was told. She reached her hand down, pushed aside her thin lace panties, and spread her lips wide, dipping her middle finger into herself. She pumped back and forth to wet her finger and then brought it back out and circled her clit.

Malfoy dragged his thick, hard, dick from his pants and began stroking himself while staring lecherously at Hermione's hand on her pussy. After a moment, he leaned over her and placed

his weight on his left arm then pressed his middle and ring finger slowly into her cunt while she ground her fingers on her clit. He mirrored Hermione's previous movements and pumped in and out of her as he watched her heart rate increase.

Hermione started to squirm, the feeling of fullness and repetition over her sex felt good, she knew what she had to do to get in the right headspace to accept his advances. After almost six months together she knew how to remove her thoughts from the process and allow herself to enjoy the feelings. Malfoy continued pumping in and out, in and out and all Hermione heard was the slick, wet, noises of her own body. The sound of it was explicit and arousing.

She circled and pinched her clit, rubbing harder and harder, her body felt light and tingly in anticipation. She felt the familiar tightening in her abdomen and knew another release of tension approached.

Just then she felt Malfoy's finger move from her pussy downwards and glance her tight bud as he simultaneously cast a cleansing charm that shot through her lower half.

Hermione sat up abruptly. "What are you doing?"

Malfoy pushed against her hole with his finger and said, "I want to own you completely. I don't want there to be any part of you unavailable to me."

"What!?" She started to panic. She and Phin talked about the act a few times but never tried it. Two thoughts raced through her mind. She didn't want Malfoy to take any part of her that she didn't give willingly to Phin first and secondly, Malfoy, like Phin, was very well endowed, it's one of the reasons she and Phin never gave it a try.

"Draco, please, it will hurt." She pleaded anxiously.

Malfoy leaned over and kissed her hard. He slid his tongue into her mouth and bit lightly at her lip. He dropped to his knees and lifted his other hand to her abandoned clit circling it slowly with his thumb. "Shh, sweetheart," he whispered confidently. "I'm just going to get you ready. You're right, you can't handle me yet. We'll get there though." He continued circling her clit and pressing into her tight hole. "Relax, I can feel the pulse in your upper thigh beating rapidly. Just let yourself go."

At that, Malfoy pushed her legs further apart and dragged his thick tongue along her cunt stopping at her throbbing clit. He continued to push against her bud with his finger and Hermione felt a strong tightening in her lower half. Malfoy lifted his eyes to her as she fisted the bedsheets and breathed hard. He wandlessly vanished her bustier and her heavy breasts fell out exposing her hard nipples. "Play with your tits." He demanded and she complied as he sucked hard on her clit.

Malfoy's slick finger breached her tight walls and Hermione came hard, holding back from screaming out in pleasure and instead, breathing heavily. As the waves of her orgasm crashed over her body she heard Malfoy crooning, "Yes, love. There you go." and she felt his finger slide slowly in and out of her.

As she came down Malfoy stood and slammed into her pussy, stretching her wide. He wrapped one of her legs around his waist and held her other leg on his shoulder as he pumped into her again and again.

Hermione's mind cleared and she remembered that he wanted her to play a more active role in their intimacy so despite herself she grabbed his hand and brought it to her chest saying, "Please, Draco, I want to cum again with you."

Malfoy shut his eyes briefly with a look of ecstasy and then dropped her legs and leaned over saying, "Oh, do you? What a greedy witch you are." He pulled from her core, climbed in bed, and laid on his side. Then he turned her to face away from him. He picked up her leg and wrapped it back over his hip sinking into her from behind. She felt every inch of his thick cock as he spread her slowly. From that angle, he had full access to her clit so he dipped his hand low and flicked the tips of his fingers against her oversensitive nub.

"Fuck, Draco!"

He slammed into her hard. "Mmmmm, yes, witch. Let me hear you."

Hermione felt her second orgasm building quickly. She wondered if she fully came down from the first. Her breathing picked up again as he plowed into her and she cried out, "Yes, yes, Draco, Fuck!"

Malfoy bent his head and licked her neck.

Hermione knew it's what he wanted. He was so thrilled with her the night he found the parchment, ecstatic that she yelled out while he fucked her.

"Yes! Witch, say it again."

"Ungg! Draco, yes!"

Malfoy pumped faster, his movements becoming erratic then suddenly, Unngnng! Yes!" He came with a roar.

He pumped a few more times keeping up his pace on her with his fingers then dragged himself out of her sex, scooped up his spent, and rubbed it onto her. Hermione saw stars as Malfoy rubbed his cum on her clit and she came again, hard.

-----Phin-----

Phin kept a close eye on Mia from afar for the rest of the evening. He filled his time pretending to be interested in meaningless conversations with ignorant Death Eaters. When Draco left with her, Phin stomped up to his room and barked, "Leeches!" and slammed open the door. He changed the password at his first opportunity!

Phin dragged his hand over his face angrily then stormed over to the bar cart while ripping off his tie. *I'm going to kill him!* He took a large sip of his drink tilting his head to the ceiling

with closed eyes and envisioning Draco's painful death.

Someone cleared their throat quietly and Phin's eyes shot open. He drew his wand and turned abruptly toward the noise finding Ginny Weasley standing by the couch with her eyes on the ground.

"What the!...oh, I forgot. Great." He moaned.

Phin sheathed his wand and let out an exasperated sigh asking, "Do you want a drink?"

He heard a sniffle and Ginny respond, "No thank you, Sir," through tears.

Phin walked over to her and placed his hand on her shoulder hoping to comfort her, but Ginny jumped at his touch and spat, "You are not allowed to be violent with me, it's a new decree. A..and if you are, I'll find a way to let it slip to Malfoy that you were writing secret notes to his witch in the middle of the night!"

Phin laughed in astonishment. "Holy Shit. You still have your spunk." Ginny glowered at him and Phin back-tracked soberly, "Weasley, I have absolutely no intention of hurting you. I won't even touch you. I don't want you here but that doesn't mean I'll be cruel. You can sit." Ginny continued to stare as Phin went on. "But please remember, if you out me to Malfoy, you're outing Hermione too and putting her life in danger."

Ginny eyed him curiously and noticed the look of anguish in his expression. She sat without speaking for a long moment then asked, "If you don't want me then why am I here?"

"Because Malfoy found out about the parchment and used you as Hermione's punishment."

Ginny looked shocked. "He found out that you two were communicating behind his back and you're still alive? Where is Hermione? How is she? Did he hurt her?"

Phin took a sip and glanced at her out of the side of his cup. "So quick to change your tune, I thought you wanted to tell him yourself." He chided and Ginny rolled her eyes. "No, she's okay. Well... She's not hurt. He didn't find out about our conversation that night. He only found out that Hermione gave you the parchment."

"How?" She eyed him suspiciously.

"I don't know, look, I'm exhausted. I'm going to bed. We can talk more in the morning." Phin waved his wand and transfigured the couch into a comfortable looking twin bed. "I'm going to finish my drink. You can use the restroom upstairs to get ready for bed first."

Phin watched her walk upstairs and ran his hand over the back of his neck. *Hermione trusted Ginny to bring me the parchment. She must have assumed Ginny would keep the secret... She hasn't said anything yet...* Phin didn't know what to think. Adding another person to their subterfuge meant an additional layer of vulnerability. But, Hermione trusted Ginny and wanted to save her so Phin put aside any dark thoughts of obliterating her to cover their tracks. *That's the last thing I need, to finally get Hermione out of this place only to have her*

kill me for erasing Ginny's memories. Ten minutes later Ginny tiptoed down the steps. Phin noticed the way that she tried her best not to take up any space in a room.

"Goodnight," He mumbled

"Goodnight, Sir."

"Weasley, you don't need to call me that," He said in frustration then noticed how his tone of voice made her shrink into herself. "Nevermind, call me whatever you want. Goodnight."

In the morning, Phin woke to a soft knock at his bedroom door. "Sir?...um...Nott?" He rolled over in his large fourposter and shielded his eyes to the light coming in from the window. His head felt like he was hit with a ton of bricks. *I overdid it last night. Ugh, what does she want?*

"Weasley, what could you possibly need this early in the morning?"

"Um, there's a Death Eater at the door he said to get you." She explained.

Phin sat up, and threw his legs over the side of the bed, he rested his elbows on his thighs and yawned, then stretched his arms wide. "Did he say what he wants?" Ginny shook her head. Phin stood and trudged over to the restroom saying, "Go tell him, I'll be right there, please."

Phin washed his face and threw on a white shirt to go with his gray sleep trunks. When he entered the living space the Death Eater stood at the door staring at the transfigured bed.

"What is it?" Phin grumped.

"Sorry to bother you, *Sir.*" The Death Eater sneered. "But I need to transfer her ownership. We weren't able to do it last night when we dropped her off because you were still at the feast."

This can't be good. "I'm new here, as you know. What does that entail?"

The Death Eater barely concealed his disdain and said, "Sir. if you'll Stupefy your witch I will describe the process for you."

Phin turned to Ginny and offered a look of apology before flicking his hand wordlessly and watching her fall to the ground. Once she was out, Phin levitated her to the bed and grumbled, "Make it quick."

The Death Eater marched forward and waved his wand saying, "Revelio." Phin watched as a thin scar appeared on the palm of Ginny's right hand.

"We bind them to us with blood magic. When a witch arrives at the castle we knock them out and take a bit of their blood. Once they are purchased, their owner cuts his palm and drips the witch's blood into the wound with a dropper from a phial. Today we can just re-open her wound and you can hold her hand to complete the spell."

Phin felt nauseated. "What does the spell do?"

"It makes it so that you can control her magic, you take it from her and it strengthens your core. You also feel if she leaves the castle grounds and it gives you a vague idea of the direction she used for escape. It isn't exactly a tracking device but no witch has escaped successfully because it gives us enough of a clue to their whereabouts. We also add their blood to the wards to ensure that the witches can't harm any wizards on the castle grounds and within Hogsmeade. That way none of these bitches can get pissed and push us down the stairs or anything. That was taken care of when she arrived as well. We just have to worry about the ownership today. Normally the spell can only be removed by the witch's owner but since he died I can administer the transfer."

Phin nodded his understanding and the Death Eater handed him an antique knife that Phin recognized as a dark artifact. The blade was heavy and it felt ominous in Phin's grip. He sliced his palm and the Death Eater held out his hand.

"I'll cut open the bitch if you want." He offered darkly.

"No. I'll do it" Phin growled. He leaned down and picked up Ginny's arm then cut her palm along the scar.

"Handy, you have this bed here." The Death Eater mentioned offhandedly but Phin understood the subtext, it was odd for Phin to offer such a luxury.

"I was too tired and piss-drunk last night when she arrived. I thought I'd wait until today to enjoy her more," he lied. "Can you get on with it? She's likely to wake soon."

The Death Eater scowled but did as Phin asked. He took out his wand and muttered "Innoco Capistrano" then much like with an Unbreakable vow, thin gold cords wrapped around their hands and shined brightly before sinking into their skin.

Phin felt light-headed by a violent rush of magic. He dropped her hand and stood back attempting to regain his composure. As the magic settled in his core, he watched the Death Eater wave his wand again and the scar on Ginny's palm disappeared. He grunted a goodbye and handed Phin a scroll of parchment as he left.

"This is from our boss," the Death Eater said over a curled lip. "That's all," he finished, then stormed out of the door.

Phin sent for food and made them both a cup of strong tea while waiting for Ginny to wake. He thought over the implications of what he just learned. *Hermione was right, Malfoy does literally hold her magic. We need him to remove it before we can escape. Mother Fucker! This situation keeps getting better and better We are going to need help.* He heard Ginny stirring and walked over to her as she sat up, wincing in pain. He held a mug out to her and she took it cautiously.

Phin sat across from Ginny. She took a sip and then asked, "What is going on between you and Hermione? Why did she insist on writing to you?"

"There's a lot I need to tell you, Weasley. But first, let me say this. You have no reason to trust me but I want you to try anyway. Hermione trusted you so I am going to do the same for you. Let me explain and if you promise not to blow up my plans I'll gladly give you back your magic."

Ginny stared at him and took a sip of her hot tea. As she considered her response Phin opened the scroll from Draco and read, *Good Morning, Nott. Take the morning off and enjoy your new witch. I'll see you and Weasley at my chambers tonight for dinner. 8 pm.*

Phin crumpled up the parchment and said to Ginny, "It looks like we have dinner plans with Hermione and Draco. We have a lot to talk about before we go."

Ginny looked scared and reluctantly admitted, "The wards won't let me leave your chambers until we consummate the arrangement. He's forcing your hand."

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Corner of Your Heart by Ingrid Michaelson "

Chapter 15: Starvation

Chapter Summary

Hermione and Draco meet with their dinner guests and Draco takes a trip.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I'm back on a new night! Saturdays from here on out unless I drop two chapters in a week. I made you wait a little longer but in return, this is my longest chapter yet. Comments and Kudos give me inspiration as always! Happy reading!

****Trigger Warning**** This chapter hints at suicidal and self-harm themes.

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

Hermione woke to a warm bed and the smell of something sweet, *pancakes?* She scrunched her eyes and willed herself to fall back asleep. She didn't want to face the day yet. *I'm asleep in the tent. Phin made breakfast. I'll suggest that we stay one more night and we can spend the day in bed reading.* She envisioned the life she had on the run, hoping to sink into the oblivion of happy memories.

A few minutes later Malfoy entered the room and sat on the edge of the bed. He placed his hand on her back and rubbed his thumb between her shoulder blades. Hermione felt goosebumps rise to meet his touch.

"Happy Birthday, love. Why don't you come out to the dining table? I've got something for you," he crooned.

My birthday?

Hermione groaned at her inability to keep days straight while living in the castle. She knew it was sometime in September but not the exact date. Celebrating her birthday with Malfoy was not Hermione's idea of fun but she roused from the comfort of her daydream and threw on a silk robe. Malfoy walked her out to the table with a possessive hand at her lower back and Hermione stopped in her tracks.

"What? How did you?"

She walked quickly to the table, the scent of vanilla, butter, and lemon wafted over her as she experienced heartbreakingly nostalgic.

"Your mom made them for me one Saturday morning. She mentioned they were a family recipe passed down through generations. She said she always made them on special occasions."

Hermione didn't know what to say. Her mother's lemon popovers were a treat growing up and just like Malfoy mentioned, they were around at every birthday, holiday, and celebration. Hermione never imagined being able to taste them again.

"Draco, I'm...thank you," she whispered reluctantly. *How can he shift from being a right bastard to doing something like this in a matter of hours?*

"Here, would you like one?" He said as he reached for the pan.

"Wait! Draco!" Hermione yelled throwing her hands out on instinct trying to brush his arm aside.

"Ah! Bullocks!" He yelled in pain as his hand touched the hot metal.

Hermione went to the sink and grabbed a towel. She wet it with cold water and walked back to Malfoy pressing the cloth to his burned hand.

"The pan is scalding hot. You have to cook popovers at very high heat. It's how they puff up." She explained with an amused frustration at his foolishness.

Malfoy stood incredibly still, considering her as she fussed over him. A moment passed as she dabbed the towel gently to the burn while holding his large hand. He eventually cleared his throat.

"Hermione, as much as I love it when you touch me." He caressed the back of her hand. "You do remember I'm a wizard right?" He said with a smirk. "I'm not sure how much good this rag will do."

Remembering herself Hermione chided, "I'm not the one who forgot hot pans burn." Malfoy huffed a laugh and she continued, "Can you open the lab? You need Dittany. I'll grab it for you if you want."

Malfoy waved his hand and the door to the Potion's Lab clicked open. Despite herself, Hermione still found it hard to turn off her need to rescue hurting individuals.

"I'll go with you." He said as though it were obvious.

They walked together to the lab and Hermione pulled down a phial of Essence of Dittany from one of the lower shelves. She and Malfoy spent less time in the lab recently. Hermione loved brewing but hated asking Malfoy to use her magic. Instead, she chose to read in his library or continue her rouse of walking the castle. However, all excursions outside his chambers stopped eleven days ago when he found the parchment.

She unstopped the potion and held Malfoy's hand as she placed several drops on his palm. Hermione watched as his red, inflamed skin turned pale again. "Thank you," he said. "I guess you can tell I don't have much experience with Muggle cookery." He shook his hand to clear

away the sting from the burn and walked them back to the table locking the lab as they walked through the door.

"Do you have experience with *wizard* cookery?" She teased.

"No, I guess not. The kitchen staff did a good job though, didn't they? They got the recipe right?"

"Yes. They look right." She said as she sat down to savor the meal.

Malfoy and Hermione ate a pleasant breakfast of popovers and cream. Hermione showed him how to sprinkle powdered sugar and lemon juice on them in the right quantities to make the confection sing, and Malfoy asked questions about how she spent her birthday as a child. She felt grateful for the shift back toward civility and appreciated the meal, however, she was acutely aware that Malfoy only had the recipe because he traveled around the world to try and capture her.

"I have another gift for you," Malfoy said as he wiped his hands on his napkin and laid it on the table near his plate. He pulled a scroll out of his pocket and handed it to her. Hermione opened the gift and looked up confused.

"December 31st?" She asked as she read the date from the parchment. "It doesn't say anything else."

Malfoy pushed his chair out and held a hand to her. She dutifully placed her hands in his and gazed up at him warily. "I thought it might be nice to spend New Year's Eve in Australia. I'd like to introduce my new bride to my good friends Monica and Wendell."

Hermione's hands shook, she heard the blood rushing in her ears. She stood up and walked to the window and stared at the castle grounds noticing the early changes in the leaves of the trees. The tips of the leaves were just starting to turn the warm shades of fall. A tear streaked down her cheek as she contemplated the idea of visiting her parents, something she thought impossible.

Malfoy followed her and stood close beside her. He placed his hands on her cheeks and tilted her face to him wiping away her tear then leaned down and kissed her tenderly. "I like us better when we're happy too," he repeated her words from the night before. She nodded.

"Hermione, I know this life isn't what you want. but please, let yourself be happy with me, I beg you. I want to give you all you desire but I need to know you're safe. Going against me and the rules of the castle, secretly communicating with Ginny, that kind of behavior will get back to Voldemort. If he finds out that you refuse to obey he'll take you from me. Neither of us wants that."

Hmm, that's new information. She didn't know what to think about that revelation. If Draco was telling the truth then certainly the idea of being sent to Voldemort sounded terrifying. *Maybe I could destroy the Horcrux first and then get sent to him?* But that was unlikely.

"Okay, Draco. I understand. I'll try."

-----Phin-----

At 8 PM, Phin waited outside the entrance to Draco's private quarters. He and Ginny spent the morning chewing over their circumstances. Phin told Ginny a half-truth. He stated that Hermione bumped into him after he defected and that they stuck together on the run until just before she was captured. He briefly explained how Hermione thought that she saw him die but that he was really hit with a stunning spell.

In actuality, Phin woke from the stunning spell as Hermione Apparated away. The Death Eaters were so focused on trying to kill her as she left that they didn't see him when he rolled over on his side and sent stunners at both of them in succession. In his panic over the situation and possibly losing track of Hermione, he quickly Obliviated the Death Eaters and Apparated them to a town one hundred miles away. After waiting for Hermione for six months he eventually realized that she must have only seen the killing curse that missed him, an easy mistake to make amidst all the stress of the situation.

Ginny listened skeptically and peppered the story with questions. "Why did she trust you?" or "Why did you defect? Didn't you like your pampered, privileged life?" Phin answered to the best of his ability but he refused to let Ginny in on how close he and Hermione became over their time together.

Phin's story and Ginny's questions ran out several hours later and the conversation moved to Phin's desire to help Hermione escape. Ginny didn't approve of the plan and therefore didn't offer to help. She did, however, hesitantly offer to keep Phin's secret and stay out of his way.

"Leave me out of it," she sneered, "I'm sick of getting caught up in these plans!"

They avoided talking about the elephant in the room until the last possible moment. At 6:30 PM Phin stood and walked to the bar cart asking, "How do you know you can't leave my chambers? How do you know the wards work like that?"

Ginny rolled her eyes and said, "Flint made it abundantly clear on my first night in the castle. Also, the witches talk. Do you think I would make that up!?" She rolled her eyes and crossed her arms defensively. "It's the final part of whatever charm they placed on us. It ensures that we are fully under the wizard's control before we can leave his quarters."

Phin desperately wanted to avoid sex with Ginny if he could so he walked her to the door and they spent thirty minutes trying to find ways for her to exit his chambers. As the clock ticked closer and closer to 8 PM Phin finally stared at the ceiling in resignation and said, "Ginny, I'm so sorry. We need to go see Draco tonight." He sickened himself.

"Go without me. Claim I'm sick," she chanced and Phin saw a vulnerability in her eyes that she hadn't let him see until that point.

His skin crawled as he shamefully admitted, "We have to keep up appearances. I need to stay on Draco's good side and not raise suspicions." Then he quickly added, "It's so that I can find a way to get us all out of here." He paused, "I'm so sor--"

"Save it! I get it. You *have to* rape me." She sneered. "I feel really sorry for you."

She stomped to the window. "Look, I know you're upset. I'm sorry!" He entreated, ashamed. The thought of forcing himself on a witch turned his stomach.

"Fuck you, just get it over with."

In the end, the act was perfunctory and horrific for them both. Afterward, Ginny walked upstairs without a word and Phin heard the shower run. He raked his hand through his hair and kicked over a dining chair as hard as he could. He berated himself for stooping to such levels to get what he wanted. *I'm no better than Draco.*

Back in Dumbledore's office, Ginny stood sullenly behind Phin as they waited. He didn't dare engage her. He felt her anger radiating from several feet away and didn't blame her. Just then the bookcase moved and Draco stood in the doorway.

"Theo, Weasley, glad you could join us," Draco stated and Phin wanted to wipe the smug look from his face.

"Hi Drake, thanks for the invitation," he replied as they stepped inside his chambers and the door shut behind them. Phin scanned the room for signs of Mia but didn't see her at first.

"Hermione, love, they're here," Draco called out as she walked out of the bedroom door adjusting her robe. Phin felt a pang of need. He wanted to grab her and hold her in his arms. Mia always knew how to calm his raging nerves. Somehow he doubted, however, her willingness to comfort him in this particular situation.

Mia walked to Draco and stood at his side. She kept her eyes on Ginny and didn't glance at Phin once.

"Well, you two don't need as much catching up as I thought," Draco said pointedly at the two women. "Although, Theo and I are going to grab a drink so feel free to entertain yourselves out here for a while."

Hermione and Ginny walked to the couch and sat as Phin followed Draco to the library. They talked about the feast and Draco's strategy to calm the discontent amongst the Death Eater ranks. Sometime later Draco said, "So, how did it go with Weasley? Did she help you get over your muggle love?"

Anger shot through Phin and his neck hairs stood on end. Draco gave him a quizzical look and Phin forced himself to answer. "Mmm, come on now, Draco, you know I'm not one to kiss and tell." Phin watched Draco's expression fall.

"I'm just trying to help you out Nott," he said holding his hands out in supplication.

Phin recognized Draco's curiosity and didn't want it to turn to suspicion. "I admit, she helped release some steam. Maybe I should've tried Pureblood witches sooner. After my witch left me it's easy to see the appeal of having one who can't run away." He said with a laugh that he hoped didn't come off as forced as it felt.

A half an hour later Draco motioned for them to leave the library saying, "The food should be here by now." They walked together toward the dining table and Phin noticed that both Ginny and Mia looked as though they might spit fire. Phin prayed to the gods that Mia wasn't pissed at him. That was the last thing he needed. *Ginny wouldn't have told her right? Anyways, Mia has no room to judge me! Look who she spends her nights with!*

That defensive knee-jerk reaction didn't work for Phin though, he knew there was a big difference between being forced to sleep with someone and forcing someone to sleep with him. *I need to get her alone so we can talk this out and figure out a plan forward.*

In Phin's opinion, the meal was awkward as hell. He and Draco chatted jovially like the old days while ignoring the fact that two witches sat in their midst seething. Phin, as ever, kept his eyes and ears open for possible ways to grab Mia and escape but he had a hard time overlooking the fact that the love of his life sat a few inches away, furious.

Phin hated Draco with every ounce of his body and hated the moment that he found himself in. He didn't want to spend Mia's birthday, of all days, fucking other witches and watching as she obeyed Draco's every command.

He stared off into the distance for a moment remembering several of Mia's birthdays spent together on the run. He always made her breakfast and they often spent the day pretending the war didn't exist and that they were on a camping holiday together. In the evenings he would sink into her and feel her hands lightly scratching at his back as he slipped his hands down to her clit and sent her over the edge.

He vaguely registered Draco saying, "The latest shipment came in today. It was a day early, not expected until the 20th."

"By the way, happy birthday, Mi--" Lost in his swirling emotions of anger and bittersweet memories, Phin didn't think out the consequences of his statement before speaking but caught himself with a cough before finishing, "uh Hermione."

"What?" Draco asked dangerously while staring at Phin. Mia glared at him as well, anger and worry etched on her face. Luckily, Draco's attention was solely on him. "How the fuck did you know that?"

Sweet Bloody Salazar, Nott! Get ahold of yourself! Phin quickly adopted an arrogant and dismissive tone, "It was always the same day as my father's. I have clear memories of her parading around like a fucking nerdy princess each year. Potter and Weasley, the twats, always on her heels, begging for forgiveness for forgetting the date yet again. I always thought it ironic that I remembered when her so-called friends always forgot about her." He took a sip of his drink and drawled, "Get her anything good, Drake?" then laughed darkly.

As he finished his clumsy explanation covering his tracks he noticed everyone else at the table glaring at him angrily. *Grrreat. Might as well dig the hole as deep as I can. Tonight should be fun at home with Weasley.*

Draco's tight eyes left Phin and he turned his attention to Mia. Something passed between the two of them and after a moment she stood and excused herself. Phin watched her walk back to the bedroom, the sight of it tore at his chest.

Phin and Draco finished a somewhat less friendly conversation before Draco walked them to the door saying, "Goodnight, Nott." As Phin and Ginny walked out the door, Draco put a hand on Phin's shoulder and said, "Don't address my witch again. Hermione doesn't need to be bullied by you any further."

"Of course, sorry. Old habits."

-----Hermione-----

As Phin and Malfoy walked to the library early in the evening, Hermione and Ginny moved to the couch. Hermione, noticing a distinctly cold mood on Ginny, whispered, "I'm so sorry, let me explain."

"Save it. I have no interest in your explanation."

"Ginny?..." Hermione pleaded and Ginny shot back with ire.

"Don't, Ginny, me! I was happy in the hospital ward. For the first time in years, I had a bed, food, work, and men weren't pawing at me!" She turned toward Hermione and said with venom in her voice, "I *TOLD* you not to risk that damn note. I said I wanted nothing to do with it and you got me placed with a fucking wizard again!"

Hermione expected Ginny to be mad but she thought that once Ginny figured out Phin wasn't like the other wizards in the castle she might feel better. "But," she lowered her voice further, "you'll be okay with Nott. Maybe he didn't tell you yet, he probably doesn't know he can trust you, but I know him. He won't hurt you."

Ginny leaned in a spat back, "Oh, he told me. Just before he fucked me over the desk in his living room. Nice company you keep Hermione. I don't know how else to tell you this but Leave. Me. Out. Of Your. Plans. I could use a little less 'help' from you and your Death Eater friends."

Hermione felt as though Ginny slapped her across the face.

"No...n..no he didn't. He wouldn't," she choked out.

Ginny wiped away an angry tear. "He gave me the same welcome as Flint, minus a few broken bones. I'm not going to give him any credit for neglecting to break my jaw."

"Then, he had to. Ph...Nott wouldn't do that." She chanced.

"Sure Hermione he had to. What reason in the world could exist for him to *need* to rape me? He had to, just like Malfoy has to, just like Flint had to. Whatever you want to tell yourself." Ginny got up and walked to the window. Hermione stayed rooted in her spot.

She sat and stewed over what Ginny told her and tried to find ways to rationalize it. But try as she might she could not find a reason for Phin to do that. The idea was despicable. *Ginny's lying because she's mad at me. She'll see reason when Phin tells her the truth about who he is and what he is trying to do for us.*

Just then Hermione heard Malfoy ask from the other room, "So, how did it go with Weasley? Did she help you get over your muggle love?"

There was a long pause and Hermione couldn't make out the conversation. Then she distinctly heard Phin reply in laughter, "I admit, she helped release some steam. Maybe I should've tried Pureblood witches sooner. After my witch left me it's easy to see the appeal of having one who can't run away."

Hermione saw red. Her palm tingled and itched and she closed her eyes lightly in rage. *How could he!? He didn't need to play his part THAT well. Was he trying to get back at me for sleeping with Malfoy!?* She felt deep, searing anger and vulnerability at the thought that he may still be mad at her for leaving him the way she did.

She spent the rest of the night fuming and only snapped out of her haze of anger when she heard Phin say, "Happy Birthday, Mi--" Fear spread up her spine as she stared at her idiotic, fuck-up, of a partner. *What the hell is wrong with you!* She noticed Malfoy's attention turn from Phin to her. His expression was cold as he lifted his chin and tilted his eyebrows commanding her to leave the table. Hermione read his meaning clearly, *Goodnight, Hermione. I'll see you in a bit.* She righted herself and rolled her eyes conveying, *Now?*

Malfoy's message was clear. *Now.*

Three weeks passed and Hermione grew increasingly anxious. Malfoy didn't allow her back to work and therefore she hadn't seen a single person but him in what felt like a lifetime. Days edged closer and closer to Christmas and Hermione worried that no word from Phin meant no movement on any potential escape plans. She longed to see Phin and know that what she heard on the night he visited with Ginny was a lie. She thought that with Phin as Malfoy's second-in-command, there must be some way for him to see her if he wanted.

In her worst moments of fear and anxiety, she let herself rage over the possibility that Phin enjoyed his new cushy life in the castle with a captive Ginny. *What if he isn't even trying to free me any longer!? I'm going to end up married to Malfoy!*

In those moments Hermione's only refuge was the fact that Malfoy was once again courteous to her. They came to an understanding of sorts on her birthday and since that day he treated her kindly and in return, she played her part. As the days plodded on, Hermione disassociated with a morbid and depressing fantasy where yes, she was bonded to Malfoy, but he treated

her well, freed the witches, and she got to see her parents whenever she wanted. *Screw Phin and his petty grudges.*

Five nights ago, Malfoy undressed in the closet and Hermione sat on the bed, prepared for another night of his advances. Suddenly she heard him inhale sharply as if in pain.

"Fuck!" Malfoy mumbled from the adjacent room.

Hermione tiptoed to the door of the closet to find Malfoy clutching his arm as he summoned a full set of Death Eater robes.

"Voldemort requires my presence." Malfoy barked in explanation.

Hermione walked into the room as he dressed and asked, "In Paris?"

"Yes. I'll likely be gone a few days." He stomped past her in his heavy boots and bid her follow. At the door, Malfoy stopped and turned to her. "You'll stay here until I return. I'll have food sent. Is there anything you need before I go?"

Hermione noticed the tightness to Malfoys eyes and his furrowed brow. He was worried about something. "No. I guess." She didn't know what to feel. Time without Malfoy sounded nice but then again he was her only source of companionship and she didn't look forward to being left alone with her thoughts for days.

Malfoy leaned down and kissed her passionately. His expression held something Hermione couldn't quite pinpoint. Then, he opened the door and left. Hermione heard several wards placed in his wake. She touched her palm to the door and noticed the magical activity swirling in its wood.

She went to bed and woke late the next morning. She reasoned that at least the solitude offered the opportunity for uninterrupted sleep. Upon waking she felt ravenous. She walked out to the living room and noticed the dining table looked empty and cold. No food awaited her. *Maybe it vanished because I slept in too late?*

Lunchtime came and went and again, no food arrived. Hermione heard her stomach growl and roar with disuse. She started hunting for any leftover food around the living quarters as she waited. She found nothing, not even a bowl of mints or a sleeve of crackers. When dinnertime arrived and no food appeared she began to worry. *Malfoy said he'd be gone for days! How could he forget to send me food?*

Hermione laid on the bed staring at the ceiling trying to move as little as possible. It was one in the morning on the fifth night and still, no food arrived. She resorted to conserving energy to hopefully survive until Malfoy arrived home. *Something must have gone wrong. He wouldn't have done this to me on purpose, not after going to all that effort to find me in the first place!*

She knew that with water she could last several weeks without food, but feared how long it might take for Draco to return. *Where is PHIN!?* As days crept painfully by, Hermione's thoughts about Phin's whereabouts turned darker and darker. The hunger ate at her reason and

compassion and stopped her from considering any circumstance that didn't involve him turning into a full Death Eater monster.

Hermione closed her eyes again and several things happened at once. She heard a rush of air and magic in the living room and a loud thud farther away. Curious, Hermione wanted to go and investigate but she didn't have the energy. It wasn't until she smelled the sweet, delicious scent of food that she willed herself out of the bed.

Her legs were wobbly as she walked out of the bedroom and noticed the dining table full of *FOOD!* Hermione ran to the table and grabbed a pastry. She took deep, manic bites and shoved the savory pastry into her mouth not stopping to taste any of its flavors. She washed it down with a large glass of Meade and then grabbed a tartlet and shoved it in her mouth as well. As she clumsily chewed her third pastry she heard a deep moan from the library.

With some food in her stomach, Hermione felt her focus move to her environment in a way that the desire to feed her starvation didn't provide the opportunity for until that point. For instance, for the first time she noticed that the scones remained dark, she didn't take the time to relight them as she entered the room. Also, the fireplace lay cold and uninviting, no fire roared in its place since Malfoy left. An eerie aura fell over the room and the hairs on Hermione's neck stood on end.

She knew that eating the food quickly might make her sick but wasn't able to stop herself. Now she noticed that instead of the food returning her energy, her body felt considerably weaker. She began to worry about what potions lingered in the food but forgot that train of thought when she heard the moan one more time. It came from Malfoy's library.

Hermione steeled herself and hobbled to the library door. The effort required to cross the room scared her and she worried about what she might find when she arrived. However, all that she saw was a silver fork laying askew on the desk, otherwise, the room looked dark and empty. She placed her hand on the door jam to strengthen herself as she felt a wave of nausea sweep over her skin. *Fuck, I ate too fast. I feel like shit!*

She decided that returning to bed sounded best and turned to leave but once again heard the noise. This time though, she was able to follow its sound and her eyes landed on a pair of large boots peeking out from behind the wooden desk. Hermione moved cautiously toward the desk, taking care to hold onto the furniture as she passed.

When she finally had a clear view, she saw Malfoy on the floor looking as though he hung unto life by a thread, his hair matted and skin deeply bruised. His face showed sunken eyes and he held his side in pain.

Adrenaline shot through Hermione and battled with her fatigue and nausea. With Malfoy in this condition, he wouldn't be able to stop her from running. *Maybe I can...*

The thoughts of escape died as soon as they came. She knew from the past several months that to exit Malfoy's living chambers she needed his magic. If he died, there was no guarantee that food would materialize again before the Death Eaters discovered his absence and found a way past his wards. Even if she got him to open the door she was very weak and

doubted her ability to make it out of the castle alone. Phin might still help but she had no idea where he and Ginny were in the castle.

If she ran, and Malfoy died, she risked being caught and kept by a crueler Death Eater. Also, she still had the trace that Cadence and the girls at the café mentioned. She didn't know much about it but couldn't risk escape before it was removed. *Ugh, the witches. I'm too weak. There is no way I could save them if I left.*

Last and most concerning, Hermione felt her magical core depleting. As she surveyed the scene and possibilities she grew certain that as Malfoy's life slipped away, whatever spell he used to hold and restrict her magic tied them together somehow. If Malfoy died without returning her magic, her core would empty and she would follow him in death.

SHIT! I'm going to die in this opulent tomb laying on the floor next to Draco Malfoy!

Malfoy's black eyes opened slightly and he saw her standing above him. He raised a hand to her shakily but passed out from the effort. Hermione cast her eyes around the room in an instinctive fight or flight response. Her arms tingled and her hands felt numb. She knew there was no way out but had to try. She couldn't let her life end like this. She needed to find a way out, to find Phin, to find Ginny.

In her desperation, her eyes fell upon the drawer where Malfoy kept her wand. She yelled out "ALOHAMORA!" with all her might. She felt the energy leave her palms and the lock clicked open. It took a minute for Hermione to realize that her wandless magic worked. She marveled at the turn of events, dived toward the drawer, fisted her wand, pointed it at Malfoy, and quickly cast a Stasis on him to stop the decline of his health.

Next, she broke into the Potion's Lab and grabbed a bottle of purple potion before stumbling back to Malfoy. She poured the potion on his open wounds and watched it bubble and smoke. She wasn't a healer by any sense of the word but she and Phin taught themselves basic healing spells and potions while on the run so that they could at least provide triage during a dire situation. After the smoke cleared she jabbed Malfoy's side with her wand and said, "Corporis Consano!" She knew it was the spell to heal internal injuries.

Once the excitement of the events passed she slumped down and leaned her back against the wall next to the desk. As Malfoy's health improved she felt her own energy increase but similarly she noticed her magic slip away from her back into Malfoy's core. She knew that if she was going to execute any plan she needed to do it quickly before he awakened.

She needed to remove the trace. That was priority number one. Once Malfoy no longer controlled her magic and couldn't track her movements, she had a chance at escape. She weighed her options. *What do I know? I know I can't harm Malfoy just like I can't harm myself... Her train of thought sparked a realization. But, Malfoy can hurt me! Malfoy restrained her and restricted her airways. When he found the parchment he nearly choked her. Suddenly Hermione knew what she needed to do. She stood up and used her remaining magic saying, "Imperius"*

Malfoy rose with a glassy look that let Hermione know he still wasn't fully conscious. She walked with him to the Potion's lab then used his magic and her blood to draw an

impenetrable ward on the door. Before stepping into the Lab she instructed Malfoy to cast two spells on her in succession. She heard his deep voice say "Sectumsempra!" then "Arresto Momentum!" and felt the pain of deep cuts spread along her skin. She stepped slowly beyond the ward, into the Potion's Lab, and used the final dredges of her magic to remove the Imperius.

"Rennervate!"

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Almost Lover by A Fine Frenzy"

Chapter 16: Draco's Memories

Chapter Summary

Hermione negotiates her way out of the trace and learns a lot about Draco's past.

Chapter Notes

Extra chapter for this week!

I had to make the decision to break up these two chapters or else provide you with one monster chapter.

Enjoy!

Trigger Warning

Suicide and Self-Harm Themes

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

-----Draco-----

Draco came to and took in his surroundings in confusion. He stood in their home near Hermione's window seat. *How the hell did I get here?*

The last thing he remembered was stumbling through the halls of Voldemort's Manor and grabbing ahold of the portkey. The past five days were horrendous. His second attempted assassination on Voldemort failed and the Dark Lord flew into a suspicious downward spiral. Draco used a mid-level Death Eater this time. He Imperiused the guard, sent him discreetly on a mission to Paris when Voldemort requested increased detail, and had the Death Eater Avada the sadistic Dictator when his back was turned.

From what Draco found out the Death Eater successfully cast the spell but for some reason old Voldie didn't die and Draco was called in to atone for his poor choice in soldiers. He spent five days being interrogated and tortured. Earlier this evening Voldemort finally let up with a final warning to Draco that if anything like that happened again he would murder Draco publicly and painfully.

Draco ran the palm of his right hand against his eye with a long sigh and decided to head to bed. *I feel somewhat better, maybe I can get a night's rest with Hermione before I call for Healer Garred in the morning.* All Draco wanted was to feel the warmth of his witch and forget the past several days

Just then he noticed something funny. The door to the Potions Lab stood ajar. Anger shot through him aggressively as he threw out his hand to ignite the lamps and fire. The added light illuminated a horrific sight. Hermione stood in the lab bleeding from several spots along her arms and legs.

"What the Fuck!?" He growled as he stomped quickly to the door only to be refused entry by a very strong ward.

"Hermione, what the hell is going on? Who did this to you!? Can you get through the wards?"

As he said it he noticed that despite her circumstance she didn't look afraid. In fact, she stood resolute in the center of the room holding a book and staring at him.

"I'm dying Draco and technically *YOU* did this." She said calmly.

"Stop playing games and come here! I need to cast the counter curse!" Draco was all-too-familiar with the curse spreading across Hermione's skin. He felt the memory of it through the chills in his scars. He needed to help her, or as she said, she would die. In fact, he didn't know how she was able to still talk to him. *Why is the curse moving so slowly?*

"Yes, I can make it through the wards, and no I won't come to you. This is the only way you'll listen. Take the trace off of me and give me back my magic or watch me bleed out on the floor of this lab." She demanded.

Draco still didn't understand what was happening and how she ended up cursed or in the lab but his anger and need to protect her raged. He spent his entire adulthood trying to safeguard this witch and she kept trying to get herself bloody killed! He cast several spells on the door in quick succession then slammed his fist into the ward bellowing,

"Get over here, NOW!"

Hermione backed away from the door further into the room and held up the book saying, "You know this book is very handy. It not only taught me how to cast Sectumsempra, but there was also a scribbled note about finite and impenetrable blood wards. Turns out, you are pretty good at casting one. However, it was my blood that sealed it so you can forget any chance of getting into this lab. If you want to save me, you need to give into *MY* demands for once!" She paused and took a pained and labored breath, "Or, let me die. Honestly, Malfoy, I'm okay with either at this point."

Draco lowered his voice and said dangerously, "That curse looks like it's moving pretty slowly love. How many of the castle witches do you think I could murder in front of your eyes before you pass on?"

He watched as Hermione's confident expression fell from her face. She thought for a moment then croaked, "Ff...fine! I don't give a shit anymore, it might be a kindness anyway!"

Draco's anger left him as he realized how serious she was about taking her life. He instantly felt desperate to get to her and realized he needed a new tactic. He took a deep breath and reluctantly admitted, "Hermione, there is no way I can remove the spell. Voldemort scans my mind every time he sees me. If he finds out that you have your magic and that I don't have control over you--he'll take you from me. He'll take you to Paris. He's already made overtures about wanting to get his hands on you."

He pleaded with her to see the situation from his perspective. "Please, love, take a Healing Potion and hear me out." He knew the potion wouldn't stop the effects of the curse completely but it would buy enough time to hopefully get her to see reason. "If you don't like what I have to say you can wait for the potion to leave your system while I go collect some witches."

"You're a Fucking Monster!" She yelled in frustration.

"That may be, but hear me out. Please. There is a lot I haven't told you yet."

It was true, Hermione knew nothing about his work to undermine Voldemort's army and his assassination attempts. She had no idea how much he gave up to keep her safe in the castle and by his side. He kept it all from her to keep her safe.

She took a stuttered breath, he knew how painful the curse was and didn't want to imagine what it felt like to move through your system so slowly. Something changed in her expression and he watched her walk to the shelves and pull down a red potion. She steadied herself with her back to him. Draco assumed she considered her options. Then, thankfully she uncorked the potion and tipped it down her throat.

"Go ahead and say what you have to say. You probably bought yourself an hour," she sneered.

----- ----Hermione----

Hermione ran a big risk and she knew it. She had absolutely no intention of taking her life but bet that Malfoy's desire to keep her alive might force him to heed her demands.

Unfortunately, though, he wanted to Slytherin his way into a negotiation. Hermione barely tolerated the excruciating pain creeping across her skin. She knew she couldn't put up with the pain for long. *If that fucker tries to kill a witch I will grab...* She scanned the shelves for something deadly, *Bloodroot! That will do the trick! It moves quickly, he won't have time to go get anyone. I'll act like I'm going to take a sip.*

She knocked back some healing potion and felt temporary relief from the pain before saying, "What the hell do you need to tell me?"

"Come close to the door and let me make sure the potion stopped your bleeding,"

"Not a chance. You'll have to take my word for it."

"Afraid your *impenetrable wards* aren't as strong as you suggest?" He asked menacingly.

She stared at him and said, "Get on with it."

"How do these wards work?"

"Malfoy!"

"Watch it, love." His reprimand snapped in the air causing gooseflesh to climb up Hermione's arm. "You forget yourself. I plan to get you out of this lab alive and when that happens you will still be in *my* fucking castle, with *my* army." With a final look of a cool calculation, Malfoy warned, "I suggest you remember my name."

"Goddammit, *DRACO*, Is this really the conversation you wanted to have right now?"

"What I meant was, can I pass objects through to you?"

"No." She stated quickly but didn't really know if that was true.

"What about memories?" He tilted his chin and Hermione turned to see the Pensieve resting on a shelf.

"What memories?" She asked curiously.

"I don't want to try and persuade you. You'll never believe me. See for yourself." He said and he pulled a long strain of silvery wisps from his temple and sent it through the ward. It glided into the room easily and Malfoy smirked, in triumph.

Hermione wanted to look as though she was playing along and in truth, she was interested to see what he thought might change her mind. She turned and grabbed the Pensieve before walking toward the floating memories and catching them in the bowl. Then she walked back to the small desk and sat. She dipped her face into the swirling, iridescent, liquid and felt herself fall.

This trip through Malfoy's memories felt vastly different from the other times he gave her access to his past. Each time that he allowed her to view his interactions with her parents, they landed in one scene, in one time period, and watched a full memory from start to finish. This however looked more like a muggle movie montage except without the music. He gave her multiple memories over many years to show a theme of hidden behaviors. After a rush of memories circled her the scene finally landed on one.

Firstly, Hermione landed in the dungeons outside of Professor Snape's classroom. Malfoy waited to enter Potion's class and several other students lined up as well. Hermione noticed that she, Harry, and Ron stood several feet away. Her chest hurt from the sight of her two best friends.

"Did you finish your essay on Strengthening Solutions, Ronald?" Her younger self nagged.

"Mione, bugger off! You're not my mum!" Ron snapped back. "And I'll let you know that yes, I have! I plan to learn all I can about this potion, it sounds right useful!"

Just then Malfoy coughed a laugh. "You would need a Strengthening Solution, Weasley"

Ron's ears turned red and he glared at Malfoy saying, "Your priggish mum thinks I'm strong enough!"

Just then Snape let them into the room. Hermione followed everyone in and stood near Malfoy. She noticed that he stared at the table ahead of him where she, Ron, and Harry sat. "Why does that asshole always have to butt into our conversations!?" Ron spat.

"Ignore him, Ronald. He knows how to get under your skin." She cautioned. At that, Ron attempted to kick the leg of the table in frustration but missed and slammed his foot into her bag instead. She pulled out her homework and found it dripping with ink. Ron's outburst broke her pottery inkwell.

Hermione felt a rush of irritation for Ron. She remembered the moment well. The inkwell was a gift from her grandmother. She repaired it but it always held tiny cracks after that day.

The memory dissolved into a new moment and Hermione found herself standing in what looked like Malfoy's dorm room. *He had a private room!? Of course, he did, the privileged git!* Malfoy stood by the desk. He had a new inkwell in his hands. He turned it over and over again, staring at it intently saying, "Granger, I thought you might need this--," "Here, know-it-all!" ... "Hermione--" He set the copper pot down in frustration, "What the fuck am I doing?"

A swirl of memories enveloped her again and Hermione landed in Malfoy Manor. She watched as Malfoy's parents sacrificed him to the Dark Lord and recoiled in disgust as Voldemort branded Malfoy painfully. The scene jumped forward and Malfoy kneeled in front of Voldemort looking terrified.

"I have a job for you Draco."

"Y-yes, My Lord."

She watched as Voldemort set Malfoy the task of murdering Dumbledore. Hermione felt sickened by the way Voldemort threatened Malfoy's entire family to get him to obey.

Another shift and Hermione found herself in the castle corridors walking alongside Malfoy. They approached a corner and she heard Harry say, "I know it was him! He gave that necklace to Katie!" Malfoy stopped in his tracks.

"Harry you're too obsessed with Malfoy. Leave him be, he looks like he's going through something really tough this year. It can't be easy for his family after what happened at the ministry last year. I think it's about time you ended this idiotic grudge and tried to bury the

hatchet! Who knows, maybe he isn't so bad once you get to know him," she heard herself say.

Malfoy placed his back against the wall and rested his head on the cold stones. He closed his eyes in what looked like relief. Hermione didn't know what to make of it but assumed that the older Malfoy wanted to show her that the moment meant a lot to him.

Again another shift and Hermione saw herself running through the castle at the Battle of Hogwarts, Malfoy was enough of a distance away that her younger self didn't realize he followed her, casting spell after spell to protect her from harm.

Shift

Hermione stood on the stones outside the castle as the sun rose and Voldemort's army crossed the grounds. Malfoy stood behind her, his eyes glued to her. She saw his hands move as if to grab her robe but he wasn't quick enough as she Apparated away.

Shift

Malfoy stood in his Manor watching as Death Eaters dragged Order member after Order member into the ballroom and Voldemort Avada'd every last one of them. Hermione noticed his shaking hands as he watched Fleur, Luna, and Cho all fall to the ground, eyes wide in death.

Shift

"What's the report?" Malfoy barked to a Death Eater guard. They were standing in the Great Hall at Hogwarts.

"There is only one location within a 50-mile radius of her home that saw magical activity over the past three weeks. We scanned the area using the dark magic you taught us." The Death Eater responded shakily.

"And? where was it?"

"An abandoned school."

"Post someone there. I want to know if anyone returns to that spot."

Shift

Malfoy sat at a long table at Voldemort's right. "The only unaccounted for Order members are George, Ginny, and Bill Weasley, Potter's mudblood, and Dedalus Diggle." A Gnarly-looking Death Eater reported.

"I call the mudblood when we find her!" Fenrir snarled. "Bellatrix promised her to me a year ago and I want to cash in."

Hermione watched as Malfoy gripped his wand tighter under the table.

Shift

Malfoy stood in front of an elf. "You will take this poison and place it in the Dark Lord's drink and Greyback's drink. You will not be seen and you won't tell anyone what I've asked of you."

"Yes, Master Malfoy."

Hermione stood shocked at the realization that Malfoy tried to murder Voldemort.

Shift

Malfoy stalked around her childhood bedroom glancing at photos, and knick knacks.

Shift

Malfoy stood in the Forest of Dean holding her beaded bag.

Shift

Malfoy walked up to a Presbyterian church in Perth, Australia.

Shift

Malfoy stood at his desk in the library of his chambers. He poured over maps and notes. A Floo-call drew his attention and as he walked out of the room he transferred the items to a drawer. Hermione saw a copper inkpot and a small watercolor still-life that she painted for her parents during the summer holidays between her fifth and sixth years.

Shift

Malfoy stood in the dungeons at Hogwarts with the two Death Eaters that ambushed her and Phin at the school.

"What happened to you? Why did you leave your post?" Malfoy demanded.

"Sir? What post?"

"Listen, you idiots, I'm missing a very important dinner engagement to be here. I don't have time for this shit."

Malfoy waved his hand and dove into the mind of the Death Eaters one by one. When he pulled out he grabbed each of their wands in turn and said, "Priori Incantatem!" Hermione watched as a stunning spell produced from one of the wands and Avada Kadavra, the other. Malfoy looked incredibly suspicious. Suddenly, rushed footsteps approached down the corridor.

A Death Eater General entered the room and said, "Sir. we received word that you need to head to your home. Voldemort—"

Malfoy turned, concern etched on his face. "Voldemort what?" he asked dangerously.

"He—killed your parents, Sir. and your aunt and uncle."

Shift

Malfoy rummaged through Harry's old vault at Gringotts and fisted a gold Galleon.

Shift

Malfoy, looking stronger and more formidable, stood in the banquet hall of a grand estate. Voldemort sat on a large throne hunched over and scowling.

"We found the Mudblood, Sir."

"After all these yearssss?" Voldemort looked slightly surprised.

"Yes, she boarded a train and Death Eaters spotted her when her disguise faltered." He took a breath. "I'd like to keep her."

"No. I want her handled once and for all. Bring her to me."

"My Lord, If I may, the Mudblood aided Potter and allowed him to stand against you for far too long. I would like to keep her to show her where muggles and mudbloods belong—at the feet of wizards"

"Hmm...Can you control her?"

"Yes, my Lord, she is quite weak and you know my magical skills are great. She will heed my demands and regret she ever aided the resistance." Malfoy sneered.

Suddenly Voldemort spat " Legilimens!" and Malfoy screamed out in pain. Several minutes passed before Voldemort pulled from his mind.

"You clearly have a grudge against her that you need to sate. Sssso many years of hatred toward one witch."

"I hated what she aspired to, My Lord, and what she represented."

"Very well. Although if I hear of any trouble from her I'll expect her in front of me."

"Yes, Sir. Of course."

"And, Draco, if I am giving you thisss gift, I expect you to give me what you've held from me in the past."

Malfoy looked pained and concerned.

Voldemort continued, "You've risen in power to a place of great honor. You are a valuable servant. However, with this powerful witch, I don't want you to get any ideas of trying to overthrow me."

"Sir. I'd never!"

"I want an unbreakable vow that you won't try to usurp my power. Not that you'd get very far in your effortssss, but still."

"Yes, My Lord."

Shift

Again at Voldemort's estate. Malfoy placed his hand on a fireplace mantel taking deep heavy breaths.

"You are quite harsh with her, Draco. I daresay she may regret that you got her and not I," Voldemort laughed.

"I needed a plaything, My Lord." He huffed, clearly having just experienced another aggressive search of his memories.

Shift

"My Lord, I grow bored with the Mudblood's fight and wit. I want to bond her to me so that I can make her more compliant. Do I have your permission?"

"You want to bond to thisss filth?" Voldemort's eyebrow raised.

"Yes, I believe the act will break her when she realizes the totality of my control over her," Draco responded coldly.

"I don't know. If you bond and she dies you die with her. I don't want to lose my greatest soldier. In a ssssense, the act protects her from harm instead of inflicting it. No one would dare try to kill her knowing they would also kill my most devoted follower."

"Yes, but that is the beauty of it. She will know that I intend to keep her locked away, torturing her for the rest of my life. I will enjoy watching her realize that there won't be an escape for her ever. She still holds out hope. I do not plan for her to be killed by me or anyone. I plan to keep her for a very long time."

"You are sssick, Draco," Voldemort said with a mean smile. "Fine. If you feel so strongly about drawing out the Mudblood's torture."

Shift

Malfoy stood in Dumbledore's former office. A Death Eater that Hermione didn't recognize stood in front of him.

"Imperio!" Draco snarled. "You will go to Paris with the rest of the regiment. When you protect the Dark Lord but his back is turned you will kill him. As soon as you cast the killing curse you will end your own life."

"Yes, Sir." the Death Eater agreed in a monotone voice.

Hermione's jaw dropped. *THAT's why Voldemort tortured him.*

The memories dissolved and Hermione felt herself land on the floor of the Potion's Lab. She felt a strong searing pain in her arms and legs and knew the Healing Spell weakened. She stared at Malfoy for a long moment clutching her forearm and hunching over.

"You tried to kill him twice?" She asked

"I never stopped working against him."

She considered him for a long time but knew she needed to make a move soon. The healing spell would soon wear off completely and she didn't want to let the curse spread further.

"Remove the trace, give me back my magic and I will help you kill him. I know how."

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "In my mind by Dynoro & Gigi D'Agostino"

Chapter 17: "Mia"

Chapter Summary

Information on where Phin was while Hermione starved and on how Hermione's negotiating tactics turn out.

Chapter Notes

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

-----Phin-----

Phin stood in the center of the castle kitchens with an unconscious and bloody Death Eater at his feet and another one cowering several yards away.

"Please, Sir. i...it wasn't my idea. I just did as I was told," the scared guard stuttered.

"I don't want to hear it," Phin barked before hexing him and watching as the man fell to the ground near his companion.

He turned and rested his back against the wooden prep station then threaded his hand through his hair and felt exhaustion creep through him as if it were embedded in his bones. Over the past six nights, he hardly slept. In fact, he barely went back to his chambers. Instead, he prowled around the castle with anxious and desperate energy, looking for any way to help Mia.

For nearly a month since Mia's birthday dinner, Phin reported to Draco's office each morning. He briefed Draco on the murmurings of Death Eaters around the castle and received his orders for the day. He ached to see Mia again but knew she likely still fumed over what she heard at their dinner. He wanted nothing more than to get her alone to talk. He needed to verify her safety and reassure her that what happened with Ginny was not of his choice.

The idea that Mia stood just beyond the bookshelf, yet unreachable, sent angry shivers up his arms each morning as he listened to Draco drawl on about strategies and plans.

In addition to his duties of spying on Death Eaters around the castle, Phin and Draco worked each day to devise ways to increase the Anti-Apparition wards throughout Britain. So far, the wards covered all of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, and Wales. However, Mt. Ben Nevis's high and rocky terrain caused the magic to falter leaving a vulnerability to the regime in Scotland.

To place the wards, the Death Eaters set dark artifacts around the United Kingdom and spelled them to transmit the magical signature over large distances. Draco oversaw the collection of these rare, dark, artifacts. Once they arrived on shipments each month he charged his men with prepping and installing them. So far the Death Eaters failed four times at placing and transmitting the magical fields over the mountain.

The last shipment of artifacts arrived the night Phin and Ginny ate dinner with Draco and Mia. Draco, along with Phin's help, organized the men to cleanse and prep the items for placement, an involved process that required a full moon cycle. Last Friday, while Phin and Draco surveyed the progress, Draco made an off-handed comment that caused Phin concern.

"The calcification phase seems to be advancing nicely," Phin mentioned by way of making small talk. Draco said nothing. "The pieces should be ready to install in a few days," He continued but Draco wasn't listening. "Voldemort will be pleased once the country is finally locked down." He said, trying to get Draco's attention. In truth, Phin looked for ways to subvert the process knowing the successful installation made escape by Apparition impossible.

"Mmm, sorry, what?" Draco asked.

"The wards. Won't he be happy?" Phin asked again while stepping back to observe Draco's reaction. It wasn't like him to be so distracted.

"Yes, he will," Draco stated, coming out of his daydream.

"Lost in thought, Drake?"

"I'm just thinking about--. Theo, on the run, you and your witch argued a lot about leaving and settling down in a quiet village somewhere?"

Was that a question? Yes, fucker, we did. Phin continued to stare at Draco perplexed. "Thinking about running away with Granger?" He teased, mining for more information. *Sweet Salazar, please let that not be the case.*

"Not running away, no! I wouldn't do a cowardly thing like that." Draco said with a pointed look. "But there might be a time when I'm no longer needed here. It would be nice to settle down somewhere and forget all this. I guess in that sense I can see the appeal."

Phin stewed over Draco's comments all day and into the night. He stomped around the castle for hours pretending to work then headed back to his living quarters late in the evening to avoid Ginny. She hadn't spoken to him in weeks and they mostly spent their time together trying to stay out of each other's way. In fact, the only time they talked at all since Phin forced himself on her was the evening that they returned from eating at Draco's.

Phin stomped into the chambers, pissed that Ginny told Hermione everything but also livid with himself for giving Ginny reason to get him in trouble. Ginny walked to the table and sat down sneering, "Well, can I have my magic back?"

Phin wanted to scream at her. *You tried to turn Mia against me! You likely made my plans to free her even harder and now you have the gall to request your magic back!? I said I would give it back if you didn't blow up my plans. Well, so much for that! I should fucking tell you no!*

"Yeah, of course." He waved his wand and felt her magic leave his body as he watched her relax, the tension and fight leaving her shoulders and her expression showing astonishment and relief. They stared at each other for a long moment. Both of them knew, without Phin needing to say it, that if Ginny used her magic to get in his way again he would take it back in an instant.

In a wholly inadequate attempt to make amends for his horrible abuse of power he let her have the bedroom and took to sleeping on the couch, not caring enough to transfigure a bed each night. Since that night she mostly stayed in her room, which was fine with Phin.

He crept into the chambers and through the bedroom to take a shower and get ready for bed then moved quietly back downstairs, so as not to wake Ginny. Afterward, he laid on the couch willing himself to sleep but found that Draco's musings made sleep impossible.

What the hell did he mean by 'there may be a time when he isn't needed here?' What does he have planned? If he runs with Mia I'll...

Devastated, he stopped that train of thought, because if Draco chose to run with Mia, Phin knew there wasn't a damn thing he could do to stop him. After tossing and turning for hours Phin finally dozed off just before dawn only to be awoken by an owl at the window a short while later.

Phin took the note from its claws and shooed the bird back out the window with a knut and a grunt then sat down to read.

Theo, I've been called away. I'm not sure how long I'll be gone. Keep the castle running until I get back.

Phin stared at the note in dismay. *No mention of Mia. Fuck! Did he run with her or is she still up in his chambers?*

He dressed and headed to Draco's office under the guise of needing to get plans in order due to Draco's absence. He growled the password that Draco gave him several weeks prior, "Jean", *Fucker*, and ran up the spiral staircase. Once in the office, he stood in front of the bookcase, breathing heavily and listening intently for any sign of life beyond the walls. He heard nothing, though realistically he knew the wards prevented noise from reaching his ears. He placed his arm on the dusty shelves, his forearms straining, then fisted his hands and hit the door in frustration. He smelled the musty scent of old books and ached to know what happened to Mia.

For five days, he sat in Draco's office whenever sure his absence wasn't suspicious. He stared at the bookcase and tried to devise a way into his chambers. *I have to get inside to find out if she is still there or if he took off with her.* He knew the wards Draco placed on the door were

considerable and that any interference with them would be noticeable so he didn't dare try to get through.

He walked out to the grounds and spent hours staring up into the windows hoping to see Mia in the window seat reading but she never showed. He even tried Disillusioning himself and flying up to the windows on a bloody broomstick but found that Draco placed a repealing charm on his chambers. Once Phin was in the air he became confused and never found the correct window.

Just after midnight, Friday morning, Phin lay in bed unable to fall asleep for his worry, when he suddenly shot up with a realization. *If she's here she has to be eating!* Phin figured out that he might be able to get a note to Mia if he somehow placed it along with her food.

Energized by his idea he stormed down to the kitchens to speak with the Death Eaters in charge of meals. He knew it would require Obliviating the Death Eater afterward and he didn't give a damn.

He tickled the pear and slammed open the door to the kitchens scanning the room for anyone who may know something about the food being sent to Mia.

"You!" He yelled at a man standing in front of a woodfire-oven watching as the morning's bread baked.

The Death Eater turned around in surprise at the sight of Phin in the kitchens and Phin distinctly caught fear in his eyes. "Yes, Sir.?"

"I want to know about the food that you've been providing to Malfoy's witch." *Please, tell me that she is here.*

Now the Death Eater clearly looked terrified. "I, uh...it wasn't my idea Sir."

Just then another man walked around the corner from a back room, carrying a tray of pastries. He took in the sight of Phin and the scared looking co-worker and quickly assumed Phin's purpose for being there. He spat out, "Listen, ever since that bitch arrived we've all been living on the edge wondering when Malfoy might off one of us. We didn't mean anything by it, we just thought maybe if she weren't in the picture things might go back to normal around here."

Phin felt angry and confused. "What the fuck are you talking about?" He quickly grabbed the Death Eater who recently placed his tray of pastries on the table. Phin fisted his throat and dove into his mind watching as the two men argued for several days about the dangers and benefits of not feeding Mia.

She's here! Phin felt a rush of relief shortly followed by *Holy Shit! She hasn't eaten in five bloody days!*

He pulled from the Death Eater's mind, tightened his grip, and growled, "Send that food up to her, NOW!" All thoughts of communicating with Mia flew out the window in Phin's realization that she needed to eat immediately.

The Death Eater vanished the tray of pastries up to Mia and as soon as it left Phin hexed him with a blood-curdling spell he knew to be extremely painful but not lethal. The man screamed in agony for several minutes before passing out.

After hexing the second man Phin immobilized the Death Eaters and levitated them into the dungeons, slamming and locking the door. He then marched back up to his chambers.

He grabbed a Firewhiskey and slumped down on the couch, hanging his head between his legs in frustration. *We promised to keep one another safe and I've been traipsing around the castle while she slowly starved.* Phin's guilt nearly ate him alive.

He thought back to their life on the run. A night several years ago where he almost got caught by some Death Eaters because he strayed too long in front of a muggle shop considering a necklace for Mia. She freaked out when he didn't return on-time and Phin calmed her nerves but didn't admit to her how close he came to never returning.

1999

"You dropped into my life and made me love you. I don't think I can live without you anymore. You can't ever leave." Mia implored.

She straddled his legs and he felt himself harden at their closeness. He leaned forward and kissed her deeply feeling her warm breath on his lips and tasting the sweetness of her mouth. "We're safe; we have a plan," he said as much for his own relief as hers. "It was just a couple entry-level Death Eater idiots. I love you."

Phin reached down between them and into Mia's shorts. He felt her soft skin as he brushed aside her knickers and dipped his fingers into her wetness. The feeling of her arousal caused his throbbing cock to ache with anticipation. He brushed his fingers along her clit and she shuddered against his lips.

"No more solo excursions. We're safer together," she said pulling back to look deep into his eyes. Phin loved her honey-colored irises and the way that they saw through him into his core.

"Okay, Mia. You protect me, I'll protect you and that's how we'll make it out of this alive." He agreed, brushing aside her gorgeous locks and bending his head to suck lightly on her earlobe. She moaned sweetly in response and Phin began the slow and seductive work of unbuttoning her blouse. Each inch of exposed skin caused him to strain and ache with want. He kept a finger on her wet clit and moved his other hand into her bra teasing her hardened nipple and palming her large tits.

"Fuck, Phin, your hands, they're amazing," she breathed.

He loved everything about this woman but watching her come undone on his hands, writhing back and forth and telling him how he made her feel--that was perfection.

He vanished her clothes and watched her magnificent, naked body move over his straining pants looking for release. She kissed him hard and moved away for just long enough to lift his shirt over his head. Phin felt her tits brush against his skin and groaned appreciatively. He could see the wetness she left on his pants and it caused him to close his eyes in want. "Mia!"

She unbuckled his belt and dragged his zipper down before reaching her small hand into his pants and encircling it around his shaft. The added pressure was just what he needed. He lifted his hips as they worked to pull his pants down just far enough to release him. Mia sank down slowly on his cock and Phin felt the tight embrace of her walls. He moved his thumb along her clit in time with her movements as she pushed and pulled her wet quim over his hard dick.

They moved slowly, savoring the safety and closeness. They were together in their home, they had all the time in the world. Phin felt her rise and fall over him again, and again, and again, as she mewled with pleasure from his hand at her core.

"I'm close Phin. Unggg."

"Shh! Mia, not yet. Fuck, you feel so good. You know I'll take care of you. I'll tell you when to let go."

He loved the feeling of her barely held back release. Loved the way it made her walls shake and tremble, clamping down on his cock. Loved the way it caused her arms to tighten against him and her breath to falter. He held on as long as possible, he chased that exquisite moment just before they let go.

"Please, Phin" She crooned while gliding her hands up his neck and into his hair.

He savored the anticipation a moment longer feeling his balls tighten in preparation for an intense release.

"Okay, Mia. gods!

They came hard together. Mia's tight pussy milking his cock. Phin exploded within her and felt his seed gush over and over inside her. Mia's nipples tightened and her clit throbbed on his thumb as she called out his name in ecstasy.

"Mia," he breathed heavily savoring the aftershocks, his cock still deep within her. "Mia," He tilted her head up and met her eyes clouded with pleasure. "You are it for me. There's only you, only us, forever."

She bent and rested her forehead on his bare shoulder pulling in deep breaths. Phin felt their damp warm bodies fitting together perfectly.

"Forever." She agreed.

-----Hermione-----

She waited for a long beat as the pain continued to pulsate through her body. *Come on, Malfoy!*

Finally, he asked quietly, "What do you mean you know how to kill him? If that were true wouldn't Potter still be alive?"

"Remove the trace. I'm not saying anything else until you do." Hermione demanded. She glared at him and felt her arms and legs begin to turn numb.

Malfoy's eyes tightened, "You'll have to lower the wards first, sweetheart."

"No. Find another way to do it, or this negotiation ends."

Malfoy stared at her with fire in his eyes for a moment longer. Hermione felt the bleeding in her arms pick up and her vision blur. She knew she didn't have long before she passed out. Malfoy surveyed her condition then stormed away angrily. Hermione moved closer to the door to see where he went and heard him rummaging around in the library.

He returned a moment later holding a rusty knife. "You'll need this to complete the spell. It can't be done unless *I* cut you and administer the spell while holding your hand. It's cast like an unbreakable vow," he said with an eyebrow raised in challenge.

DAMNIT! Hermione wanted to hold out further. She wanted to be sure that he removed the trace before she breached the ward. However, Snape's curse continued its slow assault on her body and she was no longer able to tolerate the pain. She turned, considering another swig of Healing Potion but moved too quickly and felt a rush of lightheadedness hit her as she stumbled.

Malfoy grabbed her arm as it brushed through the barrier and the last thing she remembered was him singing, "Vulnera Sanentur, Vulnera Sanentur..." as she blacked out.

Hermione came to and realized she was back in Malfoy's bedroom. Her head hurt and her limbs felt heavy. Malfoy sat in the armchair at the corner of the room, his large legs spread wide in front of him and his forearms stretched across the armrests. Hermione internally cowered at the murderous look in his eyes.

She slowly sat up and said, "Draco, I..."

"Healer Garred just left. You and I both needed tending. You've been out for several hours."

"Okay." She bent her head in response to his anger, as she did she noticed that he held her wand.

"You were *inches* from death," he said with venom in his voice.

"You administered the counter-curse?"

"Yes."

She lifted her eyes cautiously to meet his and asked, "Did you return my magi—?"

"Let me be very clear. If you ever pull a stunt like that again I will burn this castle to the ground with all your precious witches inside."

Hermione felt tears of anger and fear well up in her eyes as Malfoy pushed up from his chair and strode across the room in two large steps. He towered over her threateningly and reached a hand out to turn her eyes to his then said with cold viciousness, "Then I'll take a trip to Australia. Do you understand me?"

Her heart stopped and she nodded obediently

"You imperiused me?" He asked, almost rhetorically.

She nodded again

"How did you get your magic?"

"You gave it to me when you were dying. I...I saved you," she lied. She did save him but Malfoy didn't give her back her magic. *My theory was right! A surge of emotion worked but it has to be combined with a weakening of Malfoy's magical core.*

"And then you threatened me with your own life," He observed darkly.

"It was the only way you'd listen. Draco, I *have* to have my magic back. No food ever arrived while you were gone! I sat in our home, unable to get out and unable to call for help, for FIVE days without any food." She quickly calculated this most palatable explanation for her actions.

A pained expression crossed Malfoy's features. "Nott told me. He only found out tonight. I've dealt with the responsible Death Eaters."

"I need my magic to protect myself. You won't always be around!" She pleaded.

"From now on I will be."

"You won't! You weren't around when Derrick attacked me and you weren't around when I spent the past five days lying in this bloody bed, hoping to last long enough for you to come home." She saw him flinch. "What about your fucking memories! Why share those with me if nothing is going to change?"

"What do you know about killing Voldemort. If you are telling the truth then I'll give you back your magic..."

Hermione's heart leapt. *There's still hope?*

"...after I kill him.." Malfoy continued.

What!?

"...AND we've bonded."

GODDAMNNIT!

"Until then, you will have me or someone else with you at all times."

Great. Hermione knew forcing Malfoy's hand was a risk. She didn't trust his declaration about giving back her magic and removing the trace. But, with Voldemort out of the picture she now felt confident that she could find a way to escape. Malfoy's biggest weakness was his concern for her safety. It was possible to find other ways to exploit that vulnerability.

"You've really tried to kill him twice already?" She asked tentatively. She saw the memories for herself but she still found it hard to believe.

"I showed you my memories." He said with frustration.

"Yes, but your memories also suggest that you only treat me the way you do out of concern for my safety. Once he's gone will you let me decide for myself how I live?" She asked pointedly.

"Once Voldemort is gone and we are bound you will be freer to live your life. I'll take us away from here, to someplace nice. We can leave behind the pressures of this world."

Well, that answers my question.

"And if I don't want that life for myself?"

Malfoy took a step back and stared at her intently. "If you're asking whether I will let you go once Voldemort is gone the answer is no. We've proven we can live together peaceably. I decided a long time ago that I would have you and that isn't going to change. However, I will be free to treat you more kindly without fear of retribution. I want that for us. Once we are bonded our combined magical cores will warm you to the idea of our union."

YOU decided a long time ago!?

Hermione fumed but knew that more than anything Voldemort needed to die. It's what Harry and nearly everyone she ever loved gave their lives for. She took a big breath and let out a long sigh.

"None of your assassination attempts will ever work because Voldemort hid parts of his soul in Horcruxes to maintain his immortality."

Malfoy looked shocked. "How many?"

"Six. Well, seven if you count the one he made unintentionally, which was Harry himself."

He took another step back with wide eyes and Hermione continued, "That's what Harry, Ron, and I were doing on the run. We tracked down all but one Horcrux before Voldemort killed Harry. If you destroy the last one he'll be mortal again and you can kill him."

Malfoy walked over to the low dresser and leaned against it in thought. "It could be anything, anywhere. How the hell, will I find it?"

It hurt to give up this information but Hermione knew in her soul that the time was right. This was the moment. Malfoy wanted to kill Voldemort, he had access to him, he might actually be able to do it. Though, first, she needed to let him know where to find the last Horcrux.

"I found it already." She admitted and his eyes shot back to hers. "It's here in the castle. I saw it on one of our walks."

"Ah, yes, one of your innocent nostalgia tours. There's the real reason we stalked around the entire castle for months." He said derisively.

In the end, Hermione told Malfoy where to find the Horcrux, what it was, and how to destroy it. After she finished he walked to her at the bed again, grabbed a fistful of her hair at the base of her neck, and sneered, "You didn't eat for five days. You obviously weren't of sound mind." Malfoy stared at her knowingly.

I guess that is the story we are going with.

He added, "You will never try anything like that again. I've now killed four Death Eaters for you. Don't force me to start on the witches as well."

Hermione nodded.

The next afternoon Malfoy worked at his desk and Hermione read in a chair. An owl flew in through an open window in the library and dropped a note in front of him. Malfoy dismissed the bird, read the letter, then turned to Hermione sighing deeply.

"It's rotten timing but I need to leave again for a few nights."

Despite herself, Hermione felt a sharp twinge of fear. Malfoy, unfortunately, represented a certain level of safety. She didn't want to be near him but she also didn't want him to go.

"What? So soon?"

"Yes, I regret it but there's an important mission that I must oversee personally. Voldemort demanded that I go myself this time. You'll be safe, I promise. I'll be back in two days."

Malfoy readied himself as Hermione paced around the bedroom anxiously fearing another two days locked in his chambers alone. Just like last time, he walked her to the door before

leaving and kissed her hard. This time he warned, "When I return, I expect a warmer welcome than the one I received last night."

The door shut behind him and Hermione noticed that Malfoy called for food before he left even though it was 3:00 PM. She turned to find the table full of fresh fruit and vegetables along with plenty of shelf-stable items like crackers and nuts.

She nibbled on the food for a while before moving the items off the table and into multiple places around the living quarters. She placed some cashews on top of shelves in the library, crackers under the bed, and grapes and carrots along the mantel. She didn't want to risk any food vanishing away when she didn't finish it all at in one sitting.

When reassured that she would be able to eat in Malfoy's absence, Hermione grabbed a book and spent the rest of the day in the window seat. To her great relief, dinner arrived promptly at 8:00 PM. She enjoyed a warm bowl of cheddar and potato soup with thick crusty bread before deciding to take a shower and head to bed.

The hot water felt comforting across her skin and she began to relax further. Afterward, she pulled on a silk nightgown and crawled into bed to continue reading. At 11:00 PM she walked out to the living room to extinguish the lamps but as she exited the bedroom she stopped dead in her tracks.

Phin stood at the door, his muscular body tense and alert. He carried a pained expression that shot straight through Hermione's carefully constructed indifference. She drew a quick breath and the sound of it caused him to turn and meet her gaze. Phin took in her appearance scanning for signs of harm and finding none, let out a sigh of relief. He dragged his hand through his hair and reverently whispered, "Mia."

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Candleburn by Dishwalla"

Chapter 18: Fidelity

Chapter Summary

Hermione and Phin spend time together in Draco's absence.

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year, Everyone! Here is that latest installment. As an update, we are coming close to the end of the second out of three parts. I think this story will end up being about 130K if my chapter average remains the same. Thanks for all the support! You all rock!

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

-----Hermione-----

"Mia," Phin whispered, and before she put together a coherent thought, Hermione found herself running across the room to him. *Malfoy left, and Phin is here!* His expression showed a deep love for her, and all Hermione wanted was to escape into his embrace.

She vaguely registered the sounds of her bare feet hitting against the stone floors or the feel of her tight nipples under her silk nightgown as the cool air of the room passed over her skin.

She nearly made it to him, but three feet from her destination, he put out a large hand in warning.

"No! Mia! Stop!"

Caught off guard, she screeched to a halt and took in a breath as her logic caught up with her. "He'll know," she said out loud and out of breath as she realized the meaning of his outstretched hand. She turned her curious eyes to meet his sad expression and asked, "How?"

"The betrothal necklace holds a fidelity charm,"

Hermione raised a hand to brush against the metal around her neck.

"Pureblood families include that charm in their engagement jewelry," he finished.

Hermione felt foolish. *Of course, they do.* She stepped backward and wrapped her arms around her waist with hunched shoulders. Suddenly she remembered her conversation with Ginny, Phin's laughter with Malfoy that same night, and his utter lack of attention as she starved.

"What are you doing here anyway?" She asked in a cutting tone.

"He told me to check on you each morning and night while he's away." He paused while looking her over. "Mia, are you okay?"

Hermione caught a waver in his voice and raised her eyes to his again.

Phin tucked his hands into his pockets in frustration and said, "I spent the past four weeks dying to see you again. I'm so sorry! I didn't realize you weren't receiving food until last night." He implored again. "Are..are you okay?"

"No, Phin, I'm NOT bloody okay!" She stomped away to the couch as her own voice shook in anger.

Phin followed and sat on the edge of the chair across from her. His leg fidgeted nervously as he scanned her appearance from head to toe and then averted his eyes frustratedly.

She crossed her arms over her chest and scowled while waiting for him to respond. Phin was clearly agitated. His large arms moved back and forth over the tops of his legs. Eventually, his deep voice broke the silence, "Do you have a bathrobe or something you can put on?"

"What? Does my appearance disgust you now that you have your own captive to fuck?" She said with as much venom as she could muster.

Phin blanched. "How the hell could you think that of me, Mia!?" He spoke with his hands, something he always did when mad. "No! That isn't the case. You could never disgust me. I know we need to talk this out, but I can't do it while you're sitting there in bloody lingerie that Draco gave you!" He stared at her, and Hermione's anger melted infinitesimally. "I already want to murder him enough. I won't be able to think clearly."

He paused to take a breath and lowered his voice again in resignation. "So, can you please just go put something else on?" He pleaded while jutting a hand out toward the bedroom. "Then you can come back out here and eviscerate me for my horrible behavior, okay?" He ran his hand through his hair angrily and stared at the cold fireplace.

Hermione stood up and walked back to the bedroom. She grabbed her white jersey, robe from the hook on the wall. As she pulled the soft cloth over her shoulders, she took note of Malfoy's towel on the rack, his soap in the shower, his toothbrush. Though not there physically, his presence hung over every square inch of the space. She shivered at the thought of Malfoy finding out about her relationship with Phin. *That won't happen. It can't. Regardless of where we stand, it would be too dangerous for us both.*

With sufficient food in her stomach and more ability to think clearly, Hermione knew logically that Phin wasn't a Death Eater monster. She needed answers though, needed to hear

what he had to say about Ginny's accusations.

She walked back into the living room and sat down on the couch noticing, that in her absence, Phin lit the fire and lowered the lamps, domestic habits of his that she knew well. Each morning, as he woke, he pulled back the curtains in their tent. Each night he lit the fire. Late at night, he lowered the lamps. The actions were so ingrained in his behavior that she wondered if he even recognized that he did them here, in Malfoy's home. She suspected Phin's nervous energy caused him to need to do something in her absence.

"Satisfied?" She asked condescendingly

"Yes."

"Can I eviscerate you *now?*"

"Yes." He said again. His leg no longer twitched, but he still sat on the edge of his seat nervously.

"You raped Ginny?" She asked, and her stomach turned as his face fell, confirming her fears. "Why!? How could you?" She asked through tears in her eyes. "How could you do that to her? To us?"

Phin rested his elbows on his legs and hung his head in shame. His large frame reduced to a guilty mess. He steepled his fingers as if in prayer. "There's no excuse for my behavior. I'm vile. I can tell you the circumstances, but it doesn't change that fact."

Hermione crossed her arms and waited for him to continue. "I did it because it was expected of me, and I needed to keep up appearances to get us all out of here alive. I did it because it was the only way to seal the charm connecting Ginny and me. Doing so allowed me to give her magic back. I did it because she couldn't leave my chambers until I did, and I didn't want her to be imprisoned in the castle. It's not safe."

He lifted his head to look into her eyes, and Hermione saw his deep self-hatred. "But, at the end of the day, I did it because I cared more about my own wants than hers. I wanted to get to you and keep you safe more than I cared for her personhood. She hates me for it, I hate myself, and I understand why you hate me for it too. I'm sorry."

"No. That's not true." She said as the tears slid down her cheeks. "You didn't have to do it to seal the charm or for her to leave your chambers!" She sneered in anger. "Malfoy didn't force himself on me for two weeks, and I was able to leave. He took me to work and freely controlled my magic."

Phin looked as though she twisted a knife in his chest with her words. "Draco plays by his own rules. We tried relentlessly to get her out of my chambers, but nothing worked. Ginny told me herself the magic operated that way, and she was right."

Hermione saw the truth in Phin's eyes. She knew Malfoy wasn't bound by the same restrictions as the Death Eaters. She closed her eyes in grief and lamented all that this world took from them. Phin clearly hated himself for his actions, and Hermione had to admit that

though she still loved him deeply, she may never forgive him. She knew too personally what it meant to be raped. She couldn't just forgive and forget.

"Okay." She said eventually.

"Okay?" Phin asked, looking up. "That's it?"

"That's all I can give you right now. I see it eating away at you."

Phin looked pained and grateful simultaneously. There was a long pause where they both felt the weight of their circumstances. Finally, Phin shifted in his seat as Hermione said, "I love you, Phin."

She knew that he wouldn't ask her if she still cared about him, that he didn't feel he deserved to hear her answer. She also knew he needed her reassurance. She watched as the fine lines around his eyes loosened, and his chest rose and fell in appreciation.

"Though, where have you been? I haven't seen you since that night. I sat in this room, and I starved for days! Malfoy came home, and I..." She felt desperate to get it all out in the open, rip off the preverbal band-aid. "I threatened him by hurting myself and trying to force his hand. It didn't work. Where were you!?" She realized it wasn't right to place unreasonable expectations on him, that he likely couldn't get to her, but at that moment, she needed to share her frustrations.

"You what!? Mia, fuck! Draco has us around the neck right now. This isn't the time to try and fight. Leave that to me for once! And where have I been!? I've been right on the other side of that god-damned wall trying like hell to get to you!"

He stood and paced in front of the fire... "Please stay safe. I can't stand the idea...I'm holding on by a thread. I need you to take care of yourself."

Hermione shot him an incredulous look and stood up, walking over to him and standing by the fire as well. "I'm NOT safe! *We* aren't safe! I saw a moment, and I had to take it. I can't bond with him, Phin! Time is running out!"

Phin closed the distance between them and stopped within inches of her. He raised his hand as if to thread it through her hair and kiss her deeply but didn't follow through with the action. His hand shook in midair, and she felt the warmth from his body against her skin.

"I am going to find a way out of this." He growled while lowering his hand. "Please keep yourself as safe as possible in the meantime. Please, trust me."

She wanted to believe him more than anything in the world. She wanted to hold out hope for the quiet life they envisioned together. *What does it hurt me to believe for a little while longer?*

"Okay."

After the initial rush of emotions and explanations, she and Phin moved to the couch. They sat as close as possible without risking touch. Hermione curled her feet up under her body and faced Phin as he rested his arms against the back of the cushion.

They sat like that, talking for hours. Phin told Hermione how he escaped the Death Eaters at the abandoned school and what he did during their separation. Hermione told Phin about the misguided hopefulness that brought her to the castle. Phin asked her to tell him more about how she threatened Malfoy the previous night, and Hermione went into greater detail.

"He was dying, and I felt myself being pulled with him."

Phin grimaced. "Witches here die with the wizard that enslaves them unless the charm is severed. Draco told me that much."

"So it's like a marriage bond then? Malfoy showed me in his memories that the same thing would happen when we are bonded. Why bother bonding then?"

"Draco showed you memories?" He asked, surprised.

"Yes, several. I'll get to that later. Tell me what you know about the charm that allows you to control our magic. Is there really a trace?"

"Yes and no. There is a trace of sorts, but it only points the wizard in the general area. The spell is dark magic. It's like a marriage bond but not as permanent. With a marriage bond once the ceremony is complete a witch and wizard are bonded for life or in death. Also, a marriage bond allows the partners to pinpoint each other anywhere on earth." He paused, and they both looked uncomfortable, but Phin continued. "With this spell, Wizards can control a witch for as long or as short a time as they like. But if they die without severing the bond, the witch will die too. And, as I said, the trace isn't as exact."

"So with Ginny and Flint?" Hermione asked, and Phin finished her thought.

"The Death Eater's must-have forced Flint to sever the spell before they killed him. Draco clearly wanted her alive to win favor with you."

The talk of Ginny soured their conversation for a time. Hermione didn't forgive Phin for his actions against Ginny, but she accepted his truth. He explained his motivations a bit further, and Hermione listened closely. She knew Malfoy to be a conniving, controlling bastard and believed what Phin told her about how Malfoy used Ginny as another way for Phin to prove his trustworthiness. It was a test; Phin passed, and Ginny was collateral. Hermione grieved that Ginny was a pawn in Malfoy's many efforts to control those around him.

Phin explained that he wasn't violent with her and said that she gave herself over reluctantly, but Hermione changed the subject quickly because it felt too similar to her moments with Malfoy.

Their conversations moved to easier topics, and sometime during their stories, their hands moved to the cushion. Their fingers rested millimeters away from one another, the most comfort they could afford under the circumstances.

Before any hint of morning light hit the sky, they got up from their spot in front of the fire and reenacted a false scene in preparation for Malfoy's probing upon his return. Phin walked to the door and Hermione to the bedroom. Once in their respective places, he called out, "Granger?" then Hermione walked to the bedroom door, and Phin continued, "Malfoy requested that I verify your safety. Are you well?"

"Yes."

Afterward, Hermione pulled out the crackers and grapes, and they snacked in the window seat. They talked about how Hermione offered Malfoy her knowledge of the Horcrux and how to kill Voldemort. Then they worked together to develop a rough plan for Phin to use moving forward, careful not to actually *plan* anything in case Malfoy drugged Hermione again.

The time passed between them easily as they fell back into familiar patterns of behavior, small actions built slowly over years together. Phin noticed Hermione shiver and responded quickly by conjuring two cups of hot tea. Hermione noticed Phin roll his shoulder and suggested they move back to the fire. She knew that a bad incident with his father growing up led to nagging arthritis. On the run, they didn't have access to the appropriate potions to combat the injury, so she always encouraged him to heat the joint to offer pain relief.

As they walked to the fire, he smiled at her lopsidedly, and she said, "There's no need to live with that pain anymore. Go see Healer Garred."

Being with Phin felt like home, and Hermione, despite everything that happened between the two of them over the past year, wanted nothing more than to luxuriate in the feel of it. After their words ran out, they sat together staring into each other's eyes from time to time but mostly just enjoying the feeling of closeness.

Hermione loved Phin, his strength, his compassion, his loyalty. She thought over all of the gorgeous parts that made up his whole and decided that one thing stood out to her more than anything, something that she took for granted before. Phin wasn't threatened by her power and strength, he loved her for it. He never tried to extinguish her light or control it. He always wanted to stand alongside her as she shone brightly and she wanted that of him too. Together they were perfect equals in strength, power, and love.

Suddenly, Hermione felt overcome with the desire to control her circumstances. *Fuck, Malfoy.* She sat up on her heels and leaned forward, lowering the side of her robe off her shoulder and dragging her hand slowly up her thigh. Phin's eyebrows shot up in surprise, and she caught an anxious look etched in his eyes.

"Mia, we can't," he cautioned.

Hermione needed to feel control over her sexuality again. She needed to feel desired and loved by the person of her choosing. She untied her robe and leaned forward so that her breasts nearly fell out of her nightgown.

"We can't touch. But you can still make me cum. Please, Phin. I need this."

Phin paused for a moment, obviously considering the potential risks involved, and then, moved his eyes over her body and let out a deep sigh. He adjusted himself in his tightening pants and leaned back over her in acquiescence to her request. They moved in perfect tandem, their bodies within a tightly calculated distance, just far enough away to not engage the fidelity charm but close enough to feel heat, and tingling energy.

She moved backward as he straightened himself out over her and held his weight with one arm on the back of the couch and one arm on the armrest above her head. His leg moved between her thighs, and she pushed up the white silk to make room.

Phin leaned down and whispered in her ear, "Let me see you," and delicious shivers of excitement spread across her lower abdomen.

He made room and watched hungrily as she exposed her right breast, pulling it up over the fabric. Her nipples tightened at the sight of his arousal, and she gently bit down on her lower lip in response. She moved her gaze downward to his confined erection and then back up to his eyes tilting her head back slightly as if to say '*you next.*'

Phin lifted his hips, unbuckled his belt, and lowered his zipper. He gripped his thick, hard cock pulling it over his waistband. Then he pumped his dick slowly while leaning down and licking his lips so close to Hermione's stiff tit that the damp heat from his mouth skimmed across her skin, and Hermione easily imagined him taking it into his mouth.

"Fuck, I missed you," he groaned, and his hot breath teased her even further. "Take your hand and spread yourself wide so I can see your wet pussy."

Hermione's eyes rolled back in pleasure. She loved the sound of his deep voice and the way his words made her feel. She moved one hand to her sex, spreading her lips and caressing her folds with her middle finger. Then she moved her other hand to her chest and lazily squeezed her tight nipple. She felt the heat from his strong body and the movements of her hands as she took her time, letting the desire wash over her completely.

"Phin, do you remember that day on the beach near Windermere?" she mewled.

Phin ran his thumb over the tip of his cock and continued to move his large hand up and down his shaft. "That would be hard to forget." He leaned down again with an elbow on the armrest and his other hand wrapped around himself.

"I remember running my dick over your sweet folds and hitting your clit just right," he said as he pumped his cock within a razor-thin distance from her aching core. "I remember you shattering on my tongue..." he breathed next to her neck. "...and that I had to hastily cast a muggle-repealing ward because you screamed my name so loudly as you came."

"Fuck, Phin!" she moaned.

"Yeah, just like that."

Hermione continued the movements on her clit and felt a spike of recklessness as she pictured the closeness of his cock to her sex and how easy it would be for him to sink into

her. She wanted more, more contact, more connection. She ached to brush her fingers against his as they moved together, drawing out their release. She longed to throw caution to the wind and wrap her lips around his thick shaft and feel him come down her throat.

Phin began to breathe heavily. He increased the tempo of his hand on his cock and urged Hermione to give him more, saying, "Pump your fingers in and out of your cunt. I want to imagine myself spreading you wide."

Hermione groaned in satisfaction and dipped her middle and ring finger into her tight channel. She watched as Phin's eyes took in every inch of their slow movement.

"Grind your palm on your clit, Mia. We're back in the tent, and you're on my lap. My hand is in your knickers, and it's my thick fingers in your cunt. My rough palm on my clit, just the way you like it."

It was just the pressure she needed. Phin's words brought her right back to nights on the run, to countless moments where she shattered on his hands, cock, tongue. He knew just how to pull the right strings and make her body sing with pleasure.

She knew she was close and wanted to finish together. Breathing heavily, she lifted to his ear and whispered, "You're going to make me cum. Fuck, Phin. I want to feel you. I've missed this, us. I want to feel you inside of me. I want to drag my wet tongue up your cock and take your full length past my lips. I always loved the way you brushed the back of my throat."

"Damnit, Mia. I love your fucking dirty mouth. Unggg. Come for me, Mia. I want to see you come apart."

At that, Hermione pumped her fingers into her cunt a few more times and ground against her palm. She shattered, screaming, "Phin!" and watched as he shifted his hips and exploded into his hand, his cum dripping over his fingers and onto the couch.

They sat together, inches apart, breathing heavily for several minutes before Phin met her gaze, and they both broke into sweet laughter.

"God, I missed that," Phin admitted.

"Me too, thank you." Hermione breathed.

A moment passed, and suddenly their situation hit them again. Hermione sat up and pulled her nightgown straps up her shoulders. She tied her robe while Phin tucked himself back into his pants and vanished the mess.

Once settled, Hermione gazed out the window and noticed the sun beginning to peek over the trees. A deep sadness spread across her, and she said, "You should go. The longer you're here, the harder it will be to hide the memories."

Phin nodded and said, "I'll be back tonight. Get some sleep. I love you."

Phin waited as Hermione walked to the bedroom and changed clothes. In the time it took for her to return, the sun rose and welcomed the new day. Before leaving, they again enacted the

false memory.

"Granger, Are you well?"

"Yes."

They walked to the door, and Phin lowered his eyes shamefully, asking, "Should I remove Ginny's memories?"

"No." She responded definitively. "She'll know that she's missing time, and the confusion and suspicion will eat away at her."

Phin dropped his head, acknowledging her truth.

"You have to wear this, Phin," she said calmly but resolute. "You didn't *want* to do it, but you did it. It's a burden and grief placed upon you because of this war, but you will not get out easy by erasing her memories. You have to let her hate you. It's her right. This burden is yours, regardless of the circumstances, you chose it, and you need to shoulder it."

-----Phin-----

Phin walked back through the castle, noticing his competing emotions. He felt lighter than he had in months, but also his anxiety tingled at the back of his neck. Hiding these memories from Draco wouldn't be easy, and he knew that though Mia accepted what he told her about Ginny, she didn't forgive him. He mumbled the password to his chambers and entered the warm room, intent on grabbing a shower and then hopefully a few hours of sleep.

Phin called for tea and breakfast, fixing himself a cup and placing a Stasis on one for Ginny. He did this every morning for her, to make her life with him more comfortable. Each morning he called for tea and breakfast, something she couldn't do herself despite having her magic. They didn't want to give away her liberties with Phin. Each morning she extinguished the Stasis and let the tea cool, untouched. Phin suspected it was her way of using her magic to say *Fuck your kindness, Rapist!* She often took a few slices of toast or an egg out of necessity. She didn't *need* tea, but she needed to eat.

He grabbed his cup and walked quietly up the stairs and into the bedroom to shower. Ginny slept in the large bed, curled into a tight ball. Phin noticed open books on the desk near the window and several drawings of what looked to be a quaint cottage near water.

The shower felt good, though Phin regretted washing away the evidence of his shared moments with Mia. As unsavory as it seemed, his sweaty skin and the smell of sex represented intimacies shared with the love of his life, something he hadn't been able to accomplish in a year.

He cleaned up and towed off, pulling on gray sweatpants and a fitted blue t-shirt. As he walked out of the bathroom to head downstairs, Ginny stirred. Her sleepy eyes caught the

sight of him standing at the end of her bed, and she shot up in fear curling her knees to her chest and grabbing her wand.

Phin sighed and threw up his hands in caution. "I'm sorry to startle you. I just needed to shower," he said, darting his eyes to the bathroom door where the lingering steam rose in the air. Ginny's wand fell slightly, but she didn't say anything. "I'm leaving now," he added and backed away, leaving the room and closing the door in his wake. Mia was right. There wasn't an easy way of absolving his actions. He needed to accept that.

Phin stretched out on the couch and quickly fell asleep. The intensity of the past several hours drained his energy, and he knew that if he wanted to make the most of the next night, he needed to get some rest.

A few hours later, Phin woke to the soft sounds of silverware clinking against a plate. He laid on his back with one arm draped over his eyes and another on his stomach. When his brain cleared of its sleepy fog, he rolled over and sat up, rubbing the back of his neck.

Ginny sat at the table, eating a fried egg on toast. Phin stared at her for a moment. It wasn't like her to occupy the same space as him.

"Why are you here?" she asked with a hint of snark.

Phin felt irritation and confusion pass over him. "Where else would I be?" he asked. He knew she certainly didn't want him to sleep in the bedroom.

"I mean now. You usually shower at night and are up and out before I come down to eat. With Malfoy gone, shouldn't you be out creeping around the castle keeping things in order?"

"How do you know Malfoy's gone?" he grunted.

"I listen at the door sometimes, and I heard some Death Eaters talking about it yesterday. Or did he come back already?" she continued to probe.

"No, he's still away. I had a long night. I needed to catch some sleep. I'll be out of your way shortly."

"You spent the night with Hermione," Ginny stated. It wasn't a question.

Phin stood up in frustration and grabbed Ginny's tea from the table. She hadn't touched it as usual, and he needed more caffeine. He didn't respond.

"She wasn't just someone you were on the run with. I can tell. You're gonna' get yourself killed, and then I'll be shipped to another fucking Death Eater. I'd prefer it if you were more careful," she sneered.

"Hermione's just a friend, and I am not going to get myself killed. I know you don't believe me, but I'm trying very hard to keep all of us safe, you included."

"Well," Ginny went on, "Since she's likely the only thing keeping you from raping me more often, I won't complain, but please think about how dangerous your little trysts are!"

He placed his mug down on the table with a thud saying, "Damnit, Ginny. Enough, alright? Hermione is NOT the only reason I don't..." He stopped and cleared his throat before continuing. "but honestly, she's the only reason I did...rape you... a month ago. Even if something happens to her," he swallowed deeply, his mouth suddenly dry. "I'll still try my best to protect you and get us out of here. I'll do whatever I can to make sure no one touches you again."

"Sure, whatever, just be more careful. If I noticed, others will too," she said in conclusion, before pushing her chair back and walking upstairs.

-----Hermione-----

Hermione sat on the edge of the bed, lost in thought. She slept late into the morning and then spent the day reading and going back over the previous night. She got to spend time with Phin, hours of uninterrupted time. It felt restorative.

Being with someone who appreciated her desires and boundaries meant everything to her. She knew she pushed her luck getting so close to him but refused to let herself feel scared and guilty about that. In fact, she already knew the memory would keep her sane over the next few months when Malfoy forced himself on her again. She now had a new way to disassociate. She could think back over the time that she came on Malfoy's couch at the sheer voice of her real love.

Phin would be back soon, and Hermione already knew she wanted a repeat performance. *Screw, Malfoy.* She wished that they could actually touch one another, but in her mind, something was better than nothing. She needed to feel close to Phin. Distancing themselves to appease Malfoy was idiotic. If he ever found out that she and Phin talked all night, he'd likely kill them both. So they might as well go all in, she reasoned.

Hermione perked up when she heard the door to Malfoy's chambers open, and Phin call out, "Granger, are you well?"

She walked to the door and said, "Yes," taking in his appearance. He wore a black Death Eater robe but unclasped it and hung it on the wall as he entered the space.

With their staged memory completed, they walked toward each other and met near the table. "Mia, last night was..." he started.

"Amazing."

"It was." He agreed, but Hermione noticed a sadness in his eyes. "I'm caught between wanting to do it all again and wanting to head out the door to reduce our risk." He placed his hand on the table next to hers, and Hermione tilted her head down to stare at the distance between their fingers.

"Phin, please don't go," she said to the tabletop, knowing he wouldn't seriously leave her. "We don't know when we'll be able to be together like this again. She raised her eyes to his

and the unspoken sentiment passed between them. *Or IF they'd ever be together alone again.*

Phin shut his eyes briefly and turned away from her. Hermione couldn't quite read his expression.

"I had a thought, but it's reckless. I'm not sure if it's worth mentioning..." he said.

"What is it? What's going on?"

"In Pureblood betrothals, the wizard is the only person who can remove the engagement jewelry." He looked at her and cringed.

"Right, I'm aware," she said, confused.

"Except, house-elves." He ran a nervous hand through his hair. "They can remove the jewelry to help a witch wash and prepare for the bonding ceremony or in case of an emergency of some sort."

Hermione's heart beat faster in her chest. "But...even if I could somehow get it off. Malfoy still holds my magic. I won't be able to get far without it, and you told me the trace is real, even if not 100% accurate."

"I know, Mia," he said with the same sad eyes he wore since walking into Malfoy's chambers. "But it could make it so that the..." He took a deep breath. "...the fidelity charm wouldn't engage. We could touch."

Instantly, Hermione ached to be rid of the wretched necklace. If this was her last night with Phin, she wanted to be held in earnest. She wanted to feel him, she wanted... "But, wouldn't it have to be an elf of Malfoy's? None of them would remove it for me, they can't without his permission. Dobby might have, but he's gone."

"Yes, but without Potter, Malfoy is the sole heir of House Malfoy and House Black and from what you told me about..." Hermione gasped audibly at the realization of what Phin implied.

"Kreacher!" she yelled out in hopes that his friendliness towards her lasted all these years.

Instantly they heard a soft pop, and standing in the middle of the living room was a very old, grumpy-looking house-elf. He scanned the room for her and gave a small smile as their eyes met.

"Miss Hermione. Kreacher is so glad you're alive," he said, bowing his head.

"Thank you, Kreacher. Are you okay? Where do you live and work these days?" she asked, happy to see an old friend. She noticed he still wore the fake locket Harry gave him. "I'm so sorry we never returned. We were chased by Death Eaters and couldn't come back to Grimmauld Place."

"Kreacher knows. The Death Eaters said so when they stormed my lady's home. I serve here now. Cleaning mostly."

"Kreacher, I am sorry to put you in this position, but I need your help. If I asked a favor of you, could you do it without Malfoy's permission?"

Kreacher wrung his hands nervously. "Kreacher cannot help Miss Hermione escape. I'm explicitly forbidden. Master Malfoy made me swear to kill myself if I tried. I..."

"No, no Kreacher, not that. I know you can't do that," she said hastily. She watched as his small body relaxed slightly at her reassurance. "I'm wondering if you can remove my necklace. Just for a night." She added quickly. "I'll need to call you back in the morning to," she took a shuddering breath, "to put it back on."

He walked toward her with warm eyes, and Hermione knew to bend down. His small hands reached around her neck, and she heard the metal click as it unclasped. "Anything, for Miss Hermione, friend of Harry Potter, and friend of Kreacher." Then just as quickly as he arrived, they heard another pop, and he vanished, leaving Phin and Hermione standing alone in the living room staring at one another.

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "I Found by Amber Run"

Chapter 19: Touch

Chapter Notes

Hello all! Here's an early chapter for this week. Enjoy!

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

"Come here," Phin whispered in his deep, husky voice, the one that always sent shivers down her spine.

Hermione ran to him and jumped in his arms. She threw her legs around his middle, and Phin held her weight by wrapping his arms under her and placing a large hand on her rear. He kissed her softly at first, his firm lips brushing against her soft ones as he dipped his tongue into her mouth.

Phin growled and leaned back slightly. Hermione felt his length grow, brushing deliciously against her jean-clad center. As he walked them into the room Hermione heard a clinking noise but instantly disregarded the sound when she realized where Phin headed.

"Phin, stop, what are you doing!?"

"I'm making love to you. I thought that was the plan." He teased into her lips. He knew what she meant.

"You know what I mean, we can't do it...in *there*."

Phin stopped halfway to the bedroom and huffed. "Yes we can, Mia. I am going to fuck you on his bed. I'm going to make you scream *my* name while I watch you come apart." He leaned them against the wall in the living room, Hermione felt her heart tighten at the determination in his voice. "He's made your life a living hell and tonight I'm systematically replacing those memories, one by one, as I take you on every single surface of his bloody house."

"It's too..."

"Dangerous?" He asked. "I think we've already crossed that bridge. Do you really think he'll be okay with this if we do it on the couch?"

"No, of course not." She knew he was right but still, the idea of sleeping with Phin on Malfoy's bed caused her arms to tremble and her breath to catch.

He pushed off from the wall and walked them through the remainder of the living room. The bedroom was dark, the only light coming from the bathroom where two sconces still burned. Phin looked around and Hermione watched as his eyes tightened and his lips pulled downward. He took a moment then set her down and brushed her hair behind her ear saying, "Are you still okay with this, Mia?"

Hermione's insides churned with fear. Her mind raced with endless, catastrophic possibilities. *What if Malfoy comes home early? What if he notices something amiss in the room? What if he finds the memory later? What if...*

She stopped her anxious thoughts with a slight shake of her head. She didn't want to waste what might be their last night together on thoughts of Malfoy.

"Yes," she said while rising on her tiptoes to kiss him again. "Yes, Phin. I want this...I need this."

Phin slowly pulled her jumper over her head then reached behind her to release the clasp on her bra. He pulled the straps off her shoulders. Her heavy breasts fell slightly as he pulled the satin from her body, holding it for a moment at his side then dropping it on the floor. His hand traced up her torso, skimming her nipples and ghosting over the junction of her neck and shoulder.

"I've never appreciated your bare neck more," he hummed.

Hermione saw the desire in his eyes, it warmed her heart. Phin's eyes showed passion, and love, and adoration. *When Malfoy looks at me I only see want and arrogance*, she thought but quickly realized that wasn't true.

When Malfoy was angry with her he took her roughly with possessive cruelty in his eyes. However, most of the time he looked at her with, if she was honest, an expression much like Phin's. A passionate look. *Stop thinking about Malfoy!*

Phin vanished her jeans and panties and left her standing in front of him completely naked. The cool air from the room caused goose flesh to ripple across her arms. She savored his look of desire a little while longer before flicking her hand in a practiced movement. If she had her magic the act would have removed his clothes.

Reality struck her hard. She typically found herself able to deal with her lack of magic but being with Phin caused her to forget her situation. The movement made her feel foolish and weak. She trembled as she reached to unbuckle his belt. Phin noticed and stopped her hand.

"Shh, Mia. It's okay." He pulled her hands to his lips and kissed her knuckles. "I'll find a way to get your magic back. It won't always be like this."

She wanted to believe him, wanted to be in that world with him, after escaping, harnessing her power again.

Phin wiped a tear from her eye and said, "What do you need?"

Hermione sighed and responded without thinking, "Some fucking control over my damn life."

"Okay," He breathed calmly tilting her chin up to face him. "Then take it."

Hermione stared into his eyes and thought back over all the intimate moments they shared on the run. From the first time they slept together she realized Phin loved to take charge. He directed her around in bed saying, "Not yet, you'll cum when I tell you." or, "I'm going to fuck your gorgeous tits then watch you come undone with the flick of my wand." but more than that he dominated her with a look or the way he moved his strong body.

She loved it, loved releasing the need to control everything, loved the intensity with which he gazed at her and ordered her around. Phin preferred it that way because he spent so much of his life under his father's thumb. He needed to find more control where he could. Mostly, she loved it, because at his core Phin respected her wants, her fantasies. He always explicitly asked for her consent before tossing her into bed and slamming into her, or pulling her into his lap and using his skilled finger to coax out her orgasm while she writhed against him.

Now, after living in captivity with Malfoy for so many months the idea of Phin taking control didn't feel the same. *She* needed to be in control this time. She needed to call the shots.

Their eyes met and Hermione placed a hand on his chest. She pulled off his clothes with renewed confidence then pushed him down to the bed. Phin looked up at her with self-assurance and authority. They both knew his submission came from a place of strength. He wasn't threatened in the least by her need to assert control, he gave it to her.

She reached down and wrapped her hands around his cock, stroking him gently. She gave Phin a pointed look and he smirked at her, bringing his hand up and dipping his fingers into her folds. They both shuddered at the feel of their familiar touches. Hermione enjoyed the achingly slow way Phin sank his fingers into her cunt while using his thumb to rub circles around her throbbing clit. Phin tilted his head back in pleasure when she reached down and cupped his balls. They knew the exact movements necessary to increase the exquisite tension.

"Tell me what you want, Mia." He said while reaching to wrap his warm lips around her straining nipple.

She rolled her eyes as he topped-from-the-bottom. *Bless him, at least he's trying.* "I want you to eat me out." She said as her breathing labored from his touch.

"Gladly."

Phin grabbed her and leaned back on the bed. He guided her to straddle his head placing her knees by his ears then ran his hand up and down her inner thighs. Hermione felt herself dripping with need. The position he placed her in felt purposeful and delicious. She reveled in the feeling of towering over him and placed her hands on the top of the headboard, pushing out her chest and leaning back in anticipation.

Phin waited for a beat then dragged his thick tongue through her pussy. Hermione felt her knees weaken in response to the spike of sheer pleasure that crept up her abdomen and down her legs. She curled her toes and dug them into the sheets as she felt his skilled ministrations center on her aching clit.

"*Theodore, fucking, Nott,*" She moaned in pure ecstasy.

He chuckled deep in his throat. "Mmmmm, you haven't called me that in a very long time, Granger."

Lost in the feeling of control the position afforded her and the intoxicating way he drew his wet tongue back and forth over her, Hermione finally shut off her raging mind. She reached up and ran her fingers lightly over her nipples, hearing Phin groan appreciatively. *He likes his view.*

Knowing he watched her closely, she picked up the attention on her hardened peaks, licking her finger and rolling her nipples between her thumb and middle finger. Phin responded by intensifying the pressure of his tongue on her sex. He moved in a rhythm around her sensitive nub and then back to dip into her channel, pulling her arousal with him back to the pinpoint of her euphoria. Every once and a while he changed up the movement leaving her anxiously anticipating his moves as spikes of pleasure shot through her each time he glanced her clit.

A tear slid down her cheek as Hermione felt gratitude for the moment deep in her soul. She was making love to Phin, he was alive and with her. She thanked the gods for the opportunity to share this with him regardless of what the future brought.

Phin sucked on her clit, curling his tongue and dragging it back and forth over her. Hermione felt like all the blood in her body rushed to that point as she nearly fell over the edge of the chasm set before her. "Oh gods, *shiiitttt.*"

Just as quickly, he pulled back chuckling deeply again and blowing lightly on her sex.

"Phin!"

"Not yet, we'll get there." He crooned.

"Oh, please, I was so close."

"I know, Mia." He said. Hermione couldn't see him clearly but she nearly heard his smile. His words hummed against her tingling skin continuing to drive her mad.

She remembered her desire to control and snapped out of her reverie saying, "uh, uh, Phin. You forget yourself. I'm not playing around; I just want to..." He continued his attention to her core and she stuttered to a stop as he grazed her clit again.

"You want to what, Mia?"

"Fuck, I want to let go."

Phin sighed appreciatively and set to work bringing her back to the edge of the cliff. He pulled her clit in, sucking hard as he ran a hand over her thigh and entered her cunt with two large fingers. The pressure took over her senses completely, He thrust in and out of her while maintaining the pressure on her clit.

Hermione shattered aggressively. All her nerve-endings popped and crackled as she screamed out her release. She shut her eyes tightly and saw stars across her vision.

Phin continued his exquisite treatment while she rode out the aftershocks and rocked scandalously against him. When her legs shook and her breathing steadied Phin rolled her off of him and placed her underneath him cradling his weight on his strong arms. He kissed her soundly; Hermione tasted her arousal on his lips.

"You're beautiful." He said kissing her again. "So damn sexy."

Hermione opened her eyes and saw his love, the intensity of it brought her back to the moment acutely. She felt his cock pressing against her inner thigh and knew that Phin died to sink into her and experience his own escape.

"Take me." She demanded.

Phin rested his forehead against hers and breathed hard. She felt him shudder against her in want, savoring the moment.

"Take me, Phin." She repeated, raising her hands to his face. "I love you. I need to feel you inside me."

He raised his hips and fisted himself guiding his dick expertly into her quim. He stretched her slowly. Hermione tried her best to imprint the physical sensations permanently into her body so that she might draw upon the feelings for years to come.

Phin growled deliciously, as he set a pace thrusting deep into her core. Hermione's sensitive sex tingled and sparked at his pelvic bone thrusting against her at just the right angle.

He moved within her with the confidence of a practiced lover for what felt like an eternity. Hermione wrapped her legs around his hips and tilted herself allowing him to dip even further into her. Phin moaned and picked up the pace. Her wet pussy and his hard dick in her tight channel heightened her need again. She felt herself rising slowly toward another orgasm as he moved back and forth.

"I'm going to cum again." She breathed

"Hmmm... Are you?" He smirked kissing her chastely and pulling her bottom lip into his mouth.

Phin ground himself harder against her clit and Hermione felt pinpricks of excitement spread across her oversensitive skin. He lowered his head and licked her nipples. He ran his face in between her large breasts and sighed at the feeling as Hermione pushed her arms inward making a deep channel of cleavage to welcome him.

He sucked on her nipples and bit down lightly as he dipped his large hand between their hips and ran his finger over her sex.

They both came at the same time. Phin thrusting hard into her in unsteady jerks and Hermione squeezing her eyes shut tightly, feeling her clit throb against his finger. Phin roared as he pumped his spent into her again and again and again.

They laid in each other's arms covered in the evidence of their lovemaking for an hour whispering affirmations of love to one another before Hermione rolled over and straddled his hips taking him again.

Afterward, Phin kept his promise. He thrust into her on the couch, laved at her sensitive folds on Malfoy's desk, and pressed her naked body up against the window as he plowed into her in the living room.

Just before dawn, they took a shower together and Phin washed her aching muscles under the warm stream. His wet and soapy hands grazing her sex briefly before he turned questioning eyes to her asking *once more*?

Hermione wanted to enjoy every moment possible with him but something about being in the shower where Malfoy forced himself on her the first time messed with her head. Instead, she dropped to her knees in front of him. Phin looked surprised and pleased at her movements and cast a wandless spell cushioning her knees against the unforgiving tile. She worked over him expertly pulling out one final release as he rested one hand against the shower wall and threaded one hand through her wet hair.

As they exited the shower a deep and penetrating sadness swept over her. The sun peaked through the windows in the living room, and Hermione knew their time together neared its end. Phin pulled a thick, soft towel over her and wrapped her in his arms.

"This isn't it for us." He asserted. "We'll be together, in Toronto like we always hoped. Malfoy's going to kill Voldemort, then we are going to find a way to free the witches and I'm going to watch the light leave his eyes personally before we run." He kissed her passionately. "I love you more than anything in this godforsaken world. You're it for me."

Words escaped her as more tears slid down her cheeks. She nodded to appease him but a searing dread hung over her like a dark cloud.

Knowing the time had come, they both dressed. Hermione walked out of the walk-in closet in a new pair of jeans and a jumper. She noticed that Phin took the opportunity to right the rooms and remove any evidence of their intimacy in her absence.

They walked slowly to the door and Phin pulled his Death Eater robe back on, hesitantly. They experienced a final pang of fear and anxiety as it took them several minutes to find Hermione's betrothal jewelry. The Malfoy family charmed it so that Phin couldn't summon it. Eventually, Hermione checked under the couch remembering the clink she heard the night before. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw it glint in the darkness under the

couch. *Oh, thank the gods! There it is!* Then instantly chided herself for being happy that she found her pretty shackle.

Hermione called for Kreacher. Her heart rate picked up as she held the necklace out to the little elf. She felt sweaty and shaky. She didn't want to put it back on. Kreacher placed his small hand on the necklace to take it from her but Hermione's trembling hands almost dropped it.

"Miss. Hermione Granger is very upset." Kreacher witnessed sadly.

"Stop." Phin asserted. He walked over to her and Kreacher and took the necklace out of their hands.

"Kreacher," he said kindly. "I think if I put the necklace back on her it will be easier. Is that okay? Could you help me do it?"

Kreacher's eyes darted back and forth between the two of them anxiously then closed his eyes and seemed to evaluate something.

"Yes, I believe Kreacher can help Master Nott, Master Malfoy's second-in-command, to secure Miss. Hermione Granger."

Kreacher walked behind Hermione and she felt as Phin slowly placed the cold metal around her neck.

"I needs to transfer some elf magic to you to do it," Kreacher said.

There was a moment of silence where Hermione imagined Kreacher and Phin behind her back holding hands and transferring magic. Hermione bent down and Kreacher croaked, "Now tap the necklace here," Hermione felt a cold and shaky hand touch the back of her neck, "and say, *Cincinno.*"

Hermione heard Phin's deep voice ask, "What's the wand movement?"

Kreacher, who stood in front of Hermione now looked affronted. "There is no wand movements in elf magic!"

Phin cleared his throat and said, "Right, Kreacher, sorry."

Kreacher recovered from the insult and continued wearily, "With elf magic, you must *visualize* the spell taking hold."

Hermione felt Phin's warm hand on her neck and shoulder and heard him mutter, "Cincinno." The necklace warmed and she knew that it worked.

"Thank you, Kreacher," Phin said quietly.

Hermione schooled her nerves and hunched down to eye-level with the elf. "Yes, thank you, Kreacher. I hope to repay your kindness someday."

Kreacher nodded and walked to Phin. He reached out his small hands as if to take the elf magic back but then stopped himself. He stood for a moment and then said, "Master Nott might be needing this magic if Miss. Hermione Granger ever breaks out of her necklace again. Kreacher will leave it with you."

Then with a *pop*, he left.

Hermione imagined Phin holding her one last time. In her fantasy he kissed her temple, her lips. He rested their foreheads together and whispered words of assurance and love. But, devastatingly so, their time ran out.

Phin and Hermione replayed the false memory one final time before Phin vanished the necessary wards and pulled open the door to Malfoy's chambers. He turned to walk out and ran into a large figure in the doorway.

"Nott, you're here early." Malfoy drawled and the hairs on the back of Hermione's neck immediately stood on end.

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Only Girl (In the world) by Rihanna"

Chapter 20: The Jig

Chapter Summary

Hermione and Phin try to hide their time together while Draco works to destroy the Horcrux.

Chapter Notes

This chapter and the next are the end of Part II. Hold on folks, things are about to get bumpy!

I'm terrible at keeping to the day I say I will post. However, I've tried to make the posts no more than a week apart.

Thanks for all the comments and kudos last week! I love hearing from you!

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

-----Hermione-----

Malfoy pushed his arm against the door, holding it open with the clear indication that Phin should leave. Hermione watched him exit Malfoy's chambers and disappear into the office. She breathed a sigh of relief as Malfoy walked into the room instead of following after Phin.

"You look really tired," she said while pulling at her sleeve as Malfoy closed the door and removed his robe. "Thank you for the extra food," she added. "I feel much better than I did a couple of days ago."

"Good," Malfoy said. Hermione didn't like the way he stared at the door in Phin's wake.

Phin said Malfoy planned to be back later in the afternoon. She hoped for enough time to sort out her memories before he returned. With Phin gone and the cold light of day staring at her Hermione kicked herself for her foolhardiness. She knew it was nearly impossible to hide the memories from the past two nights. *He can't use Legilimency on me. I need to get ahead of this.*

"I didn't do anything while you were gone. I know you don't trust Legilimency on me because I'm an Occlumense. I thought maybe I could take some Veritaserum." Malfoy turned to look at her. "To set your mind at ease."

"You what?" He asked.

"I'm sorry about before. You were right. I really wasn't thinking clearly." *Come on, buy this, please.* "You said you wanted a warmer welcome. I thought I could meet you halfway if you really plan to give me back my magic eventually. I spent a lot of time thinking about us while you were away again." *Stop rambling. You're laying it on too thick!*

Malfoy narrowed his eyes at her then shook his head and huffed a laugh as he walked to the Potion's Lab. He came back with a small bottle of clear liquid and said, "Very well."

Hermione took the potion from his hands and imbibed a small sip, enough to satisfy Malfoy but small enough so as not to stay in her system for very long. He waited a minute eyeing her closely, then said, "Did you plan any escape attempts while I was gone?"

"No."

He looked slightly relieved. "Did you attempt to break into the drawers in my office to get to your wand?"

"No."

With a now curious expression, he asked, "Did you attempt to break into the Potion's Lab?"

No."

"What did you do the whole time then?" He teased.

Okay, here we go.

"Just basically laid around. I spent some time by the window, hung out in the library a bit. I spent a lot of time in bed, to be honest. It was nice to relax after what went down last week."
Check! True, true, and true!

"Is there anything at all that you're hiding from me?" He snarled.

Fuuuuck! No, Hermione, think through it, where's the loophole? She thought frantically for any way to answer his question truthfully and not out herself and Phin. *Anything, anything, any THING! No, I'm not hiding any THING!*

"No." She tested out the answer and felt thrilled when she heard her response pass her lips.

Seemingly mollified, Malfoy trailed his fingers along her betrothal jewelry as Hermione's heart rate picked up. "You spent a lot of time thinking about us?" He asked silkily.

I don't like where this is going. "Yes." She answered cautiously as she watched him like a hawk. He was up to something and Hermione didn't like knowing that she had truth-serum in her system while he waited, ready to pounce.

"I may have forgotten to tell you, but this necklace holds a very old fidelity charm." He tilted her head upwards with his pointer and middle fingers.

Oh shit, he knows! Hermione tried to school her reaction as her nerves spiked with fear and anxiety.

"The charm, of course, lets me know if someone attacks and forces themselves on you." He said plainly. "Obviously you'd never be asinine enough to willing let another man touch you." He continued as a side note.

Hermione felt confused. Something didn't add up. Malfoy seemed like he was gloating, he didn't seem mad.

He leaned in and lowered his voice saying, "It also lets me know if you orgasm when I'm not around. Were you pleasuring yourself two nights ago?"

Does he know about Phin or not?

"Yes." She reluctantly admitted, still waiting for him to strike.

"I guess I never made it explicitly clear that your pleasure belongs to me. I'll let it slide this time since you didn't know." He paused to run his hands up and down her arms. "It definitely made my time away more interesting to feel the shivers of your release." He smirked at her arrogantly then kissed her lips. She felt him harden against her while their bodies pressed together. "What came up when you were thinking about us?"

Hermione breathed a huge sigh of relief. Malfoy only seemed to know that she touched herself on the first night he was away.

"Your eyes when we fuck." She answered automatically, hoping it might move their conversation in a less dangerous direction.

Malfoy kissed her again then asked, "And what about them?"

Hermione bit her lip and answered, "How when you're mad at me your eyes can be cruel." Malfoy's eyebrows furrowed but Hermione went on, "But, that normally you look at me with..." She stopped trying to find the right word.

"Love," Malfoy suggested with a softer expression. He tucked a flyaway hair behind her ear and asked incredulously, "Do you really still doubt my feelings?"

"No," Hermione said surprising herself. Thinking about it further though, she knew Malfoy would describe his feelings that way.

He kissed her yet again then said, "This is a much better welcome. Come. Show me what you did the other night to make that charm shiver up my arms."

They moved to the bedroom and Malfoy took a seat on the armchair in the corner. He lounged with his legs spread wide and directed her to undress and recreate her ministrations from two nights ago. He watched with lecherous eyes as she coaxed out another orgasm. Hermione felt shocked to be able to elicit any feeling from her body after all that she put it through over the past several days.

When her breathing finally stilled and her fingers rested on her sex, wet and tired, Malfoy stood and vanished his clothes. He approached the bed and said huskily, "Roll over on your stomach." She obeyed his order and then felt his hands slide across her hips and pull her up on her hands and knees.

Malfoy entered her with a groan, saying, "You're magnificent." He set a slow pace moving in and out of her taking his time. She felt the tingling sensation of a cleansing spell and his fingers push into her tight ring. She was used to it at this point. Malfoy often 'prepped' her as he called it, though he hadn't taken her completely yet. He breathed deeply as his large sack swung and hit against her puffy, swollen, lips.

"I think you should've known though." He said deeply between thrusts.

"What?" She asked quietly, anxiety creeping up her neck.

Malfoy kept his fingers pumping in and out of her backside and placed his other hand on her lower back caressing her gently.

"That you'd need to ask me for permission to cum." He said, dangerously. He leaned down and cupped her left breast pinching her nipple. "I think you owe me something, don't you?" He said as he added a third finger, stretching her wide.

Hermione winced at the fullness and croaked, "What?" nervously. "What do I owe you?"

"You know, love." He growled arrogantly. "It's time I own every inch of you."

He pulled his fingers from her rear and Hermione felt anger and shame as his blunt head pressed into her, past her tight ring.

Afterward, they fell asleep. Hermione shivered with rage but succumbed to the exhaustion she felt from three straight nights of little to no sleep. Malfoy rested his large arm across her body and passed out, looking wholly pleased with himself. She woke two hours later to him walking through the room fully dressed and freshly showered.

"I must work today. I've been away too many days." He said buttoning the cuffs of his dress shirt. Before he exited the room Hermione rubbed the sleep from her eyes and asked, "Can I show you where the Horcrux is when you get back? Can we destroy it?"

Malfoy continued walking, saying, "We'll see."

----Phin----

It was 9:45 am and Phin waited in Draco's office wondering if he would show. After leaving earlier, Phin went back to his chambers to change. He made sure to avoid Ginny's knowing

gaze as he walked past her at the table heading to the bedroom where he still kept his clothes. His skin crawled wondering how Draco might respond to seeing him in his home so early. *The Wanker told me to check on her!*

It was true that Draco told him to check on Mia's welfare each morning and evening. He was just following orders. Though, Phin didn't like the way Draco looked at him as he walked out the door.

Just then Draco walked into his office through that same door, looking smug and freshly fucked. Phin took a deep breath and looked down at the floor briefly. *I'm going to kill you.*

"You were in my chambers early this morning, Nott," Draco said again in an accusatory tone.

Phin cleared his throat saying, "Just following orders Drake. I'll admit I checked on your witch early in the morning and late each night so that I could fit it in while running the castle in your absence. She always seemed fine. Things ran smoothly this time. Did you succeed in planting the wards?" He tried to quickly change the topic.

Draco leaned against his desk and folded his arms over his chest. "Of course," He drawled.

"What finally did the trick?"

"The artifacts needed to be placed in trees or rock ledges to broadcast the wards due to the altitude." He responded then pushed off of his desk, wand in hand, and said, "Enough chit chat." He locked eyes on Phin's and dove into his mind.

Phin expected it. He quickly scanned through each false memory. Nighttime, "Granger are you well?", "Yes." Morning, "Granger are you well?", "Yes." Then one more evening and one more morning. As soon as the decoy memories concluded Phin yanked away from Draco's gaze. He didn't want to leave any opportunity for Draco to delve further into the past two nights.

"These Death Eater Fuck-ups couldn't figure out that the artifacts needed to be placed higher!? What kind of idiots do we have here, man?" Phin teased as a diversion.

Draco stared at him obviously shocked that Phin pulled away from his interrogation. However, the ruse about insulting the Death Eaters seemed to work when Draco shrugged and walked behind his desk to sit while saying, "They lack a certain amount of finesse and intelligence."

Draco stared at his desk where his arm rested against the surface. He gripped his wand tighter and Phin noticed the muscles strain under his Dark Mark. He seemed lost in thought but eventually raised his head as if deciding something.

"I have a task for you, Theo."

"Of course, what do you need?"

"I want you to visit Diagon Alley and retrieve something for me from Gringotts."

"Okay, what?"

"The sword of Gryffindor."

-----Draco-----

Something felt off. Draco sat behind his desk turning his wand over and over in his hands. He felt jumpy and irritable. He chided himself for his inability to feel content. He had his witch, his best friend was back in the castle, and he was potentially very close to murdering the sadistic Bastard that controlled his every move for the past decade.

Still, something felt off. *Three nights ago, Hermione nearly killed herself trying to get her way, and this morning she willingly took Veritaserum?*

He shook his head and rationalized that she was starving when he came back then almost died due to his injuries. *I convinced her to see reason and this morning she showed me that she understood her place again. That's all.*

He got up and walked through the castle checking on all the operations and missions. Everything seemed in order. He allowed himself to relax reasoning that he must just be on edge, worrying about the Horcrux and finishing the job with Voldemort.

Draco wanted to verify the legitimacy of Hermione's claims. If she was telling the truth, he wanted to destroy the blasted thing as quickly as possible. From what she told him he knew he had to bring her to complete the job. The only viable method of destroying the diadem was the sword of Gryffindor and Draco knew that blasted hunk of metal wouldn't work in his Slytherin hands.

He had to think through his course of action carefully though. He needed a way to ensure that Hermione was tucked safely back in his chambers if Voldemort felt the loss of his soul fragment and summoned him. Draco knew that if he was called to atone for its loss, the fight to kill Voldemort would most certainly leave him gravely wounded. He also realized reluctantly that in that case, he needed to give Hermione back her magic before he left. He refused to lose her, due to the spell that bound her magic, on the same night that he finally vanquished the Dark Lord.

Lost in thought Draco almost tripped over a sullen-looking Justin Finch-Fletchly as he rounded a corner.

Justin jumped back and bowed his head mumbling, "Very sorry, Sir."

Draco stepped around the cowering man and kept walking down the hall, but suddenly remembered something. "Fletchly," He called, turning back. "How did the latest shipment go? Are all the artifacts secured for processing?"

Justin stared at Draco, confusion and worry etched across his features. "Shipment, Sir??" He asked shakily. "My team assumed there was a schedule revision due to your absence."

"Didn't Nott tell you otherwise?" Draco asked angrily.

"No, Sir. No one's seen Nott for days."

Draco turned and stormed away frustratedly. *Great, Fletchly's a giant fuck-up and now I'm set back a month.* Shaking his head, he resolved to talk to Theo and find out what happened but hoped that by this time next month he wouldn't need to answer to Voldemort regarding his progress on the shipments or anything else.

-----Hermione-----

Hermione sat in the window seat waiting for Malfoy to return. She stared out the window and chewed on a loose cuticle. Her trick to divert him with Veritaserum worked decently but she knew the danger wasn't passed. She tried to calm her nerves and bury the memories of her stolen time with Phin deep within her subconscious.

It was no use though, no matter how hard she tried, she simply couldn't pull her strong feelings away from the memories that she and Phin created. *I'm fucked. It is only a matter of time before Malfoy finds out.*

Her nerves shook as she repeated the phrase, *destroy the Horcrux, get my magic back, remove the necklace*, over and over in her mind. She didn't dare think about escape, leaving that for Phin to figure out.

A creaking sound woke Hermione from her worry, and she turned to see Malfoy standing in the doorway.

"Go put on a robe." He barked, looking put out.

She didn't question him but instead did as he bade and grabbed a robe. She hoped this meant that he planned to take her to destroy the Horcrux. Hermione walked out of the bedroom and noticed Malfoy coming out of his library, tucking a rusty knife into the pocket of his robe.

Malfoy walked her to the seventh floor and Hermione felt her nervous energy rise with each step. She didn't dare ask Malfoy too much because he was clearly grumpy and she didn't want him to change his mind. They rounded the corner and Hermione caught sight of Phin, standing in front of the portrait of Barnabas the Barmy holding the sword of Gryffindor.

"Draco, what are we doing here?" Phin asked. Hermione knew he already knew the answer.

"I'll let you know when we get inside." Malfoy said then added, "What happened with the most recent shipment? I thought you had things under control."

Phin's eyebrows rose infinitesimally then he said quickly, "Our informant told me they needed more time to collect a critical mass to make the trip worth it. Sorry, I should've mentioned that earlier."

Hermione had a distinct feeling that Phin would have some work to do to clean up this oversight.

Malfoy nodded and gave an unpleasant scowl. "We'll talk more about that later," he said then turned around and stomped back and forth in front of the blank wall. Eventually, the large oak door appeared and Malfoy ushered the three of them into the room of hidden things.

Phin looked around with astonishment then raised a questioning eyebrow.

Draco answered Phin's unspoken question. "I recently learned that there's a dark artifact in this room that we need to destroy. Hermione told me about it a few nights ago. Apparently, Potter thought this item might give him an advantage over the Dark Lord. He hid it here in

hopes of using it but never got a chance to re-enter the room to grab it during the Battle of Hogwarts." Malfoy took a breath, Hermione thought his lie sounded convincing. If Phin really was who he said he was and they weren't leading a very dangerous double-life Hermione suspected that he might have bought it. "We need to destroy the object to remove the threat from our Lord."

"And the sword?" Phin asked

"Is necessary for the item's disposal." Malfoy clipped.

"And Granger?" Phin asked again.

"Is necessary to wield the sword being that she's a Gryffindor."

Malfoy leveled a look at Phin that clearly said, *That's enough questions*, then the three of them headed into the mass of books and dusty furniture with Malfoy in the lead.

They walked for a long while. As they neared the place where they found Snape's old Potion's book Hermione chanced a look at Phin over her shoulder. He looked as anxious and determined as she felt. They locked eyes for a brief moment and a world of unsaid messages passed between them. *This is it! I love you! Stay safe!*

As she turned around she realized that Malfoy stopped walking and stared at her with narrowed eyes and tight lips. Hermione ducked her eyes and scratched at the back of her neck.

"Alright, love. You lead the way from here." He said darkly.

Hermione shook with anxiety now. *What did he see? Nothing! He couldn't have seen anything, and if he did he wouldn't know what to make of it anyway. Calm down!*

She walked ahead, taking the lead, and found the large black cabinet with the stone bust. The hum of the Horcrux rang clear in Hermione's ears once again as if it called to her.

"There." She said, pointing to the diadem for Malfoy to see. Then she added, "That's where Harry hid it," to continue his ruse.

Malfoy grabbed the bust and diadem down from the top of the cabinet with his long reach. He picked up the diadem and held it in his hands examining it carefully. He cast his eyes upward to her and placed it back down on a stack of papers near his right arm.

"Kiss me." He demanded.

Hermione turned shocked eyes to him asking silently, *Here? Now?*

Malfoy raised a challenging eyebrow and nodded, yes.

She heard Phin clear his throat and shuffle his feet as he turned around to examine something behind him. Hermione felt the expertly concealed rage leaking off of him. She raised on her tiptoes, placing a hand on Malfoy's chest and one on his upper arm as she kissed him lightly.

As expected, Malfoy wrapped a large hand around the back of her neck and pulled her in for a deeper embrace. He soundly kissed her then pulled back and said, "Get on with it, love." He then lifted his head and barked, "Theo, give her the sword."

Hermione took it and held the heavy cool weight of the sword in her hands. She walked to where the diadem sat and pulled in a shuddering breath. This was the moment that she anticipated for years. The Horcrux sat in front of her, a symbol of everything she lost in the war and now she would end its control over her life. If nothing else, she would be able to say that she successfully destroyed the last Horcrux, making Voldemort once again mortal.

She raised the sword high above her head feeling a rush of adrenaline and strength and screamed out a guttural roar as she brought the blade down on the diadem slicing the evil

object in two.

-----Draco-----

Draco watched her weigh the sword in her hands. He knew Hermione told the truth. The diadem dripped with dark magic. He spent enough time handling dark artifacts recently that the magical signature rang out loud and clear to him. However, his irritation spiked back and forth under his skin. He didn't like the look he just caught between Hermione and Theo. Something wasn't right with them. *I'm going to get answers out of Theo when this is over. If he pulls away from me this time, he'll regret it.*

Hermione raised the sword over her head and brought it down on the dark item. Suddenly several things happened at once.

The Horcrux didn't go down without a fight. Black, sooty, smoke shot out of the diadem and circled the enormous room as a high-pitched voice screamed. Hermione ducked to avoid the blast of smoke and just then, as he expected, Draco felt an agonizing pain in his Dark Mark. Voldemort summoned him and was clearly livid.

Malfoy clutched his arm in agony. He stumbled toward Hermione and roughly grabbed her wrist while pulling out the rusty knife and a fork from his pocket.

"I'm being summoned," he grunted out through gritted teeth. He quickly used the knife to slice open her palm then clasped their hands together. He wordlessly cast the counter spell to give Hermione back her magic "You need to take your magic back in case he weakens me too much in his fury."

Malfoy looked up at her with pain and longing eyes. He lifted his gaze to Nott and sneered, "Theo! I don't have enough time. Take her back to my chambers and lock her in!" Then he fisted her necklace and turned his attention back to her. "Don't be foolish enough to think this is an opportunity for you. If you try ANYTHING I will know!"

Malfoy hunched over and shouted, "Go!" at Theo then buckled over in pain. He tapped the fork with his wand watching it glow with the blue light of a portkey. He held it as the light

moved over his body enveloping him and pulling him towards his destination.

The room shook with violent crashes and bangs. As he left, he kept his eyes on Hermione and watched in horror as Theo reached out to her yelling,

"Mia! Come on. We need to leave! Now!"

She turned around, and Draco caught her gaze. As the final pull of the portkey washed over him he saw fear and shock cross her expression.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter is the one you've likely been waiting for. Draco knows something is going on between Theo and Hermione. Will he kill Voldemort? Will Hermione escape? What will happen with the witches? All these answers and more!

Song choice for this chapter: "Major Tom by Shiny Toy Guns"

Chapter 21: Is Up

Chapter Summary

The castle is shaking, and Phin and Hermione race to escape.

Chapter Notes

Hello Readers!

Here is the last chapter of Part II. Thank you for all your support throughout this piece. I've loved writing this work. It's been great to delve into my creative side during this crazy pandemic world we are all living in. Just a note, to all of you who love Draco, I love him too! His evil nature is fun to explore and dream about. Works that write a purely evil Draco never quite do it for me, so I intentionally wrote in some gray moments with him. To all of you who hate Draco, I'm with you as well. I want him to be possessive and sexy, but at the end of the day, he is a rapist who only sees the world through his own eyes.

Enjoy the chapter and check out the end notes for why this work is marked complete.

Trigger warning: rape, domestic violence, and mild gore. Tread carefully, as always.

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

****BOOM!***

Books tumbled off of high shelves throwing dust into the air.

WHAM!

The stone walls of the room shook. Tiny broken pebbles of debris fell from the mortar between the bricks down to the piles below.

"Mia! We need to go!" Phin called again, frantically.

Hermione stood in shock and fear, "He...he knows," she whispered.

"MIA!"

She whirled around and shot Phin an angry look. "You called me by the wrong name, and he HEARD you! He KNOWS! I'm not sure what he knows, but I saw it in his eyes. When he

gets back, he's going to find out everything, and he's going to kill you!"

Phin grabbed her shoulders and shook her, "Mia, damnit, snap out of it! I don't give a fuck what he saw or heard! The castle is falling down around us, Voldemort summoned Draco, one of them isn't coming back. We're leaving NOW. This is our only chance! "

Hermione blinked rapidly, clearing her mind and bringing her attention to what happened around them. Phin was right. The room was groaning and shaking from abuse. This was their chance to flee. Escape was risky but waiting around for Draco to show up and slice through their memories until he found what he was looking for wasn't an option. She didn't even want to think about what might happen if Draco didn't return and Voldemort took over the castle.

"Okay, you're right, let's go," she said.

Phin noticed something lying on the floor and ran to grab it before placing a hand at her lower back and ushering them out of the room as quickly as possible. He Disillusioned them as they ran through the castle at a tight clip.

They careened down the seventh-floor corridor, and Hermione tried her best to think through the plan. She knew that Kreacher gave Phin elf magic but, unfortunately, he only taught Phin the spell to put the necklace *on*, not take it off.

"Kreacher!" She yelled, summoning him. Phin looked at her over his shoulder as they kept moving, their hands clasped tightly. Nothing happened; the elf didn't emerge. *SHIT!*

"We need to go get my wand," Hermione yelled. "If we can't get this blasted necklace off me, we at least need a fighting chance to get away. Maybe we can figure out how to remove it on our own later."

"No," Phin said firmly and tugged Hermione in a different direction, away from Malfoy's office and chambers. "We need to get to Ginny first. We're not far. My chambers are in the old DADA classroom."

Hermione wanted to kiss him for still thinking about Ginny in their rush to get out. She planned to find a way to nab Ginny and as many other witches as possible before leaving. However, she didn't know how to do that or where Ginny was at that moment. Two more flights of stairs and one hallway later, they stood in front of the old familiar door. Phin removed the Disillusionment spell, then muttered the password, and the door flew open.

Ginny stood in the center of the room, pacing and looking terrified. She already wore a robe as if ready to bolt from the room at any moment. "What's happening!?" She yelled at Phin, looking slightly relieved to see him. Her eyes then caught sight of Hermione, and anger shot through her expression. "What did you two do!?" She sneered.

"We don't have time to explain," Hermione cautioned. "Malfoy's gone. We need to grab as many witches as we can and get the hell out of here."

Ginny rolled her eyes and threw up her hands. "How the hell are we going to do that? What about the trace? What about wards?"

BOOM!

The castle shook again violently, "And, what the hell is happening to the castle!!?" Ginny finished.

"GINNY!" Hermione and Phin yelled in unison, trying to interrupt her terrified ranting.

Hermione spoke quickly trying, to set her friend's mind at ease "Voldemort must have laid the original wards within the fault line of the castle. He's furious right now. He's also weakened. The castle must recognize his physical and mental state."

Phin interjected, "We don't have time for all that right now. I have a plan." He held his hand out to Ginny in a silent demand that she come with them. "You have to trust me," Phin stated sternly.

Ginny scoffed. "Not likely." She pushed her hair out of her eyes and crossed her arms.

Hermione ignored her. She turned to Phin, saying, "We need to save anyone we can."

"I know, Mia." He said to pacify her. "I told you, I've thought this through. We have to gather everyone in the Great Hall. We'll need to Disillusion you again. You can't be seen with me."

Hermione chewed her lip, she knew what she had to say wouldn't go over well. "You two go. Tell me the password to Malfoy's chambers. I'll get my wand and meet you in the entrance hall."

"Not a chance," Phin growled angrily.

Another shake of the castle rang out, and Hermione watched as a small inkpot fell off the desk near the window. It shattered to the ground spilling ink all over the stone.

She needed to make Phin see reason. "We don't know how much time we have. It'll be quicker that way. As you said, I shouldn't be seen with you anyway."

Phin shot back, "I'm sorry, Mia, did you forget what happened the last time we separated? We'll find you another wand. I know where to look. The answer is NO! "

The floors rumbled and shook, more dust fell from the ceiling.

"This isn't like last time, I promise. I need to get *MY* wand. When I used Bellatrix's wand, it never worked right. You know that."

Phin continued scowling.

"I know where my wand is," she continued. "We need to move quickly. Splitting up makes more sense. I'll meet you in the entrance hall." Phin still didn't look convinced, so she rose on her toes to kiss him, hoping it might reassure him. Phin pulled away angrily, but she placed her hands on his cheeks, saying, "Phin, I love you. I'll just be a moment. Trust *me*."

He rubbed his forehead in frustration then sighed loudly. "It's *Jean* for the stairs and *Day 15* for his chambers." He said through tight lips.

Hermione didn't want to think about the fact that she and Phin both knew what *Day 15* meant, or the fact that he used that phrase to enter Malfoy's chambers for the past two nights.

"Thank you." She whispered, then turned to Ginny, saying, "I know you don't trust Ph—Theo, so you need to trust me as well. He'll keep you safe. Please go with him and do as he says."

Ginny nodded curtly, saying, "Be careful, Hermione."

She threw her arms around each of them in turn then watched as they walked out the door. As they did, she prayed to the gods it wouldn't be the last time she got to hug them both.

-----Phin----

Phin's anger and anxiety rolled throughout his body. He needed to get this over with so that he could grab Mia and get the fuck out of this castle. He ran through the castle with a glowering Ginny at his side.

"Here," he said, stopping in front of a door on the second floor.

Phin entered quickly and found what he needed sitting on a table in the center of the room.

"What is all this?" Ginny asked, staring at the many shelves of artifacts.

"Dark objects," Phin said absentmindedly. Then noticing Ginny's narrowed eyes, "I need this to amplify a spell to release the witches. You'll see." Phin tilted his head toward a shelf and said, "Grab one of those."

He watched as Ginny caught sight of what he was talking about. She ran to the shelf and pulled down a large glass mason jar filled with used wands. Phin watched her quickly dump out the jar and hold each one briefly, checking for the best fit with her magic.

When she found one she liked, she waved it in a circular motion and said, "Wingardium Leviosa." A nearby decanter flew up into the air rapidly. Ginny stopped it just before it crashed into the ceiling. "It's a bit aggressive," she crowed, "but it'll do the trick!"

"Good," Phin said hastily. He summoned the rest of the wands, shrunk them down, and tucked the bundle into a pocket of his robe.

He led them back out of the room and continued toward the Great Hall. By this point, Death Eaters ran about the castle in all directions, yelling and trying to avoid falling stones. Phin placed his wand on his neck and muttered, "Sonorous."

His magnified voice rang throughout the castle, "ALL MEN ARE TO REPORT TO THE GREAT HALL IMMEDIATELY WITH YOUR WITCHES! VOLDEMORT IS UNDER

ATTACK. REPORT FOR YOUR ORDERS!"

Ginny raised an eyebrow at him curiously but kept up. Phin continued to the hall, pushing open the massive doors and noticing that no one stood in the room yet. He continued walking towards the dais then, once they arrived at his destination, he turned to Ginny.

"You need to play your part as my witch. I'm going to Imperio the witches, so they don't freak out. I'll sever the bonds then instruct them to head out of the hall. You'll go with them. You have your wand, right?"

Ginny nodded with an incredulous glare.

"I'll follow you out. Once we exit the doors, I'll explain how you and the other women can escape." Phin looked up and noticed Death Eaters filing in with their witches in tow. He straightened up to welcome them in but with one final message to Ginny, he whispered, "Don't believe anything I tell the men."

Fear entered Ginny's eyes, but she turned her gaze forward and assumed the rightful posture expected of her.

Phin scowled at the men as they entered the hall. He occasionally barked orders at them to, "Line up!" or "Keep quiet!" As the men took their spots, they dragged scared and reluctant looking witches in their wake. Phin's stomach churned at the sight of the abused women. He recognized several of them.

Once all the men arrived, Phin stood tall on the dais and gave his orders. "Voldemort fell at the hands of the French Ministry. It was a coordinated attack. Malfoy went to investigate and gave me orders to clean things up here."

BOOM!

Phin watched the anxiety rise in the Death Eaters and witches. "The French Aurors are on their way. We need to prepare for the battle." Murmurs broke out around the hall as the men shifted their weight nervously. "We also need to get rid of any evidence implicating us in war crimes in case they prevail. Malfoy will return, and when he does, we need to fight, but we can't let any of these castle witches get in our way!"

Phin pulled the dark artifact out of the pocket of his robe as well as the rusty knife he picked up from the floor of the room of hidden things. Draco dropped it as he port-keyed away. Phin held out the dark object. "This will amplify our magic so that we only need to cast the spell once." He tapped the artifact and watched as the haze of its magic spread around the room.

Phin raised his wand and said, "IMPERIO!" Immediately all the women went glass-eyed and still. Phin glanced sideways and watched Ginny play her part, stiffening her posture and adopting a similar expression.

"We need to sever the bond between you and your witches so that we can dispose of them!" Some of the Death Eaters yelled out in affirmation while others in anger. "Silence!" He

bellowed then sliced his hand with the knife. He grabbed Ginny's hand, noticing the men stare at their hands in shock as the slice of blood appeared on their palms.

"Renodo Capistrano!" Phin shouted and watched as his magic touched each Death Eater in the room. One by one, he saw the Death Eater's grasp hands with the witches next to them. He felt the magic in the room shift as each witch unknowingly received her magic again.

Phin flicked his wand, and all the witches turned and headed to the door of the Hall. Ginny suddenly realized this was her moment to play along. She walked slowly down the steps of the dais and followed them out. Phin watched her go. The spell didn't return Ginny's magic, she already had it, but he needed her to play along and was glad that she did.

He looked out to the Death Eater's and said, "IMPERIO!" again. Phin knew it would be impossible for him to hold the unforgivable curse over so many at once without the dark object. Luckily for him, the artifact's amplifying magic allowed him to magnify his spells.

He ran up behind Ginny and followed her out. She turned around, giving him a curious look, and Phin said, "I didn't want any of them following us out. I'll leave them under the spell so that we can get out of the castle without being followed."

As they exited the hall with 100 or so witches in tow, a dark look crossed Ginny's expression.

Phin only vaguely noticed, though, as he scanned the room desperately looking for any signs of Mia.

Just then, Ginny ran back into the hall and threw her wand out over her head. Suddenly, a giant flame of Fiendfyre shot from its tip into the room. It spread rapidly around the room, engulfing the Death Eaters one by one. Phin heard screams of agony as the flames tore through the room.

Ginny ran back, slammed the doors, and yelled, "Tergora Inpenetrabiles!" Phin watched in shock as a ward crept up the door, locking the flames inside. He turned back to Ginny and watched as a satisfied, manic expression crept up her eyes.

"Merlin's balls!..." He shook his head aggressively to shake the horrific sound of hundreds of men dying from his mind.

Phin had to push on. He had to get the witches out of the castle and then go back and get to Mia. His eyes scanned the entrance hall again. Not seeing her, he quickly cast out a Homenum Revelio in hopes she was still Disillusioned. Nothing happened. She wasn't there.

"Ginny, you need to lead the witches up the mountain. I'll send them with you. Keep them under the spell until you are as far away as possible. That way, their fear won't get in the way of you escaping. Take this." He shoved the artifact into her hand. "If you tap it and say 'Promo,' it will lead you to other nearby objects. Find one in a tree or on a cliff and destroy it. Once it's gone, you'll be able to Apparate away. Tell the witches to get out of the country. Go as far away as you can. Stay out of Europe." He took a deep breath, "Here, take these." Phin

reached into his robe and pulled out the bundle of wands. "There isn't nearly enough, but it's better than nothing."

Ginny held the dark object and the wands in her hands lightly, staring at them in astonishment. She furrowed her brows then looked up at Phin, saying, "Hermione?"

"I'm going back for her. I'll get her out. Be safe."

"I..." She stared at him with a pained expression.

"I'm sorry for everything, please, go." Phin said.

Phin watched Ginny and the other witches make their way out the door. Before she walked out of sight, Phin yelled, "Ginny, wait!" She stopped and stared at him with tense shoulders. Phin knew she expected the proverbial shoe to drop at any moment.

He quickly summoned a piece of parchment from the potion canteen's open-door to his left. He tapped the paper and ran to her, shoving the crumpled paper into her hands. "So Mia, er, Hermione can reach you when this is over. I know she'll worry about whether or not you're safe."

Ginny glowered at Phin one last time before shoving the parchment into her robe and heading out to the castle grounds, leading a crowd of scared and abused witches on a mission up a mountain and as far as their magic would take them.

-----Hermione-----

Hermione's eyes welled up as she watched Phin and Ginny disappear around a corner. However, once they were out of sight, she pulled her hair back and secured it into a high messy bun. *Time to get down to business!* As she ran, she swiped her forearms over her face. *Salazar, please don't let this be a terrible decision!*

She ran as fast as she could toward the east wing of the ninth floor and stopped in front of the stone gargoyle muttering, "Jean." The spiral staircase appeared from the wall, and Hermione took the steps two-at-a-time as they continued to spin. Once inside, she raced across the office, yelling "Day 15!" at the bookcase. She bounced on the balls of her feet, waiting for the door to swing open. When it did, she ran into the room as another deafening explosion crashed through the castle.

The teacup she drank from earlier that afternoon rattled near the window ledge, giving Hermione a moment to consider all that changed in the past hour. Shaking off her thoughts, she dashed into Malfoy's library and came to a stop in front of his desk. She held her hand out to the top drawer and spat out, "Alohamora!"

Nothing happened.

She tried again, focusing her energy and yelling, "Alohamora!!" The door to the bedroom shot open, across the living room. *My magic works. Why won't the drawer open?!* She tried a

few more times to open the drawer with no success before reasoning that Malfoy might have moved her wand anyway. *He knew I broke it once. He wouldn't put it back in the same spot, would he?*

She scoured the library, throwing books off of shelves and upending side tables. She looked for anything that might be a secret hiding space. When she finished with the library, she moved to the living room. Next, she searched the bedroom and closet. As she continued her hunt, she chided herself for her stubbornness. She knew she should've stayed with Phin and found another wand. She just couldn't stand the thought of being separated from her wand any longer. The desire to wield her magic to its full extent clawed at her.

Hermione cast a tempus and noticed she nearly spent an hour searching. *Too much time is passing! I need to get out of here and back to Phin!*

BOOM!

BOOM!**

BOOM!

The stones shook and quaked, throwing Hermione to the ground. *Shit! It's getting worse!*

She yelled out in frustration, "Accio Wand!" and heard a small rustling sound coming from the Potion's Lab. She ran across the living room and threw all her might at the door to the lab, shouting, "ALOHAMORA!" the heavy door slammed open, and Hermione stopped to listen for the source of the rustling noise. She followed the sound to a wooden box sitting underneath...*the Pensieve!*

The breath suddenly flew out of her lungs. Her hands trembled, and her heart rate increased. With the plain, yet ominous sight, she felt dread, and terror filled her.

It was a message from Malfoy. Clear and simple. If she disobeyed him again—if she took back her wand—he'd go after her parents. She slumped down unto the floor and shook. *I can't do this. He'll kill them.*

Hermione felt the cold of the stone beneath her legs, the rough wood of a cabinet against her back. The banging continued, but, suddenly her fear tuned out the chaos.

She thought back through all the times that she sat in Malfoy's lap by the fire, pouring over memories of her parent's happy life in Australia. She remembered how Malfoy held her tenderly and rubbed his thumb over the back of her hand as she viewed moment after moment. She thought about his promise to take her to see them for New Years', and her heart ached with grief. *Sometimes Malfoy is kind.* She tried to convince herself. *If I turn back now, maybe I can...*

"Mia!" She heard Phin call from the living room. She bent her head in anguish. "Mia!, damnit!, MIA!! Where are you?!"

His figure loomed in the open doorway of the Potion's lab. He took in the sight of her on the floor and stomped to her side in three large strides.

"What's wrong? Are you hurt? Did he set up a fucking, hex or something?" Phin searched her body fastidiously, running his hands over her skin, looking for an injury.

"No," she croaked, brushing his roaming hands away and wiping at her wet face. *I have to explain to him that he needs to leave me and run.* "No, Phin, stop! I'm not hurt. I just can't..."

Ice flooded his expression instantly as he sat back, eyes still roving over her. "Can't what!?"

Oh, gods. Phin's going to kill me. I need to make him see reason. "I can't le..."

"Don't you fucking say it." He snarled acidly.

"He'll kill my parents! He left me a message that as good as spells it out. If I try to steal back my wand, or my magic, if I disobey him, he'll kill them!"

A short pause of stunned silence passed between them, then Phin barked, "Accio, Mia's wand!"

He stood up, following the rattling noise. Noticing the box, Phin moved the pensive to the side dismissively and opened the lid. The latch wasn't even locked.

Phin crouched down again, fisting her wand. He pried open her hand and placed the wood within her grasp resolutely before wrapping his large hands around her head and turning her to face him.

His voice shook as he spoke. "Get. Up! We're going!"

Hermione shook her head, "I can't!"

Phin cut her off abruptly, "Mia, I'm sorry, but that wasn't a request. We'll find a way to get to your parents before he does, but you and I are leaving right, fucking, now." He spoke through gritted teeth as if he was about to explode. "You're going to come with me willingly, or I am going to stun you and levitate your ass out of this godforsaken castle." Phin dragged Hermione up by her arm and threw out his hands in irritation. "We don't even know if he's going to survive the battle with Voldemort. Regardless, we're not waiting around to find out!"

"But what if he *does* survive and he heads straight for Australia and gets to them first?" she pleaded.

"And what if you stay!? I'll refuse to leave you, and he'll kill *me!*" He shot back. "This is war, Mia. There is no scenario where we get everything we want. I am NOT leaving you here. We're escaping together. Today! Think of what we've already accomplished. You found the Horcrux, got your magic back, and now have your wand. I freed Ginny and the witches."

Hermione's eyebrows shot up in surprised relief. "What!? How many of them?"

"ALL of them!" He roared exasperatedly. "We're so close to making it out of here. If we were able to do all that, then we can save your parents too." Phin spoke desperately. She watched as his eyes welled up with the effort to get her to agree with him.

"How? What do you mean you saved them all?" She asked, flabbergasted.

Phin sighed in frustration, "I'll tell you everything, *later!* Now, let's get going!"

Hermione took in a deep breath. One way or another, she might lose someone she loved. She had the opportunity to save Phin today. They would do everything in their power to save her parents too. She steadied her emotions, admitting, "Okay, you're right. We just have to fight harder to save them. Let's go. We don't have any time to waste!"

"That's my girl!" Phin crashed his warm lips into hers. His great relief showed in the loosening lines around his eyes.

Hermione pulled back, attempting to make light of her emotional rollercoaster by chiding, "Come on, Phin, we don't have time for your nonsense."

Phin huffed a grateful laugh as Hermione sprang into action again. She found a nearby leather bag, dumped out the contents, and cast an undetectable extension charm on it. Afterward, she turned quickly and scanned the shelves.

"Throw everything in here that you think we may need on the run. This might be our last opportunity to get supplies for a long time."

She and Phin set to work summoning nearly every potion off the shelves and tossing it into the bag. They took beakers, flasks, parchment, quills, and even two of the smaller cauldrons. When finished, Hermione ran around the apartment, hopping over the debris she strewn around the room earlier. She unearthed every bit of nonperishable food she hid the other day and threw that in the bag as well.

"Go get anything you think we may use out of Malfoy's library. I'm going to the bedroom for clothes." Phin nodded and moved to the library as she ran to the bedroom. She pulled out armloads of clothes for both her and Phin, then stopped in the bathroom to pick up soap, shampoo, and other toiletries before running back out to the main room.

Phin breathed heavily from all the running around. He levitated several dark artifacts, tons of books, and what looked like a mound of galleons. He shrank it all and dropped them into the bag. "That's good enough, I think," he said in his deep voice while brushing his hands through his hair.

Hermione stood staring at him, full of adrenaline. Her chest heaved as well. "Okay then, let's go!"

Phin walked over to her and took the bag from her hands. He wrapped his arms around her dragging her in for a tight embrace. He kissed her again, and Hermione felt excitement at the

possibility of finally leaving the castle behind.

"I want to try something," Phin whispered into her lips. As he pulled away, his hands grazed along her necklace. He turned her around to face the fire, she felt the warmth of magic pooling at the base of her neck, and for a hopeful moment, she let herself believe that he found a way to remove the shackle.

Phin lowered his head to kiss her neck then whispered, "Re..." but he froze, never finishing the spell.

She realized that the castle stilled during their race to gather provisions. An eerie calm spread over the stone structure, and dread pricked over her skin. Something wasn't right. She turned slowly to see why Phin stopped casting the spell, but her eyes widened in horror as she took in his immobilized form.

"Hello, love. Am I interrupting something?"

Hermione caught sight of Malfoy standing in the doorway. His robe was open, and his clothes were singed and ripped. He had a gash across his forearm and an already formed black-eye puffing up above his cheekbone. Pain and exhaustion etched across his face. Most terrifyingly though, were his eyes, which smoldered with pure fury,

Hermione watched in shock as Phin's eyes darted back and forth anxiously, then she felt her wand slip from her hands.

Malfoy grabbed it out of thin air and cast a silent spell dissolving the wood into nothing before hanging up his robe and rolling up his sleeves. He strode across the room and stopped in front of her.

"I think you need to tell me what's going on, *Mia*. Our home is a mess, my men are dead, and you seem to be very comfortable with my best mate."

Hermione's hands shook violently in fear. "I.." she started meekly, but Malfoy fisted her throat and slammed her into the wall next to the fire.

"Oh no, sweetheart. I'm not interested in any more of your lies." He said, trailing a hand down her neck and lightly touching the place Phin recently kissed. His pressure increased as he rubbed the spot with his thumb. Malfoy leaned in and kissed, biting down and drawing blood to the surface.

"My arms burned with your fidelity charm from the moment I left you," he said into the crook of her neck then pulled up to stare at her. He cricked his neck, causing it to pop, then said, "It fueled my anger and gave me an edge over the old snake. I knew I needed to finish him off as quickly as possible so that I could come back and see what my soon-to-be-bride was up to."

Hermione felt his rough hand around her neck. She saw the muscles in his temples bulge. *He killed Voldemort. He's the most powerful dark wizard in the world now.*

Suddenly, pain lanced through her head as he crashed into her mind. He tore through her memories relentlessly powering through any of Hermione's mental barriers. Hermione's body was exhausted before Malfoy showed up. Her Occlumency skills were no match to Malfoy's anger.

1998

"Please, I'm not what you think I am!" Phin yelled.

Hermione stared down at him as he writhed on the ground in pain, green boils crawling across his leg.

"My ass you aren't! Obli... " She spat as she leaned down to Obliviate him.

"Stop! Please! I'm on the run as well! Don't erase my memories. I'll be a sitting duck. I swear I'm no harm to you!" He yelled. Hermione inched closer. "I swear it, I'll swear it! Fuck! I'll make an Unbreakable Vow!"

Malfoy dove straight for her first memory of Phin on the run. He knew what to look for now and honed in on those moments she so expertly hid until this point. Her head killed as he took his time with those first few months together, the day they decided to adopt their nicknames, their first kiss, the first time they made love...

1999

Hermione's chest heaved with nervous excitement as Phin unbuttoned her jeans and slid his hand into her panties. She was dripping wet. His coarse fingers felt amazing against her silky folds. She needed him to know though. "Phin, I've...I've never done this before," she breathed.

He pulled back with a heated and questioning look. "Never done what, Mia?"

Her cheeks warmed, and she admitted, "Anything. I was always too busy fighting or on the run. Victor and I dated for a brief moment, but all we did was fumble around a bit." She was talking rapidly in her embarrassment. Phin looked shocked. "I mean, I'm not completely naïve I have, you know..."

He rested his forehead on hers and breathed deeply. "You've what?" his deep voice asked, heavy with anticipation.

"Touched myself." She admitted. She wanted to crawl under a rug and die.

A quick shudder of desire rolled over Phin's shoulders. "Merlin's balls." He took another steady breath then pulled his hand from her jeans with great reluctance. "I'm sorry, Mia, I don't want to push you too fast. We don't have to."

Hermione's eyes opened wide. "Oh, no! I want to, very much!" She kissed him and guided his hand back into her dripping sex. Her panties were soaked and cool against her sensitive skin. "I just want you to know that you'll be my first. You'll need to tell me what to do, and... how you like it."

Phin growled his approval and said, "Fuck, Mia. you're the hottest women I've ever met." He threaded his free hand through her hair and dove into the depths of her eyes, saying with sincerity. "We can stop at any point. Just say the word." Hermione nearly melted from the intensity of his striking, blue eyes. He dipped his finger into her sex then brought it out again, sliding over her eager clit.

"Oh, gods, no. I'm not stopping this. Please, Phin." Her hooded eyes raised through her lashes to meet his gaze. "Fuck me."

Malfoy pulled from her mind, with malice in his eyes before slamming back into her head. He watched as Phin and Hermione grew closer on the run, said 'I love you' for the first time, hunted the last Horcrux, and eventually split up.

Hermione felt as though her brain might split in two. His anger was evident in his abuse of her mind. No matter how upset he was with her before, he always shifted through her memories painlessly.

Then he arrived at more recent memories. Phin's arrival at the café, their stolen moments in the closet, the conversation they had at the feast, Phin leaning over her on the couch as she arched her back and mewled, and then Kreacher removing her necklace. Delirious with pain, Hermione had enough. If he wanted to see her every intimate moment with Phin, she would show him.

She shot through the pain, pulling up memories that she knew would piss Malfoy off. She slowed down the speed at which they crossed his path and forced him to take in every single detail.

Yesterday

They stood in Malfoy's bedroom. "Tell me what you want, Mia." He said while reaching to wrap his warm lips around her straining nipple.

"I want you to eat me out." She said as her breathing labored from his touch.

"Gladly."

Malfoy watched, seething, as Phin and Hermione fucked on nearly every surface of his home.

Hermione's hands splayed across the window. Her tight nipples pushed up against the cool glass as Phin drilled into her from behind. His thick cock pulsed inside her as she clamped

down on him with the walls of her tight pussy. His hand flew out to grab the window frame, and Hermione watched as his forearms corded with the strain of holding off his release. Hermione came hard screaming, "Phin! God, I love you!" He groaned, and Hermione felt their sticky, mingled release dripping down her legs and unto the floor.

Then...

Phin held Hermione on his lap as they sat in Malfoy's desk chair. She rocked her naked body seductively over his cock as he sucked on her neck. He rolled her nipples between his thumb and forefinger and whispered into her ear. "Remember that time I made you cum 6 times in one night."

Hermione moaned her appreciation for that marathon of mind-numbing ecstasy.

"I think we can beat our record tonight, don't you?"

Then...

Hermione knelt in front of Phin in Malfoy's shower. She took him down her throat and hummed at the feel of his heavy cock on her tongue. Phin guided her head back and forth as he fucked her mouth slowly. When he finally shattered, she lapped at his cock, greedily sucking down every last drop of his cum.

Hermione felt her throat close as Malfoy's grip tightened and her airways completely shut. He slammed her body into the wall, pulled from her mind, and tightened his eyes, saying, "You're going to spend the rest of your fucking life apologizing to me with that eager mouth."

He violently let go of her throat, leaving her gasping for air. Hermione pulled in a quick breath and croaked out as loud as she could, "You captured me and kept me as your sex slave!! Did you really expect I'd eventually fall in love with you!?"

Malfoy cast a spell, pinning Hermione against the wall. He bellowed out in rage, spun around, and leveled Phin with the Cruciatus curse. Phin slammed into the ground screaming out in agony. He rolled over on the floor as his arms and legs bent in unsightly directions. "ARRGH!! He screamed through his clenched jaw.

Malfoy walked forward and kicked him in the face as hard as he could. "Your fantasy of escaping with Theo is over, Hermione," Malfoy said coolly.

"Leave him alone, you evil bastard!" She screamed from her position against the wall.

Malfoy towered over Phin watching the curse rip into him. "I saved you from the war!" He said dangerously with his back to her. "From the Death Eaters, from Voldemort!!" Phin rolled unto Malfoy's shoe as his body uncontrollably arched and spasmed. Malfoy kicked him off lazily. "I've done nothing but work to keep your Bloody, ungrateful ass safe since fifth year!"

Hermione couldn't take it any longer. Malfoy's inability to see the world from any perspective other than his own was astounding. "YOU DIDN'T SAVE ME FROM SHIT! YOU THINK YOU'RE MY SAVIOR? YOU'RE NOT! YOU'RE A RAPIST! I'M THE BRIGHTEST GODDAMN WITCH OF OUR AGE! I DON'T NEED SAVING!!"

At that, Malfoy turned to face her, removing the spell that pinned her down. He grabbed the back of her hair and dragged her toward the couch. She landed on her stomach, her face pushed against the cushions as Malfoy's vice-like hand gripped her wrists behind her back.

"No?" He whispered into her ear maliciously.

Her heart hammered in her chest as she heard him unbuckle his belt. Hermione realized that Malfoy could have vanished his clothes. She awaited his rough entrance knowing that he intentionally chose to draw out the process making it worse for her.

She bucked her legs backward, kicking as hard as she could. She didn't care if he hurt her. She wasn't going to lay down like a fucking dog and take it from him any further.

Malfoy thankfully dropped the Cruciatus from Phin and moved his focus to subdue her. Hermione continued thrashing, trying in vain to find purchase with her foot against his shin or kneecaps. She knew that as long as Malfoy kept his attention on her, Phin was momentarily safe.

While flailing around, she noticed Phin pulling deep heavy breaths as he rested his cheek against the stone. His eyes were closed, and his brows furrowed as if trying to ward off aftershocks of the curse.

Suddenly, her body stilled. Malfoy ran his hands over her lower back, and she felt shivers of panic run up her spine, "That's enough." He crooned. "As much as I like it when you show your fight, you know I don't enjoy it in the bedroom. I prefer you pliant and docile." His hands slid under her hips, and he lifted her slightly as he unbuckled her jeans and pulled them down.

Phin stirred and caught sight of Malfoy hovering over her. He jerked upwards, trying to reach her, but Malfoy flicked out his hand, and Phin froze.

"Oh, Theo, you're awake. Just in time to watch me fuck my witch." Malfoy said savagely.

He flipped her over and ripped open her shirt. Then he vanished her bra and swiped his finger over her nipple.

"Now, you're going to lay there, like a good little witch, while I fuck you, and in return, I won't torture Nott any further before I kill him, understand?"

She hated him, more than Voldemort, more than the war, more than anything. Hot angry tears ran down her cheeks as his thumb scraped against her peak. She knew what she needed to do.

"Draco. I'm sorry. Please don't kill him. I'll do anything."

"Yes, you will, love." He threatened.

"Please." She tried again. She knew he wanted her to beg. "Just let him go. I... I'll stay with you."

He leaned down and pressed his lips to hers and said, "You're not *choosing* to stay, Hermione." He smirked. "I'm keeping you. And, this piece of shit." He tilted his head to Phin, "Is dying today. But I'll let you determine how it happens. Fight me on this and watch him suffer."

"Okay, I'll be good." She cried.

She pulled her hands from beneath her and placed them on his chest lightly. Malfoy leaned down to pull her nipple into his mouth, and Phin groaned in rage and agony from his place on the ground. Just as Malfoy was about to make contact with her, She focused all of her magical core on her hands and yelled, "BOMBARDA MAXIMA!"

There was an intense crash as Malfoy flew through the room and slammed against the floor near the dining table. His head cracked against the stone with a sickening thud, and a steady stream of blood trickled out from the base of his skull. Hermione knew Malfoy assumed she still couldn't hurt him. But if Voldemort laid the original wards and he was now gone, those protections were gone as well.

With Malfoy knocked out and possibly dying, she ran to Phin and crouched at his side. "Can you hear me? Phin!" She shook him gently, and his eyes opened. He needed medical care. She opened the leather bag and summoned a bottle of Healing potion. She forced him to open his mouth and then tipped the potion down his throat. While she waited for him to regain consciousness she slowly rubbed the tension out of his legs and arms. She picked up his wand from the floor beside him and tapped it along his body, muttering any spell she knew that might help his pain.

After a long stretch, his eyes cleared, and he began to breathe slowly.

"Mia," He croaked. "Are you okay?"

Hermione let out a soft and hysterical laugh. "Am *I* okay?" Phin sat up slowly while Hermione continued to fuss over him. "Wait, you shouldn't move too quickly."

His eyes raked over her and his brows furrowed. In her race to heal him, she forgot that her shirt still hung open. Suddenly she felt incredibly self-conscious. She hugged her arms to her

chest instinctively. Phin reached forward and gently took his wand from her hands. He pointed it at her, and she felt the piece of the shredded material knit back together.

"Where's Draco?" He asked anxiously as his eyes darted around the room.

Hermione tilted her head towards the dining area where part of Malfoy's boot was visible beyond the couch. "I hit him pretty hard with a blasting spell. He cracked his head. I don't think we need to worry about him right now. I don't think he'll make it but, we need to move quickly just in case."

"You did it, Mia." He said with pride and aching sadness in his voice. She knew that the danger wasn't quite over yet and that even if Malfoy never woke up, the trauma of the night would haunt them. However, at that moment, she allowed herself to accept his praise. It meant everything to her. "I love you," he added.

"I love you too!" She sputtered through raining tears. Anxiety and adrenaline still coursed through her body. "If you think you're ready, we need to move." She stood up and grabbed the leather bag from the floor.

Phin stood up gingerly, saying, "We don't have to move too quickly. I'm not leaving anything to chance. I'm finishing the fucker off."

Hermione glanced over at Malfoy's prone body again. "Please, Phin, don't wrench your soul apart on his behalf. He's as good as gone anyway. Let's go."

Phin stared at her and blanched incredulously but then seemed to remember something. "Wait, Mia," Phin said. He stepped forward and reached out his hand to her neck. He placed his hands over her necklace and finished the spell he started before Malfoy arrived and detonated their escape.

"Resigno."

Hermione felt the necklace slide off her neck, through her shirt, and onto the floor.

"How?" She asked, shocked.

"Kreacher taught me the Latin for 'lock' to secure the necklace, so I just tried the Latin word for 'unlock.'" he shrugged. "Let me finish off Malfoy, then let's get the hell out of here."

Hermione wanted to protest again but realized she didn't have it in her. In truth, she would sleep better knowing he was gone for good. She wouldn't have to rush to save her parents, and they could take their time leaving the country and setting up a life somewhere else. They wouldn't have to continue running. They could finally find a place and settle down.

Phin marched over to the dining area with a murderous expression. She watched him pass the couch and turned to face the window. She didn't need to see it happen. She stared out at the castle grounds and watched several birds take flight out of the trees in the Forbidden Forest. *We did it. We're safe.*

Just then, Phin inhaled a deep gasp and swore darkly under his breath. Hermione whipped around as he said,

"He's gone!"

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Riot by Three days grace"

Chapter 22: PART III Escape

Chapter Summary

Hermione and Phin escape but, three months later, there is something weighing on Hermione's mind that she needs to tell Phin.

Chapter Notes

AND, we're back! Thank you all for your patience as I figured out how I wanted this story to end. I appreciated all of your feedback and I've decided to stick to my initial plan to do three parts.

At the end of the last chapter I felt exhausted and ready to set the story aside for a bit. I needed new inspiration if I was going to write the final part, and I found it!

I'll put this warning in both chapters twenty-two and twenty-four but I've decided to give you three chapters at once so if you see the update and go all the way to the end you will miss out on some important chapters.

Happy reading!

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

-----Hermione-----

Three months later

Hermione stared at the majestic beauty of Lake Louise from their porch. She wrapped her hand around her tea and savored the warmth from the cup and the feel of her thick wool sweater as she came to a realization. *I need to tell him.*

She and Phin found a small cabin on Cascade Mountain near Banff soon after they arrived in Alberta, Canada.

After realizing Malfoy's body disappeared, they grabbed the leather bag and ran out of the castle as fast as possible. Once outside the castle grounds, Phin led them on a strenuous journey, over loose stones and tree branches climbing the nearby mountain's narrow path.

Halfway up the rocky trail, he pulled an artifact out of his robes. They followed the light cast by the object to a spot near the mountain's summit where the stars shone brightly. Hermione spent the journey lost in thought over the events of the evening. She shivered in fear and continuously cast her gaze over her shoulder to make sure Malfoy wasn't following them.

Eventually, Phin stopped and pointed to a place near the rock face. He whispered in relief, "Ginny made it out!" Then turned to Hermione, saying, "There's a disturbance in the wards!" Hermione didn't ask too many questions, her shock still prevalent, but she followed as Phin walked them over to the place where the wards shimmered and then took his outstretched hand.

They Apparated first to Iceland. When they landed, Phin collapsed against a tree from the effort it took to jump that far with side-along Apparition. He took out the object again and held it in front of him, examining its magical properties.

"We can't get to Canada by Apparition." He admitted between deep, heaving breaths. "Even with help, it's still too hard. I'll need to set up international portkeys." He stood carefully. "Now that we're out of the United Kingdom, I can cast the spells without tipping off our Ministry. We'll be long gone before Iceland's government catches on," he said.

"What are you talking about? Where are we?" Hermione woke from her daze. "Of course we can't Apparate, and an international portkey requires at least three people to cast." She stared at him disbelievingly.

"Iceland," he emphasized again but kindly. "and that's what this is for." He tossed the dark object up into the air, caught it again, then leaned down, picked up a rusty bottle cap and several other random tokens. "It amplifies magic. But, to be safe, come hold my hand while I cast the spells."

They portkeyed to Greenland, then Manitoba, Canada, and finally landed in Alberta. The process took three weeks. On the way, they decided not to head to Toronto in case Malfoy found those original plans while pilfering through his memories of interrogating Phin. However, they chose Banff because it was close enough to their dream and remote enough to provide more safety.

Before they left Greenland, Hermione came up with a plan. On their second night in the cold terrain, she turned to Phin as he sliced up some cheese and pulled out several crackers. They sat beside a fire at a makeshift campsite on the outskirts of the town of Qaqortoq.

"I've been thinking," she started, and Phin looked at her with concern. "We can't risk going to Australia ourselves, but I also can't live another moment without trying to save my parents from..." She couldn't say his name.

Phin placed the plate of food down. Hermione frowned at the sight of him. She stole plenty of clothes for their journey but Phin's selection was less than ideal. Firstly, because he dressed in Malfoy's clothes, Hermione had a hard time looking at him, and secondly because Malfoy never wore anything casual. All Phin had to choose from were Death Eater robes, pressed trousers, and Oxford's. Hermione and Phin did their best to Transfigure them but they still looked off.

He turned to wrap her in his arms. "What do you want to do? I'm here for you, whatever you need."

Hermione hung her head in shame. "I have a plan, but it takes an Unforgiveable."

Hermione found a wizarding village and asked Phin to Imperius, a twenty-something wizard. They sent the young man from Greenland to Yemen and then to Australia. Luckily Phin already set up the portkeys in Iceland, anticipating their need to get to Australia and hide her parents.

He instructed the Wizard to use a tiny quantity of the Draught of Living Death, one of the potions they stole from Malfoy's lab, and to take Hermione's parents from Australia to Angola, and ultimately to Grenada. Lastly, they told the Wizard to modify her parent's memories and set them up with a place to live and jobs before coming back.

Though Hermione developed the plan and knew it was the safest way to avoid capture, she still didn't like that they needed to endanger the young wizard. She spent hours thinking through the possibilities before deciding it was the best course of action. She and Phin couldn't go, which meant they either needed to find someone who would make the dangerous trip for them and then obliviate them, or they needed to Imperious a witch or wizard.

At least with this option, if Malfoy caught the wizard, he wouldn't be able to give away their whereabouts, and hopefully, the bastard would leave the wizard alone, knowing he didn't participate willingly.

She worried a groove into the dirt near their campsite while they waited a week and a half for the wizard to return. When it was finally clear that the wizard moved her parents and everyone was safe, they breathed a sigh of relief and headed on to Canada.

Hermione reasoned that this time, Malfoy wouldn't find her parents as easily since they traveled by magic instead of Muggle transport. The young wizard was safe, so she tried to put the unsavory way she used him to rest. She kept her parents away from Malfoy's clutches. Though she knew she would never see them again, she was content knowing they were safe.

Once they settled near Banff, they fell into a new rhythm. Hermione got a job at a small pharmacy, and Phin opened a hole-in-the-wall bar for local Muggles. No one seemed to question how this new favorite pub popped out of nowhere. The beer was cold, the food cheap, and the tourists never graced its threshold, so it quickly drew a steady stream of regular patrons each night.

Hermione took a sip of her cooling tea as she heard Phin move around in their home, soon she needed to Apparate down to the edge of the woods near the base of the mountain and walk the mile into work.

She liked her job at the Pharmacy; it was quiet and reminded her of working with potion ingredients. She preferred, however, to stay in the back, breaking down packages and counting out pills. She and Phin tried to place themselves near Muggles but not too out in the open. They wanted to hear if anything strange happened in town but didn't want to leave much of an impression.

Hermione charmed the Pharmacist, a nice elderly-woman, to get the job and then mostly kept her head down, working with the medications. Phin's job was more public, but still, he mostly ran the show from his office in the kitchen.

A crisp breeze kissed Hermione's face, and she sighed, deeply. She didn't want to have the conversation with Phin, but he'd find out either way. She needed to tell him herself.

She turned and took in the cozy, one-room cabin. Phin stoked the fire, milled around the kitchen, washed off her breakfast plate, and started a fresh kettle of tea. Hermione felt glad they chose to stay in one place. She originally wanted to keep running, but Phin insisted they try their best to carve out some peace for themselves. They stole Hermione another wand on their way through Manitoba, and therefore both got to work setting up as many wards as they could when they finally found a suitable place to stay.

Their first few months together post-Malfoy were different but good. Hermione spent a lot of time sitting alone on the porch taking in the beautiful views and thinking. Despite the cooling temperatures, being outside helped her to feel free. Phin didn't push, and for that, she was glad. The heightened intensity of everything they went through came to a screeching halt once they settled in, and Hermione's nerves didn't know how to cope with the emotional whiplash.

It took her a while to use her magic again for smaller things like warming tea or summoning a blanket. Phin often walked to the porch and asked, "Would you like company?" in his deep voice. Most of the time, she nodded, and they sat together in silence. Every once in a while, when the memories of what she went through felt too raw, she shook her head and hugged her arms to her chest a little tighter. In those moments, Phin always leaned down and kissed her forehead before walking back into the cabin.

She liked their home. Each day she found herself more and more comfortable in her new, free life. Phin's steadfast love made adjusting easier. *Staying in one place will help our situation.* She briefly wrapped her arms around herself, let out another deep sigh, and then walked back into the cabin.

"Phin, we need to talk." She said while setting her mug down on the kitchen counter.

Phin stopped buttering his toast and turned to look at her curiously. "Sure, Mia. What's going on?"

-----Draco-----

Eight Months After Hermione Escaped

Draco sat in a dusty armchair twirling his wand in his hand in a practiced manner and staring at the wall in front of him. The room was dark and quiet. He came here every night. It made him feel closer to Hermione. Next to his chair stood a small side table with the Pensieve

resting on its flat surface. Draco spent the past eight months pouring over his memories, looking for anything that might give him a clue to her whereabouts.

On the night that he killed Voldemort, he returned to the castle hemorrhaging from internal bleeding and running off sheer adrenaline. His rage at her deceit and disobedience caused his executive functioning to falter, and therefore, he neglected to realize she had the power to use her magic against him.

When Hermione blasted him across the room, he was only vaguely conscious, but even in his ruined state, he recognized that if he wanted a chance at any future at all, he needed to Apparate away and get to a Healer. He awoke at Saint Mungo's to several hoovering Mediwitches and a crowd of Aurors and News reporters outside his room.

His recovery was slow. He stayed at the magical hospital for nearly a month. As he healed, he used his Slytherin prowess and vast wealth to secure him a comfy life outside of Azkaban.

Draco rolled his neck and thought back over his first week in the Hospital ward.

"Excuse me, nurse?"

Draco lightly touched the wrist of the Medi-witch who busied herself at his bedside. She warmed his blankets and ensured he had the right potions.

"Yes, Sir??" She asked pleasantly. She lowered her eyes after catching his gaze, and Draco knew he had her under his thumb.

"I know I'm not allowed visitors right now," he simpered conspiratorially, "but could you please make an exception for my elf? I need to check on matters of great importance."

The witch glanced out the widow of Draco's room, saying, "Make it quick, I'll cover for you if anyone tries to come in." She smiled at him kindly then walked out of the room.

As soon as the door closed, Draco sneered, "Kreacher!"

The elf appeared with a pop. He wrung his hands nervously and kept his gaze to the ground. "Yes, Master Malfoy?"

"Where is she? Did you take my necklace off her again? I can't feel its magic. Do not lie to me. That's an order." His voice dripped with malice.

Kreacher hung his head lower. Draco hadn't confronted the elf yet for his treachery. "I do not know where Miss. Granger is, Master," Kreacher croaked shamefully. "I did not take her necklace off again, but it sits on the floor of your chambers, Sir."

"Did she call for you again?"

"Many times while you fought Voldemort, Sir. but none after we arrived back at the castle."

Draco knew something was up as soon as he left the room of hidden things. He heard Theo call Hermione 'Mia,' and he saw the fear in her eyes. Before entering Voldemort's throne

room, he summoned Kreacher and commanded the elf to stay in France. Draco knew Kreacher had the power to remove the necklace, and he didn't want the elf anywhere near the castle in his absence.

Later that evening, while shredding through Hermione's memories, he saw how Kreacher helped her and Theo deceive him. Now the sight of the elf's wrinkled face caused him to see red.

"I no longer require your assistance." Draco spat. "Your service to my household is complete."

Kreacher gave a terrified nod and disappeared.

Draco stood from the chair and walked to the kitchen to grab a drink. He patted the shriveled elf's head on the wall as he passed by. As he entered the kitchen, he ran his finger over the table, wiping away the dust. The place was disgusting, he realized. *I really need to get it cleaned if I plan to spend much more time here.*

Back in the room, he took a long pull on his Fire Whiskey. The ice in his glass clinked against the rim, and the smell of the oak tannins filled the air. The July heat left a sticky haze to the room that clung to his robes. *One way or another, I'll know soon.*

His time of waiting and wondering would soon be over. After months and months of no news, Draco held onto the hope that he might find out something in the next couple of weeks.

After leaving St. Mungos, Draco tied up loose ends with the Ministry then Apparated as quickly as he could back to the castle to look for any clues about their whereabouts. He combed over each inch of his ruined chambers and followed their likely path from the castle to the top of Ben Nevis Mountain.

Draco roared his anger into the air at the sight of the faltering wards.

The trail ended on the mountain-side, so he hastily traveled to Perth but found he was too late. He didn't really expect to beat them to her parents anyway, considering how long it took him to heal. He spent several weeks in Australia looking for clues as to where they went but ultimately found nothing. They simply disappeared. *My witch is brilliant*, he thought dryly.

He headed back to London empty-handed and quickly set to work, devising a new narrative around his actions in the war and making strategic political donations. Essentially doing what his father taught him and his father before him.

During the days, he shook hands with influential witches and wizards or conducted helpful favors for members of the Wizengamot, but each night he set to work hunting the castle witches or scouring through memories. So far, he found thirty-five witches, but none of them knew anything about Hermione. All they remembered was that the castle shook, their men brought them to the Great Hall, and then everything went black until they awoke on the top of Ben Nevis Mountain and Ginny Weasley told them to flee the country. After interrogating

each witch, Draco soundly and efficiently obliterated them, erasing any chance they might come out of the woodwork and ruin his plans within the British government.

Still, three people eluded him. Hermione Granger, Theodore Nott, and Ginny Weasley. Draco spent hours thinking about what he wanted to do to each of them once he caught them. Weasley was a means to an end. If anyone knew where Hermione and Theo went, it would be her. Draco checked every location ever listed to any of the Weasley clan and came up with nothing but rusty, old, decrepit structures left to rot. None of the other witches saw where she went either.

His plans for Theo were fairly cut and dry as well- make him pay for his treachery.

As for Hermione, Draco reasoned that she just needed time to come around. Hermione clearly warmed up to him when she thought Theo was dead. *If only he had been!*

He thought longingly about an alternate reality where Theo never came back, but he still killed Voldemort. In that life, the witches were free, Hermione was happy, and they lived on a beach somewhere far from the world's pressures.

Draco huffed, knowing Hermione apparently had no qualms with throwing her yolk in with a former Death Eater wannabe. He assumed that given the right motivation, she would welcome her life with him again once he found her and dealt with Nott. He just needed a small stroke of luck, one turn of events that might give him an edge on his search. *I'll find you, love. I can be very patient and persistent.*

Two months ago, he thought such a stroke of luck occurred. Late one evening, Draco milled around his study hunched over maps and plans when an urgent floo-call interpreted his thoughts.

"Sir. I caught sight of a witch matching Weasley's description tonight. She entered a small home on the outskirts of Sofia, Bulgaria."

The man on the call was one of Draco's paid cronies, hired to investigate the whereabouts of Ginny and to keep his mouth shut about it. His name was Bromley Payne. He made a good spy because his forgettable appearance made it easy for him to blend in.

"How sure are you that it was her?" Draco asked gruffly, looking up from his desk.

"Quite sure, Sir. she matched the picture you gave me. I noticed her because she ran through the street headed to her house. Her disguise must've faltered somehow because her clothes were ill-fitting ,the glasses she wore fell off as she ran and she didn't pick them up. I think she used Poly, but it ran out on her-lucky for us!"

"I'll be there in 30 minutes."

Draco pulled favors acquiring an emergency international portkey and, true to his assertion, stood in front of the door to Ginny's home in 30 minutes. He chuckled to himself at her attempt to place wards on the structure. He worked his way through the secured door instantly and clicked open the handle. He Disillusioned himself and crept into the home.

Ginny stood by a table in the center of the room. She looked up and Draco briefly caught a flash of terror and rage in her eyes before she Apparated away.

The plan was for Bromley to sneak in from the back and grab her before she had a chance to escape but Ginny obviously held a healthy level of suspicion. She clearly wasn't interested in checking out any odd occurrences. Draco heard Bromley sneak through the kitchen and yelled for him to not to bother but to get out of his sight.

Before leaving, Draco scoured the small apartment Ginny called home. He looked for anything that might indicate Hermione's whereabouts or point to a means of communication. He found nothing; the sparse home looked barely lived in.

Just before he left, Draco had an idea. "Accio Parchment! He said acerbically and held his hand open as parchment flew toward him from all corners of the room. Seven pieces of yellowed paper arrived in total, 6 scrolls of assorted lists and drawings, and one small ripped piece of scrap parchment.

Curious, Draco grabbed a quill and wrote, "Hermione?" The question remained for a moment, then disappeared into the paper. His heart rate increased further. A few minutes later, words scrolled across the parchment in the neat, crisp writing he knew belonged to his witch.

"Ginny? What's going on? Are you hurt? Why are you writing me so soon? You said you wouldn't contact me again unless it was an emergency. Write back quickly but don't forget the code word this time!"

Draco wanted to dive into the parchment and pull her out. He felt thrilled that he found a link to her but frustrated that Hermione, of course, came up with the double protection of a code word. "Fuck!"

He thought for a moment about how to respond then chanced, "Hermione, I need your help! Draco broke into my home! I'm scared. I can't remember the damn code. Can you meet me, please!?" He tried hard to make his handwriting shaky and to look like the writing he found on the other parchments. Draco waited in anticipation, hoping that she might fall for his rouse.

Thirty minutes later, when it was clear Hermione wasn't writing back again, Draco dipped the quill into the inkpot near him one last time. He tapped off the extra ink and wrote to her again, this time not bothering to obscure his handwriting.

"I found her, love. I'll find you too. It's only a matter of time."

Something caught Draco's eye, shaking him from his thoughts. A glint of magic bloomed on the wall in front of him. A huge smile crept across his face as he leaned forward and watched the magic scroll along the wall. After several moments of action, he cast a quick charm igniting all the sconces in the room. He crouched down near the old tapestry and placed his hand along the line that connected Andromeda, Bellatrix, and his Mother. He ran his finger over the branch where his Father joined the family, then down to his name.

He left his fingers at the new joint for a moment where Draco Malfoy now met Hermione Granger. He closed his eyes briefly in reverence, then opened them again, staring hungrily at the branch that connected the two of them...

Ladon Gedeon Malfoy

Chapter End Notes

Ten points to anyone who can figure out what Ladon Gedeon loosely translates to! No major foreshadowing with his name. I just had fun thinking of Hermione trying to name her son something as a big "fuck you!" to Draco.

Song choice for this chapter: "Oblivion by Tribute Bastille "

Chapter 23: Minister Malfoy

Chapter Summary

Several years later and Hermione and Phin find out some unsettling news.

Chapter Notes

This is the second of three chapters posted tonight. Make sure to start with Chapter 22.

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

Daily Prophet

June 7, 2009

Draco Malfoy Appointed Minister of Magic!

In an unsurprising, yet satisfyingly joyful event, Thursday afternoon, Draco Malfoy, celebrated War-Hero and Vanquisher-of-Voldemort, was appointed Minister of Magic.

As our readers know, newly appointed Minister Malfoy, shocked us all with the stunning revelation in 2002 that he was not only a secret double-agent in the resistance against Voldemort for years, but he also single-handedly saved numerous witches from harm by Death Eaters, hunted down and destroyed Voldemort's last remaining Horcrux, and reigned justice down on hundreds of violent rapists and Lord Voldemort himself.

Minister Malfoy, in the last seven years, wiped away remaining doubts on his character by proving to be a model citizen. In early 2003, Malfoy established the Harry Potter Foundation, a philanthropic institution whose primary goal is to provide relief to those disproportionately affected by the war.

In 2005, Minister Malfoy rescued the British wizarding world again by bailing out the 2.4 Billion Galleon deficit created by war-time governmental and economic instability. Most recently, in 2007, Minister Malfoy provided the necessary research and discovery needed to create the Isusiurandum potion, or more colloquially known, "Malfoy Mix" which allows

witches and wizards the opportunity to strengthen their marriage bonds so that no British witch can ever be torn from her bonded partner and forced into slavery again.

"Thank you, Minister Malfoy, for all that you've done for the wizarding community," says Jules Fortenberry from Kent. Cadence Dillingly, a castle captive remarks, "Minister Malfoy will keep us safe," high praise indeed, considering the reclusive nature of the refugee witches. Many, like Fortenberry and Dillingly, anxiously await Minister Malfoy's induction ceremony on September 1st so that they can rest easy knowing that they are safe and in capable hands.

When asked for a comment, our humble new Minister responded, "I'm just doing what I can to help rebuild." Very kind, Minister, but we know that the desire to see a better life for the rescued witches and the British Wizarding community in general spurs from your heartbreak and long lost love. Hermione Granger, Minister Malfoy's true love was tragically the one witch who he was unable to save.

Granger, who aided Minister Malfoy in his plot against the Dark Lord and who fell desperately in love with our new Minister, and he, her, was captured and torn away as a hostage on the night Voldemort fell. Her assailant was another twist to Minister Malfoy's heart; his former best friend turned Death Eater Architect, Theodore Nott, Jr. To this day, Minister Malfoy remains Britain's most eligible bachelor. We'll have to wait and see if this new post as Britain's chief public servant brings with it a new lease on love as well.

-----Hermione-----

"Slimy, Slytherin, Piece of Shit!" Phin bellowed as he threw the paper down on the table, sloshing his tea.

"Slimy, slimy, piece of shit." Ladon echoed in a sing-song manner while sitting on the floor. His white-blond hair shone in the sunlight as he played with the wizard-chess set Hermione and Phin made for him out of wood and stone. They gave it to him two months ago, on his sixth birthday.

"Phin!" Hermione chided through tight lips, a nod in Ladon's direction and a hard stare.

"I'm sorry, Mia, but did you read this yet?" He asked frustratedly, pointing at the discarded *Daily Prophet*.

"Yes," she replied, with a clipped tone.

"What's wrong, Dad?" Ladon perked up, catching the tension in the room.

"Nothing, Bud. I'm fine. I just read something about an old friend of mine who makes bad decisions." He looked up at Hermione and sighed before continuing, "Lad, how about you go practice on your broom for a bit. Mom and I need to chat."

"Really!?" Ladon asked, jumping to his feet. "Can I?" He looked to Hermione for confirmation. She never liked when he practiced flying alone but knew that he was getting older and needed more responsibilities.

"Fine, I guess," She allowed, "but stay in the side-yard under the wards and no more than Dad's height off the ground." She stated sternly.

"I know, Mom!" Ladon retorted while bumping into her affectionately and heading out the door.

Hermione watched as he grabbed his broom and zoomed around the side-yard. Meanwhile, Phin stood up from their small wooden table and stomped into the kitchen.

She strode across the room and picked up the discarded newspaper. Of course, she already read it. The *Daily Prophet* was their one tie to the British wizarding world or any wizarding community. Phin left early in the morning, every four months, and traveled the nearly 1,200 kilometers to Idaho Springs, ID. He crossed the United States border in the process, all on a mission to visit a small wizarding village's bookstore that carried newspapers from around the world. The Polyjuiced Phin requested that they keep all the weekly papers for him to pick up quarterly, meaning their information was always months behind.

Hermione held her breath in her chest every time he made the trip but knew it was necessary, not only to keep tabs on wizarding Britain but also to purchase potion ingredients they couldn't forage at home.

Sighing, Hermione followed him and threaded her hands through his arms, flattening them across his chest.

"How are you so calm about this?" Phin asked

"I don't know, I guess it just seems like the more he settles down in England, and the more we hear about him, the less he's out there looking for us. He can't very well run a country while hunting us down. Maybe it's good news. Maybe he stopped searching." She responded, willfully in denial.

Phin gripped the kitchen counter, forearms straining, then ran his rough hands over hers and grumbled, "I don't like him amassing more power."

Hermione didn't like it either. She knew that Malfoy was up to something, even if it was just "slimy Slytherin" politics to look better in the public eye. However, she decided several years ago to stay sane she needed to try to let go of her fear that Malfoy lurked around every corner. She couldn't offer her best as a mom if she was always scared, and year after year, they remained safe in their haven on the side of a mountain.

"He can't very well send out an army of Aurors to hunt us down if he wants to maintain his war-hero façade." She tried again, but her reasoning even sounded flat to her ears.

Phin pushed off from the counter and turned around. He held her at arm's length and growled, "He *can* if he painted you as a stolen princess of war and me as your evil captor. And, don't

play dumb Mia, it doesn't fit you." He took a deep breath and grabbed a Muggle beer from the pantry casting a quick Freezing charm- one long enough to cool the beer but not long enough to freeze it.

He continued, "Maybe it's time to move on. We've been here for too long. It might be time to start running again."

"What!?" She asked, surprised. Hermione walked to the pantry herself and pulled a metal tin down from the top shelf. She popped the top and pulled out a shortbread biscuit. "You!" She said, pointing the buttery pastry at him, "were the one who said we needed to stay!"

"I know, but that was before. Things are different now. You're my entire world. I won't lose you to that bastard ever again, and," He stopped, getting choked up, momentarily. "I refuse to let him take my son from me!" Phin took a steady breath and then pleaded. "Let's head somewhere warmer for a change. You're always complaining about the cold."

Hermione finished her sweet. With Ladon outside, it was easier to sneak a moment of indulgence. She let the sugar melt on her tongue, then walked over to Phin and grabbed his hand. "It's because of Lad that we *need* to stay. He's happy here. He has friends. He's about to start school in a week." She rubbed her thumb over the back of his hand and stared at their intertwined fingers. "He's never known any life but this beautiful one that we created for him. He doesn't know there's anything to fear in this world. Running destroys that."

Phin looked unconvinced.

"Look, Lad has a sleepover tonight with Liam. Let's relax and enjoy our night alone together. Forget about Malfoy. He hasn't shown up in all these years. If he had any idea where we were, he'd be here by now."

Phin shifted his weight then let out a deep sigh, "I'll get Lad ready and take him to town. The walk will do me good."

Hermione helped Phin and Ladon pack up his overnight bag and head out the door. She pulled Ladon back at the last moment and gave him a big hug.

"*Mom!*" He protested, turning it into a three-syllable word.

"Sorry, I just love you SO much! You gotta' put up with me!" She teased. "Have fun with Liam. Dad or I will come to pick you up in the morning."

Before letting him go, Hermione swiped her hands down his back lightly, casting a Protego Duo. Ladon didn't notice, but when Hermione lifted her eyes, she saw Phin staring at her with a smug expression.

"Come on, Bud," Phin said while holding out the door.

Ladon walked under his arm, yelling, "Bye, Mom!"

As he ran into the yard, Phin turned back and said under his breath. "Not worried, huh?"

Hermione was worried, incredibly so. She knew it was doubtful that Malfoy gave up on his search. It was two years ago that he reached out to her last. After the night he found Ginny, Malfoy tried several times to get her to respond.

"Ginny's locked in the cellar of the Manor, love. You remember that place. Come home, and I won't hurt her."

or

"Come home now, sweetheart. Leave Nott, and I promise I won't go after him."

Or the one that scared her the most.

Two years ago, she felt her pocket warm during Ladon's birthday dinner. She made an excuse and headed quickly into the bedroom to see what new horrible thing Malfoy had to say. She had to be careful because if Phin saw that she still had the parchment, he would go ape shit. Hermione never wrote back, but she couldn't justify throwing the parchment out since she didn't know if Ginny was safe or not. Hermione reasoned that she likely got away since Malfoy's attempts to manipulate her using Ginny seemed half-hearted. She prayed to the gods that she was right about that.

She closed the door quietly, pulled out the parchment, and read,

"Hello, Sweetheart. It's been a while. Tell our son that I wish him a happy birthday and that he'll see his Dad soon."

Hermione audibly gasped.

"Mia? Where'd you run off to?" Phin walked into the room and caught her staring at the message with her hand clasped to her mouth. He instantly ignited the parchment and stormed across the room to knock the flaming paper out of her hands.

The row they had that night dueled anything up until that point and since. Malfoy hadn't mentioned anything about Ladon before. The confirmation that he knew brought on a whole new sense of terror. She was ultimately glad Phin burned the parchment. She grieved over Ginny but felt better with her connection to Malfoy eviscerated.

Still, what she told Phin was true; Malfoy kept saying she'd see him soon, but several years later, there was no sign of him.

Hermione watched Phin and Ladon walk through the wards to the spot near the cliffside where they Apparated each day. She took in the sight of her two guys. Ladon was the spitting image of Malfoy. His white-blond hair, gray eyes, and pointed features cried Malfoy through and through. His mannerisms, though, and personality were all Phin.

There wasn't anything about her sweet, strong boy that edged toward haughty. He never showed signs of arrogance, confidence, yes, but not arrogance. Instead, he laughed from his gut as he climbed tall trees or flew through the wind on his broom. He was incredibly attuned to emotions and was always the first person in their family to notice when she or Phin felt upset.

Hermione sat on the porch, lost in thought, a lot less over the past few years. Any time she wallowed in her thoughts, Ladon found her. Each time he walked out to the porch and, without asking, curled up on her lap and held her hand, or touched her nose and made her smile. Nowadays, though, he was too big to sit in her lap. Instead, they sat together under a large comfy blanket, telling each other stories or reading books together until she moved past her traumatic perseveration.

The door creaked shut, and Hermione walked back to the bedroom she shared with Phin. Phin transfigured a new room for Ladon just before he arrived, turning their one-bedroom cabin into two. She sat on the edge of the bed and thought back to the day she told him she was pregnant.

On their escape, sometime during their stay in Manitoba, Hermione realized that she missed a period. She hoped that it was just from the stress of escaping the castle but realistically knew that she lived under intense pressure for nearly a year with Malfoy and never missed a period during those months.

While lying awake one night, around their campfire, she thought back over the events of the past month and a half. Yes, she and Phin made love several times, but he always made sure to let her know that he cast a contraceptive charm, and the timing didn't line up. Then it hit her, Malfoy never made a big deal out of administering the charm. He always cast it wandlessly and nonverbally, but she usually felt the shiver over her skin in response. However, thinking back, she didn't remember him casting the charm anytime after the feast, the night he gave her the betrothal jewelry.

Too afraid to believe she may be pregnant with Malfoy's child and not knowing how Phin might react, she waited until she had a new wand to test her theory. One afternoon, while claiming she wanted to forage, Hermione walked into the woods by herself and waved her wand over her abdomen. She learned the spell to detect pregnancies when they were on the run together the first time. They were always cautious. The last thing they wanted was a baby while traipsing around England in a tent.

A faint white light hovered over her stomach, pulsating to the quick wub-dub of a tiny life. Seeing the light, Hermione slumped down against a tree and hung her head in her hands. *How are we going to handle this!?*

Several minutes later, Phin found her resting against the tree. He sat with her for a long time, not saying anything. Hermione assumed he thought she was upset about the trauma she recently experienced at the castle.

It took Hermione several more weeks to tell Phin. Despite her baby's origins, she loved the little life that grew within her. She couldn't stomach the idea of terminating the pregnancy, not because she objected in theory, but because she couldn't take anymore heartache. She

worried, though, about what Phin might feel- how he might react to the news. Her worries melted the moment she told him.

Phin pulled her into his arms and said, "I don't give a flying fuck about this child's biological parentage. This baby is ours. We'll raise him or her to know nothing but the love of two parents who are madly in love with each other and them!"

Waking from her thoughts, Hermione dragged in a deep breath and rubbed her right hand over her forehead to wipe away the stress. She flicked her wand, ignited several scented candles, and then cast the charm to start up the gramophone playing light piano music. *Breathe in...Everything is going to be okay. Breathe out...Malfoy isn't going to find us. Breathe in...My family is safe. Breathe out...*

She stood from the bed and walked into the ensuite to draw a bath. Sitting underneath the warm water helped her to relax. She wanted to take her advice, forget about Malfoy, and spend an evening on the couch, drinking wine and seeing what happened.

Hermione plucked some bubbles from the water, cupping them in her hand and blowing them away. Just then, she heard Phin walk through the house and into the bedroom.

"Mia?" He called.

"In here."

Phin found her in the bathroom and walked over to sit on the edge of the tub.

After a long moment, he said, "Fine, we can stay." He hung his head between his legs and rested his elbows on his knees.

Hermione slid further into the water and watched him warily. She didn't want to fight about Malfoy anymore, and she knew Phin had more to say.

"But, Mia..." He stopped then turned to stare at her. "We need to bond."

She slunk entirely below the surface of the water at that assertion. Ever since the castle, the thought of bonding frightened her. She loved Phin desperately, but she also spent the past seven years advocating for the fact that they didn't need to bond to prove their love.

She emerged from the water and wiped the droplets from her eyes. "Phin, we've gone over this b..."

"No, that's enough, we bond, or we run." He pushed up on his knees and walked across the room to lean against the vanity with his arms crossed, scowling.

Hermione stood as well and grabbed her towel. She wrapped the soft fabric around her body, saying, "You don't know what you're asking me." She used a corner of the towel to dry her dripping mane.

"I don't!?" He scoffed. "I know exactly what happened to you. I was there. I watched it happen, helplessly! I know how scared you were! I also watched as it took you years to climb

back from the brink of your emotional trauma. I understand why you don't want to tie yourself to anyone so permanently, but unfortunately, it isn't only about what you want!"

She crossed her arms and stared at him indignantly. "Oh, No?"

"No!" He said with a tone of finality. "If we bond and he finds us, he can't force you to bond. I'll always be able to get to you."

Hermione shuddered, remembering the feeling she had when Malfoy said the same thing to her.

"I don't know much about magical bonds. What will change when we are married?" She asked, trying to divert the focus back to a topic he might like.

Malfoy placed his hand on her cheek and said with desire, "We'll be connected permanently. Our magic will intertwine and make us stronger. We'll be able to feel each other's emotions." He kissed her lips. "I'll always be able to know if you are scared or in trouble, and if so, I'll be able to find you instantly no matter where you are in the world. No one will be able to take you from me or hurt you."

"If he never finds us and we live happily ever after, is it the worst thing to be bonded to me?" Phin paused. "We need to keep Lad safe and happy. You say that requires staying in one place. I need to keep *you* safe. We need to bond!"

She felt the realization wash over her. Phin was right. As much as she didn't like the idea of being tied to a wizard so intimately, it was time. The thought of being bonded to Malfoy was terrifying. The concept of bonding with Phin, besides how she felt about the principal of the matter, was... nice. They could stay together in their home and know two things, Malfoy would never kill Phin- for fear of killing her- and he would never have complete control over her. *I can take that option away from him!*

"Okay." She huffed. She busied herself by toweling off. She spent so much time resisting this option that it felt weird to change her mind on the matter. Although, the more she examined her feelings, the more she found it felt right.

A wide grin stretched across Phin's face. He uncrossed his arms while beaming and crooned, "Come here."

Hermione rolled her eyes teasingly and padded over to him. *Oh, he's going to make a meal out of this victory. I'm never going to hear the end of it.* Phin fingered the top edge of her towel where the damp fabric met her skin. "You'll do it?" He asked again in his deep, sexy voice.

"Yes, you're right, it's time." She sighed, smiling at his infectious joy.

"Say it again." He leaned down and kissed her neck, opening his lips briefly to suck on her tender skin.

She tilted her head back in pleasure at the feeling and whispered, "You're gloating."

"Yes, I am." He said while raising his head to kiss her lips, his left hand bunching up her towel. Hermione felt a breeze graze her upper thighs. "It's not very often that *the* Hermione Granger admits she was wrong," he said.

Hermione pulled back, "I never said I was wrong!" Phin moved his hand up to remove her towel. He let it fall to the ground as he stared at her hungrily.

"No, but you did say that *I* was right! Merlin, you're beautiful."

Hermione vanished his shirt, raised to her tiptoes, and ran her fingers through her hair. The movement pushed her wet, naked breasts against his tight chest. "You see me all the time, aren't you bored with me yet?" She continued teasing.

Phin groaned deep in his chest at the feel of her brushing up against him. "Never," he said earnestly.

In the end, they successfully forgot about Malfoy and enjoyed their evening together. Phin took Hermione slowly on the couch, in front of the fire. He moved in and out of her, rolling his pubic bone along her tingling clit and they both came at the same time. They fell asleep for a while in each other's arms, and then Hermione awoke to red coals in the fireplace. She felt hot and sticky, shoved between the inside of the couch and under Phin's heavy arms. Rolling on top of him as he slept, she used her hand to coax him from his dreams. Once he was hard as a rock again and murmuring her name like a prayer, she sank down on his weeping shaft and clamped her tight walls around him.

They took full advantage of the empty house and got very little sleep. Before sunrise, Phin walked her back to the ensuite again and drew another bath. He slipped into the water, then held her hand as she stepped in and guided her to rest her back to his chest, his muscular legs straddling her. Phin kissed her neck while rolling her nipple between his thumb and middle finger. When Hermione's breath hitched at the sheer pleasure of the warm silky water and Phin's rough fingers, he lifted her slightly to spread her legs then dipped his expert fingers into her folds. Hermione shattered as his hands glided through the water and brought her over the edge.

Phin walked them outside to the porch as the sun rose over the mountain range. The light shimmered across the lake below as he held out his open palms to her, and she placed her small hands in his.

"Hermione Granger, I choose you, now and always. I bind myself to you from this day forward so that nothing can pull us apart. I tie my magic to yours and pledge to love you, cherish you, and obey your will until death do us part." He pulled out his wand and tapped the soft underside of each of her wrists. Light golden strings of magic twined themselves around their clasped hands.

She took a deep breath and stared past him to the beautiful scenery surrounding them. The moment felt right. "Theodore Nott, I chose you, now and always. I bind myself to you from this day forward so that nothing can pull us apart. I tie my magic to yours and pledge to love you, cherish you, and obey your will until death do us part." The bands of magic flickered

and sparked with intensity before sinking deep into their skin. Hermione felt a rush as their magic entwined, and she knew they conducted the ceremony successfully.

Phin wrapped his arms around her, kissed the top of her head, and said into her hair, "I love you. He'll never be able to separate us now!"

-----Draco-----

knock, knock, knock

"Come in," Draco called as he watched a nervous-looking witch push open the large mahogany door.

"Excuse me, Sir. I didn't mean to bother you."

"Not at all. How can I help?" He said with a kind smile.

"I have the archives you requested." She stumbled over her words and walked further into the room with two large books in her arms.

"Thank you," He paused with raised eyebrows, clearly indicating space for her to insert her name.

"Sarah Beth, Sir. uh, Hawkins."

"Well, Miss. Hawkins, I appreciate your assistance." He said as he stood from his desk and met her in the middle of the room. He took the large books from her hands and placed them on his desk. "That will be all for now."

"Thank you, Sir. If you need anything else, I'm right outside." She turned to walk back out the door. "And, Sir." She said, turning around for a moment. "Happy first day. We're all glad to have you with us."

Draco nodded with another smile and watched as she left. Once the door clicked shut, he pulled the first of the two massive texts towards himself and ran his fingers reverently over its dusty cover. He wanted to get his hands on this book for years. *Being Minister already has its perks.* He flipped past pages and pages of names of British wizards and witches, then finally found the names he sought.

Theodore Nott Jr. & Hermione Jean Granger (Bonded Pair)

Draco growled low in his throat and slammed the book closed. Dust flew everywhere. He knew it was likely the case but still didn't enjoy seeing the proof in black and white. *Calm down, stick to the plan. I need to be patient. Their time together is running out.*

He pulled the other book forward to leaf through its contents. Similarly, Draco found lists and lists of names, this time of younger witches and wizards. He flipped to the M's and saw,

Makanee, Cassandra age 11, 3028 Capons St. SO53 5PD UK

Manfield, Davin, age 11, 7879 Godric CT. N38 UK

With another great sigh, Draco pushed the second book away. *No news there. I'll get her back; I just have to wait.*

He finished up his long day of meetings, and paperwork then left the office around 7:00 pm. It felt good to start his new role. As he walked to the fireplace to Floo home, he pondered the difference between being feared as Voldemort's second in command and being revered as Britain's savior. Both brought power, but one was decidedly more enjoyable. One side involved receiving and engaging in torture, while the other side involved lots of smiling and handshakes.

This is the side I wanted to be on all along. I just wanted to be here with Hermione. Draco groaned over the irony that he was finally able to align himself with the morals and social norms he agreed with most but that now Hermione saw him as a Dark Lord of sorts. He'd have to work hard to change that opinion.

He stopped by his home to change then headed out for the evening. He wasn't looking forward to his night but needed to keep up appearances and head off suspicions. Draco didn't want people poking too much into his off-the-job time. He needed to cultivate the narrative that he was a normal bachelor, not a man on a desperate mission to find his bride and son. He wanted to have the story carefully constructed before he brought Hermione and Ladon home to England, and he didn't want the press poking around in case a few people went missing along the way. Because Draco knew one thing, he liked his shiny new, upstanding persona, but nothing was going to get in the way of him finding and settling down with his family.

He Apparated to a townhouse in South London and walked the steep steps to the door before knocking politely.

Quick footsteps approached, and Draco watched as the door opened, revealing a stunning witch in a plunging blue robe.

"Why, hello, Minister!" The woman crooned.

"Good evening, Helene." Draco smiled, holding an arm out to her. "How are you on this fine night?"

"Splendid! You have no idea my surprise when I received your owl. What an honor to accompany you to dinner."

"The honor is all mine, I assure you." Draco bowed slightly.

He Apparated them from her doorstep to the cobblestoned streets of Diagon Alley and made sure to take his time walking her to the new 5-star restaurant, Délicesse. He wanted the

reporters to have plenty of opportunities to capture the event.

They ate lamb chops with cognac Dijon cream sauce as Helene excitedly replayed the small moments of her day and week.

Draco internally rolled his eyes at each new story. At one point, when Helene giggled vapidly, Draco excused himself and walked to the bar to grab them new drinks.

He ran a hand over his eyes, lamenting the tedious task of engaging with any woman that wasn't Hermione. No one held a candle to her wit and drive; no one came near her level of compassion. No one else was the mother of his heir.

He approached the table with the refilled drinks and decided to wrap up the evening as quickly as possible. He reasoned that surely the reporters got what they needed by now. He wanted to head home and pour over any recent news from his paid men around the globe.

As soon as Helene finished her last sip of the 1991 Domaine Leflaive Montrachet Draco purchased for her, he spoke up. "Well, I have a very early morning tomorrow, as you can imagine. Shall I walk you home?"

Helene giggled again softly and leaned forward. "You shall, and I'd love to show you that new dining table I mentioned."

Not a chance.

2014

Draco stepped out of the Floo at the ministry just after dawn. Lately, several policies and legislative emergencies drew his attention, so he hoped that the on-duty guards wouldn't think much of his early arrival.

He waited for this day since his first day as Minister of Magic. In fact, he waited for this day for even longer than that. He pulled a thick, familiar tome off of his shelf as he walked toward his desk. Draco learned over his five years as Minister that the Hogwarts Registry updated each year on June 15th to give the Ministry and Hogwarts leadership enough time to reach out to Muggle parents and inform them appropriately. The updated list also provided

the information necessary to reach out to all incoming British eleven-year-olds and give them the start-of-term instructions and booklists.

Draco flipped open the heavy book and parted the pages directly into the M's, having done this same act so many times before. He found it hard over the past years not to obsessively check, *just in case*. However, today was the day that there was no doubt in his mind he would find what he longed to see. He ran his finger over the names and stopped at,

Malfoy, Ladon, age 11, 766 Mountain Ave, Banff, AB T1L 1J2, Canada

I found you, love.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter Hermione and Phin's time is up. They had a good run.

Song choice for this chapter: "Hollywood's Bleeding by Post Malone"

Chapter 24: Fire Whiskey

Chapter Summary

Ladon turned eleven and he wants to go to wizard school.

Chapter Notes

This is the third of three chapters I'm posting tonight. Make sure to start with Chapter 22.

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

-----Hermione-----

August 2014

"THIS ISN'T FAIR!" Ladon bellowed at Hermione as he paced back and forth through the living room. "WHY CAN'T I GO!? HOW WILL I EVER LEARN??"

Hermione's heart ached. She avoided this argument for years. "I'm sorry, but we aren't changing our minds on this. Your Dad and I will teach you magic. We're actually very good."

"Probably because you had a proper education!" He interrupted with a scowl.

"Yes, but regardless, we know enough to share that education with you. Anyway, you're already light-years ahead of where I was when I started school." She sat down in the armchair by the fireplace, hoping to diffuse the tension.

"Mom, it's not just about what I'll learn. It's about being with other magical kids!" He pleaded. "Why do we live up here, so isolated? Why don't we have any magical friends?"

Hermione rested her head on her hand and rubbed at her temples. *I need Phin.* "Your Dad and I just prefer our solitude, that's all," She tried.

"You mean you like secrets! Did you know that I thought we were the only magical family in the world until I was eight!?! I heard you and Dad talking about 'other witches', and it blew my mind. Kinda' like how I heard you talking about several wizard schools you have NO

INTENTION OF SENDING ME TO!" Ladon threw out his arms in frustration and kicked at a nearby chair leg. "You should really learn how to throw up more silencing wards!"

Yes, we should!

Hermione's head ached with a persistent migraine. She wanted Phin to be home to help her with this argument. Whether due to stress or some virus, she and Phin felt off for over a week. Phin complained first of the headache and nausea and Hermione followed the next day. She thought back over his state this morning and cringed. *He shouldn't be working right now in his condition.* On top of everything else, Phin developed a terrible cough.

She closed her eyes for a moment to check-in with his feelings through the bond. *He's miserable and exhausted. Great.* She heaved a deep sigh and looked up at Ladon who waited for a response. "We don't have the money to send you away." She said trying to power through the pain.

"That's not true. Anyways, I read in the *Daily Prophet* that the British school gives out scholarships."

Damnnit! "Lad! I told you to keep away from those newspapers. That's enough! Now, drop it!"

"Fine! I'm going to Liam's. His mom's new boyfriend wants to take us hiking. At least some parents are cool!"

Hermione lifted her eyes to his and gave him the kind of stare that only moms can muster. "Try again, please."

Ladon pulled in a deep breath and glared at her with a swotty air of sarcasm, "Can I please go to Liam's. I'd like to go hiking with my friend."

She needed to lay down and clearly, Ladon needed some space from her as well. "Yes. Just let me call his mom."

Hermione and Phin engaged in the painstaking work of setting up a telephone in their home several years ago. It was difficult to get the line up the mountain and the sound crackled due to the magical activity, but the Muggle device helped when they needed to call into work or communicate with Ladon's friends.

She dialed Liam's mom and coordinated the afternoon then Apparated Ladon down the mountain and let him walk the rest of the way to Liam's house alone. She and Phin carefully charmed the town so that no one ever questioned where they lived or how they got to and from their home. The spellwork was much like a Muggle-repelling Charm. Hermione developed the theory and practice and Phin called it a 'work of art.' It took several weeks to implement but in the end, they felt safe interacting with the locals more and didn't feel it was necessary to sneak away when traveling home. If you asked anyone in town where they lived they typically responded, "Oh, down main street." or "Just a little ways away."

Hermione needed to process what just happened so instead of heading home she walked through town to Phin's pub, the Bear Claw. She pushed open the door to find a mostly empty pub. Five tables held the regular Saturday afternoon crowd and two grump-looking Muggles sat hunched over pints at the bar.

She heard Phin before she entered the kitchen. He sat in his office. Timetables and purchasing orders neatly lined his desk, but Phin wasn't looking at any of it. He coughed loudly into his arm as she entered. "Hi, what's going on, I can feel your stress and exhaustion running through my chest." He said before coughing again. "I was just about to call home and check on you."

Hermione scowled at him and crossed her arms. "You need to *go* home. I came here to tell you about the massive fight I just had with Lad, but I can see I need to drag you out of here."

"What fight?"

"The one we knew was coming. He wants to go to *school!*" She said pointedly.

"I'm sorry." He coughed again. "You're right I shouldn't be here and I wish I had been home to help you with that. Let me just see if Carla can handle the pub tonight and I'll walk you home."

Thirty-minutes later Hermione and Phin walked past all the tourist' shops and local haunts on their way to the base of the mountain. Phin placed a hand at the small of her back as they walked, a habit of his. He seemed to always need to touch her, not to smother but just to reassure them both that they were together and safe.

She thought over their life in Canada. Despite all odds, they built the dream for themselves that they always wanted. They enjoyed their work, had dinner together as a family nearly every evening, and fell asleep in each other's arms every night.

She shuddered to think what they went through to get to this point, but everything was peaceful and quiet for so long it was possible to hope that with continued precautions they might remain happy. Hermione felt the warm heat from the summer day and sighed.

She loved Ladon unconditionally, but parenting wasn't easy at times. Ladon was as headstrong as she was and as cunning as Phin; it made for a formidable combination.

They decided years ago that he needed to stay with them in Banff and attend the Muggle schools. It was simply too dangerous for him to go to any wizarding school. She and Phin devised magical curriculums and study schedules to conduct in the afternoons, once Lad arrived home. They started that education in his first year of primary.

She knew he must feel isolated. He had Muggle friends but the wizarding world was still a captivating mystery to him.

"Lad is at Liam's I assume." Phin's gravely voice stated, knowing where Hermione's mind was at the moment.

"Yeah, they went hiking with Bev and some new boyfriend." Hermione paused, "Are we making the right decision? Maybe he could attend the school in Newfoundland. It's not *that* far away."

"Stop, Mia you're just upset from your argument. You know that's not a possibility." Phin pulled her in for a hug. "He knows about Lad." Hermione didn't miss how Phin avoided saying Malfoy's name. It didn't matter, they both instantly knew who he was talking about. "He's going to be scouring the schools, especially the ones in Canada."

She grimaced. Phin was right. "Lad just looks so sad. I hate that we have to shelter him. I don't want him to resent us someday."

"Resenting us is better than the alternative," Phin reasoned. He stopped and turned towards her once they walked under the forest canopy. "Someday he'll be old enough and we'll tell him the truth. Once he knows, he'll understand."

They traveled the rest of the way home together in silence. Once back, Hermione directed Phin to the bedroom telling him he needed to rest. She pulled off his shirt and ran her hands over his chest. Phin dipped his head and kissed her tenderly, she savored the comforting smell of pine then ushered him to the bed.

Hermione thought for a moment about curling under his arm and falling asleep with him but didn't like his look and wanted to do some research. She started to worry about the hollow rattle to his cough and the gaunt look to his eyes. It always shook her when Phin felt sick. He was such a strong and capable man, seeing him vulnerable felt off somehow. Once he fell asleep she set to work scouring magical texts looking for the source of the illness or a way to combat its side effects. She never experienced this type of magical ailment before. He seemed to be wasting away.

She pushed through her symptoms knowing that someone had to figure out a treatment plan and Phin certainly couldn't do it in his state. Somewhere near 7:00 PM, the phone rang.

"Hello," she answered.

Cracckle "Mom?" crack Ladon's voice traveled through the spotty lines. Hermione pressed the receiver to her ear.

"Yes, are you ready for me to pick you up?" She tried her best to speak through the crackling of the line.

"Mom?" Ladon tried again.

"Lad, I can hear you, are you ready to come home?" She tried again.

"What? No. We're headed out again tonight to camp near the lake. I'll be home tomorrow okay?"

"No! You need to come home. We still need to talk everything out further with your dad. Plus, since when does Bev camp?" Hermione felt her irritation growing. Liam's mom Bev hated camping and Hermione sure as hell wasn't going to let Lad go camping with Bev's new boyfriend without meeting him first. She hated using the phone. "I'm coming to get you now."

"Mom! I can't really hear you. We're headed out. I'll talk to you tomorrow morning. Thanks!" Ladon hung up and Hermione stared at the phone in anger. This wasn't what she needed right now. She wanted to crawl into bed and sleep off her illness, not chase her son down and drag him home so that they might continue a painful fight.

Hermione yelled down the hall. "Phin, I'm going back to town to pick up Lad, I'll be right..." Just then the phone rang again.

"Ladon, stay where you are, I'm coming to get you!" She answered without waiting to hear who it was. So few people called the house.

"Emily?" A small voice asked anxiously.

The call had to be from someone in town. She and Phin introduced themselves to the locals as Emily and Jon and went by those names with the Muggles ever since their arrival in Banff —a fact that fed into Lad's suspicion and anger. Hermione pressed her ear to the receiver again, the anxiety rising within her. She didn't recognize the female voice on the call and she needed to get to Ladon before he took off to Merlin knows where.

"Is this Emily? This is Carla from the Bear Claw."

She let out a huff of irritation. "Hi Carla. What's going on."

"It's just, Jon left me in charge tonight but there's an emergency at my house and I need to take off. Is there any chance he could come back?"

She leaned backward to check on Phin down the hall. The room was dark and his raspy cough broke the silence. "No. He's really sick. Is there anyone else who can take over?"

"There's one other waitress here but she's new. She doesn't know how to do anything yet except serve. The cook's here too but he's the same way, only does the food."

"I'll be right there."

Hermione Apparated back to town frustrated and ill. Her headache spread over her temples and behind her ears and her breathing began to labor. Something was significantly wrong. *Grab Lad, check on the pub, head home.*

She Dissillusioned herself under the canopy then Apparated to Liam's street. She didn't want to waste time and energy walking to town. Noticing the clear street, she removed the charm and knocked on Liam's door. Several minutes passed. She rapped on the door knocker many times before reasoning that Bev must have gone with the boys after all. *Maybe this new man is rubbing off on her.*

She decided to head to the pub and call Bev's cell. If she was with the boys Hermione felt better about letting Ladon go on the trip. She needed to handle the pub and go home to lie down.

Upon entering the pub Hermione quickly noticed that the place was busier than normal. She relieved Carla and set to work in the back making sure the food got out and the drinks were stocked. Once everything seemed in order she snuck back to Phin's office to call Bev. No answer.

Her arms and legs felt sluggish and her vision blurred slightly. She tried calling home to check on Phin. No answer.

"Um, Emily? Do we have?" The new waitress popped around the corner of the office but just as she started to ask her question the phone rang.

Hermione grabbed the call throwing one finger up for the waitress in the international sign for 'give me a minute.'

"Bear claw." Hermione answered anxiously.

"Emily? Is that you? I got a couple calls from the pub. What's up?"

Hermione let out a sigh of relief. "Bev! I just wanted to check in. I didn't really want Lad to go camping tonight. Sorry, I just don't know your boyfriend yet. But once I realized you went too I thought it was probably okay. I was calling to make sure everything is alright. Lad didn't have any clothes or camping gear. Can you tell me where you are? I could bring some items by."

"What? Oh, no, they're fine." Bev responded distractedly. Hermione heard the sounds of rustling in the background of the call.

"Emily?" The new waitress asked again.

Hermione shot her a look that could kill then turned back to the call. "They're fine? Aren't you with them? You weren't home when I stopped by."

"Oh, I went out the store to grab groceries. No, I stayed home but they're fine. You'll like him a lot when you meet him. He's a very nice guy. Just moved here for a job. He's going to be teaching this fall at the high school."

Hermione tightened her grip around the phone. She felt everything slipping out from under her. She didn't know how this day went so sideways. She tried to ask a question but had to stop coughing deeply from her chest first.

"Who?" She croaked.

"My new boyfriend. Darren."

Fear crept over Hermione's skin. *Calm down, Hermione, lots of men are named Darren. It doesn't mean anything necessarily.* She hung up on Bev and ran to the door. This guy might

be totally fine but Hermione wasn't going to risk it. She needed to get eyes on Ladon, immediately.

As she rounded the corner of the office into the pub, the waitress followed. Hermione turned around scowling, trying to shake her off.

"Emily, I'm really sorry but there's this big guy at the bar asking for *Fire Whiskey*? Is that something we carry? I've never heard of it."

Hermione instantly grabbed her wand. She felt the world closing in on her. She knew what was about to happen as she turned slowly towards the dining room. Time stood still and her nerve endings popped as every fiber of her being tensed with fear.

Her vision blurred as she took in Malfoy standing in the center of the pub, confirming her suspicions.

He wore Muggle clothes, faded jeans, brown boots, a tight-fitting gray shirt. His hands rested in his pockets casually showing off his Dark Mark. His silver eyes caught hers as they stared at one another for a moment before his arrogant smirk spread across his face in triumph.

She twisted on the spot attempting to Apparate away, Muggles be damned.

"Ah, ah, love. I wouldn't do that if you want to see Ladon again." He said calmly.

Suddenly Hermione noticed that everyone in the pub was frozen. Malfoy stalked towards her as the ringing in her ears felt like a knife to her skull.

"Where is he!" She growled through tight lips.

He stopped in front of her and brushed her hair behind her ears. She felt the heat from his body and shivered at the rush of intense memories from her time at the castle.

"We're leaving, now." He crooned. Hermione read his subtext loud and clear, *fight me on this and you'll never see your son again*.

She froze, paralyzed in fear but pushed on, knowing she needed to fight. "You can't!" She spat. "We bonded. Phin and I are inseparable now. He'll always be able to find me. You'll never be able to have me completely."

Another deep cough racked her body and as Hermione pulled her arm away from her mouth she noticed drops of blood on her sleeve. She felt her magical core draining rapidly.

"Shh, sweetheart. You gave me years to figure out a way around that complication." He said confidently.

Hermione watched as black splotches crossed her vision before she doubled over in pain. Malfoy guided her head to rest on his shoulder. He placed his large hand on the back of her head. "It's okay, I'm here, love. It's almost over, you'll feel better soon."

Her eyes shot wider with fear. She needed to run, to get to Phin, to find Lad but her body felt too weak. *I'm dying? He's punishing me for running away from him?*

Malfoy pulled a phial out of his pocket and popped the top with one hand while fisting her hair. He tilted her head and tipped the potion down her throat then grabbed her forearm.

The last thing she saw before passing out was gold bands wrapping around their entwined arms.

Chapter End Notes

What happened to Phin? Where is Ladon? What will happen when Hermione wakes up? Check back next week to see what happens when Draco and Hermione reunite after all these years.

Song choice for this chapter: "Zombie by Bad Wolves"

Chapter 25: Freedom?

Chapter Summary

Hermione has her magic and she isn't trapped inside, but can she break free?

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning: DV

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

Hermione woke to the soft feel of plush fabric and a mattress that enveloped her in comfort. The pleasant feeling of her physical surroundings was in direct conflict with her anxiety. Malfoy's familiar clean scent perfumed the air causing her eyes to shoot open in fear. The room was dark with only the faint light of the lamps from the hallway. Hermione noticed deep cerulean and cobalt shades of blue through the window and suspected it was just after dusk.

Malfoy sat at the edge of the bed. His dark clothes melted into the room, but his silver hair and piercing eyes stood out vividly. He rested a hand on her lower back in what Hermione assumed was supposed to be a comforting gesture.

At his touch, she threw out her arm to brush him off, then scrambled up to the headboard clutching her legs to her chest.

"Where is Ladon, and what did you do with Phin?" She scathingly asked as she cast her eyes out for her wand. She found it resting on the bedside table and instantly fisted the wood, directing it at Malfoy's chest.

His mouth turned down in a disappointing frown, but he didn't grab his wand or react concerned. "You've been out for a week. I just brought you home from St. Mungos." He clarified. "Our son's at Hogwarts. They welcomed the incoming first-years a week early to help the students acclimate. The Ministry merged Hogwarts and Beauxbaton this summer to account for the drop in population."

Hermione's foggy brain took a while to catch up. She was absent from the wizarding world for so long it felt confounding to pick up where she left off. Hearing Malfoy talk about St. Mungos, the Ministry, Hogwarts, and Beauxbaton felt utterly odd.

"His cohort is small, but he seemed content when I left him." Malfoy finished. He leered at her hungrily, and Hermione felt desire and self-satisfaction dripping off of him. Age hardly touched his features. She knew it wouldn't. Wizards aged slowly; he still looked strong and powerful, only less militaristic than when she last saw him and more business-like.

Hermione felt sick. Her feet rubbed back and forth under the covers nervously. She was in the same type of silk pajama sets that Malfoy always preferred her in. She hadn't worn silk since leaving the castle. The feel of it viscerally brought her back to the time she spent under his thumb.

She continued her angry probing. "What does Ladon know? What did you do to *Phin*?"

Malfoy slowly pulled the sheet from her legs and watched as she curled into a tighter ball. He placed his hand millimeters from her bare foot. All his movements meant to assert dominance subtly, and she knew it. He spoke calmly, "I told him the truth, that you were very sick and I came to save you. That I'm his real father and that he would attend Hogwarts this Fall."

Hermione sifted through the triage of the answers she needed immediately. Ladon was safe. She would get back to him in a minute. She stared daggers at Malfoy and demanded for the third time, "What did you do to *Phin*!?"

She felt ice creep up her chest. He sat back, and she watched as the muscles in his forearms strained. His tightly controlled expression narrowed as he said in a calm voice, "Mention Theo again, and I will permanently erase him from your memories. You had your time together. That time is over."

Her hands shook, and she closed her eyes, reaching out for the shared connection she grew to depend on over the past five years. She felt nothing. The link to Phin was gone, replaced by a nagging and frustrating draw toward Malfoy. She remembered the gold bands she saw before passing out, then raised her gaze to meet his eyes and said, "You forced me to bond."

His smug expression was all the confirmation she needed.

Think, Hermione! You prepared for this! She wasn't naïve. She knew there was a strong possibility she would end up with Malfoy again at some point. She and Phin strategized several ways to evade, avoid, injure and deceive Malfoy if he caught her. Recently though, that scheming revolved around the bond and how Phin could find her and help. She hadn't considered the possibility of Malfoy bonding with her for a very long time. Those avenues for escape were much, much harder. *Fight! Figure out a plan!*

"You clearly intend to keep me trapped again, but I will *never* be yours." She sneered, hoping if nothing else, to cut him to the core.

Malfoy pushed up on his knees to stand, saying, "You're a free witch, love. No one is keeping you trapped anywhere. The war is over." He flicked his wand sideways, and Hermione felt herself freeze. *No, no, no, no!* Terror laced through her body at the thought of what he intended to do. He walked to the head of the bed and grabbed the back of her neck. Then he pulled her forward and kissed her forehead. He turned to walk out of the room; before

stepping into the hallway, he looked back and said, "Dinner is in thirty minutes. I expect you with me at every meal." As the door shut, Hermione felt the spell release.

She waited to hear his retreating footsteps then jumped out of bed to try the window. It opened quickly, and Hermione felt the cool, late summer air skim her arms. She took one look back at the room and thought about Apparating to Hogwarts to grab Ladon and run but knew it was pointless since Malfoy had unlimited access to her location now due to the bond. Not to mention the full force of the Ministry behind him.

It doesn't make sense! How did he transfer the bond? Phin and I should have died if our bond severed. She pulled in a sharp breath at the thought of Phin. If I'm alive, there's a chance Phin is too. I can't fall apart. I have to believe he's still alive so that I can do what I need to do.

She needed more information. She looked around the room, realizing that it was vaguely familiar but unable to place it. "Lumos!" She tried and heaved a sigh of relief when the lamps in the room ignited. The large canopy bed loomed in the middle of the room with an ornate fireplace across from it. Two doors stood to the left of the fireplace, and Hermione noted that one led to a marble-clad bathroom and the other a large closet. The only other furniture in the room was a writing desk and two armchairs.

She found Malfoy's toothbrush and toiletries in the bathroom, along with his clothes in the closet. The suite was intended for the two of them to share.

After thoroughly combing over every inch of the room, Hermione cracked open the door and stepped out into the hallway. She gaped at the sight before her. The house looked nothing like it did when she visited as a teen. Malfoy ensured that the floors and surfaces sparkled, fresh white paint covered the walls, and the musty smell and dust were a thing of the past. Expensive-looking art hung throughout the hallway, drawing her attention to the large landing at the top of the stairs.

Grimmauld Place. I guess it's better than Malfoy Manor.

Hermione knew she could barricade herself in the bedroom and ward the doors, but she was still weak from her recent illness and had no interest in battling Malfoy tonight. If she learned anything from her time at the castle, it was that when she followed Malfoy's orders, he treated her kindly. Subsequently, when she refused him or fought, he met her with fire and almost always won.

She felt determined that things would be different this time around, but she didn't want to push him too much tonight. Malfoy's forced bonding caused her to rethink her strategy. She needed more time. She made her way down to the kitchen and peered in to find pots bubbling away in the fireplace and delicious scents of cooking food but no Malfoy.

Suddenly she felt his looming presence behind her.

"I assumed you wouldn't want to live at the Manor," Malfoy revealed while running his calloused hands up and down her soft arms. Hermione felt gooseflesh rise to meet his touch. "Here, we're close to my work. Plus, we both have happy memories in this place. We can

work together to make it our home." She turned around to glare at him, and he continued, "The dining room is upstairs. Come, I'll show you."

Malfoy walked her to the main floor and opened the French doors leading to a formal dining room. They never ate here during her youth, and Hermione didn't even know that the room existed. She never thought to investigate because the glass in the doors used to be too dirty to see through back then.

The long table housed a silver candelabra, a large vase filled with white hydrangeas and peonies, and two elaborate place settings near the back window. Malfoy directed them inside and pulled a chair out for Hermione. He then walked to the head of the table and sat as well.

"So, what are the rules?" She huffed angrily, "I'm sorry, *gifts*." She corrected.

He raised a curious eyebrow, asking, "Rules?"

She sat back in her chair and crossed her arms, waiting for him to proceed.

"There are no rules. We no longer need them. You're right. We're bonded. Theo contracted a rare Magical illness that was going to take your life if I hadn't found you." Hermione rolled her eyes as he pulled the cork out of a bottle of red wine and poured two glasses for them. "Several years ago, I developed a potion that strengthens marriage bonds..."

"I know, I read that," she interrupted. "What does that have to do with us?" She pushed her wine glass away, then added, "And stop pretending you didn't cause that illness somehow."

Malfoy gave an arrogant smirk. "I see you kept tabs on me." He said, ignoring her second comment. He took a sip of his wine and placed the glass back on the table. "Some bonds aren't as strong as others. For instance, many half-blood or Muggle-born bonds falter under pressure. Pure-blood bonds are stronger because of their tie to several generations worth of magic. The potion strengthens the weak bonds and also has a valuable benefit in our case. It enhances bonds by tying them to the bloodline. That means that if someone tries to forcibly sever the bond between a mated pair who has a child, it will be impossible."

He took a sip of wine and continued, "It's how we encouraged population growth." He raised a pointed finger in her direction, "Now, you made the foolish decision to bond with someone who was not the father of your child. Therefore, when you were gravely ill, I was able to administer the potion, tying your bond to the bloodline, then transfer the bond to myself to save you."

Hermione felt a chill creep up her spine, "And Ph...?" She started to ask what happened to Phin again, but Malfoy leveled her with a deathly look, and the words died in her throat. She needed to know what happened to him, but if she pushed Malfoy and he erased her memories, it wouldn't matter either way. Even if Phin survived, she wouldn't know she had a reason to escape. The thought was terrifying.

She cleared her throat and said instead, "So, that's it? We're bonded, and you expect me to play the loving wife? Are *we* pretending that you're a war-hero too?"

"Am I not?" He asked with a quirked eyebrow. "I did what I had to do to survive the war, Hermione. Then as soon as I had the correct information, I killed Voldemort."

That was enough! Hermione couldn't take any more of his unaffected, arrogant spin. She quickly cast a spell restricting Malfoy's airways. She felt her own throat closing in as well. "You did a lot more than you *had* to!" She croaked, not caring about her safety. "Don't expect me to forget. I'm not going to let you push me around anymore, you evil bastard!"

Malfoy stared at her with his infuriatingly bored eyes. When she finished, he flicked his wand, throwing her against the straight back of her chair. Hermione tried to catch her breath from the effort it took to assert her magical power over him in her weakened state. He stood and knelt in front of her so that their eyes were level. Then he ran a hand up her thigh saying,

"I thought we might be able to behave like adults, but I guess not. So, let me make this clear. Yes, I expect you to be a loving wife. Take all the time you need to come to terms with that fact. But know this, you kept me from *my son* for eleven years, so until you give in to the compulsion of our bond and learn to accept your new role, you won't be in touch with him. No letters, no visits, nothing until all that I feel coursing between us is adoration. Do you understand me?"

"Fuck you!" She whispered.

"About that, how about I give you some time to adjust before I take you again. What do you think? Fourteen days?"

Malfoy left her alone during the night, but Hermione seethed nonetheless. Part of her wanted to get it over with and stop playing his sick games. Hermione's magic equally matched Malfoy's, but he dominated her in size. If he found a way to restrict her magic again, she would have to work very hard to overcome her circumstances. Waiting another fourteen days felt torturous now that she knew there was likely no escaping the act.

Not to mention the insidious pull that she tried her best to ignore.

When Malfoy first explained the bond's effects, he mentioned the pull that she would experience towards him. "*You'll come around after we bond. You'll feel it draw you to me, and the desire to run will wane. It will settle your nerves.*" He said one night while holding her after a particularly lengthy round of sex.

After bonding with Phin, she felt the full effects of what Malfoy mentioned, and it astounded her. She and Phin enjoyed a healthy love life before bonding, but after they completed the ceremony, they found it hard to keep their hands off one another.

Phin often showed up at Hermione's work to drag her into the staff lounge and take her on the counter when the sweet, old pharmacist was out. Hermione couldn't wait until their alone time each night because Phin would throw her onto the bed and lick a path from her hardened nipples to her throbbing clit. Nearly every morning, she woke him by straddling his straining cock and lowering unto him before the sun rose.

To Hermione's great horror, she woke in the middle of the night with a familiar deep sweat, her nerve-endings singing and her body slick with desire for... *No! This isn't happening.* She didn't want to think about the object of her body's desire. Even more mortifying was the thrum of satisfaction she felt through the bond. She knew Malfoy was in another room chuckling to himself because he was well aware of what she felt and for whom.

The next morning, they ate a silent breakfast together before he headed to the Ministry. The only words passed between them were from Malfoy. When she first sat down, he smirked at her over his coffee cup and asked, patronizingly, "Did you sleep well?"

Once Malfoy left for the day, Hermione decided that she needed to try and get help. Malfoy could track her every move, so escape was impossible, but she estimated that someone might help her if she was able to get to Diagon Alley. *If I expose him for what he is, maybe I can get him arrested somehow.* She knew it was a long shot, the *Daily Prophet* made it clear that Wizarding Britain fawned over him, but they hadn't heard her side of the story yet.

She spent the morning hemming and hawing over her course of action. On the one hand, If she angered Malfoy, he wouldn't let her see Ladon, but on the other hand, she needed to try to do something. She couldn't let herself be controlled by him again. She could always find a way to make him happy somehow if her plan failed. She knew that she held his emotions as tightly in the palm of her hands as he did hers.

After lunch, she cautiously tried the front door and found it open. Stepping out on the stone stoop, she took one last look at the hallway behind her before Apparating to Diagon Alley. As soon as she appeared on the cobblestone streets, she scanned her surroundings to develop a course of action.

The Leaky?—too many men. Fortescue's?—too many kids. Twillfitt's?—too many pureblood sympathizers. Gringotts?—too many ministry ties. She sighed, trying to find the best place to seek help. *Madam Malkin's!*

She made her way across the busy street to the purple awning and pushed open the door. The strong scent of potpourri filled the store, and several hanging racks littered the aisleways. Hermione pushed between the robes and uniforms, looking for anyone who may be able to help. The store was nearly empty. No one was in sight except the cashier, who busied herself folding clothes in the back near a tall display cabinet.

Hermione approached the witch and tapped her on the arm while looking over her shoulder to ensure that no one else might overhear their conversation. "Excuse me, please. I need help." Hermione whispered.

The witch turned around and took in her appearance before exclaiming, "Goodness! Hermione Granger! It's true, then. Wow!" She put down the robe she was in the middle of

folding and grabbed Hermione's hands. "You poor thing! What you've been through," She made a tsking sound, then furrowed her brows and said, "Hmm."

"What I've been through?" Hermione started

"Yes, well, it's been all over the papers. Sweet Salazar, eleven years held captive by that maniac." She tilted her head and gave Hermione a sympathetic pout. "But the Minister saved you..."

She stopped talking mid-sentence and gave a dreamy look. Hermione imagined that she left off the phrase "*how romantic!*" She fumed, but the woman continued, "How can I help? Anything you need, name it."

Her plan wasn't going to be easy. Hermione's ears rang with anger at the way Malfoy created the narrative he preferred. She hadn't expected much less. He was a Malfoy, after all. She was surprised, however, with the public's willingness to believe him. She opened her mouth to correct the witch.

"Dress robes. Right, love?" came a cool voice behind her. Hermione realized that in her irritation, she neglected to hear the bell on the door chime. A shiver of fear and anger passed back and forth between them. "For our wedding ceremony." Malfoy continued to the cashier. "We bonded already but plan to host a large event for the public to celebrate. We're grateful to have found each other again. Now we can finally put an end to the terrors that plagued us due to the war."

He placed a possessive hand on the back of her neck as he talked. "Right, Hermione?" He stared at her with eyes that dared her to challenge him. "By the way, her name is Malfoy now." He added with a big grin. "You should've corrected her, sweetheart." He turned back to the cashier and said in a stage whisper, "She's still getting used to the fact that she's allowed to be out in public and with other people."

The witch smiled sweetly, then perked up, saying, "Well, *Mrs. Malfoy*. I'm honored you came in today. But really, the type of dress robes you need are more likely to be at Twillfitt and Tatting's."

Hermione's anger raged, and she interjected, "No. That's not what I needed. Don't listen to him!"

"Oh, I'm sorry, did you want to get something special for when we go visit Ladon?" Malfoy's question was innocent, but Hermione knew better. "That visit isn't for a while." He added.

In the end, Malfoy helped Hermione pick out a new robe, then paid for the purchase and walked them out into the sunlight of Diagon Alley.

"Did you eat lunch? I can spare a little while longer away from the office before I need to get back." Malfoy stated, utterly unfazed by what just happened.

Hermione scowled at him and Apparated back to Grimmauld Place. She wasn't interested in spending any more time with him than necessary, and she suddenly felt like she wanted to lay

down. The emotional effort it took to attempt an escape exhausted her, especially since her plans fell through so spectacularly. *Damnit! Malfoy hardly even batted an eye. He is completely confident in his ability to keep me leashed.*

Later that evening, after a prickly dinner of minimal talk and many irritated glances, Malfoy pushed back from the table, saying, "Why don't you grab a book from the library and meet me in the drawing-room."

"No." She snarled in response.

He placed a large hand over hers on the table, and despite herself, Hermione noticed a rush of peace wash over her. "We started off on the wrong foot," Malfoy said. "I want to be better for you. I know you don't like being pushed around and feeling like you don't have control." He raised his eyes to hers, and Hermione saw sincerity reflected in their depths.

"How about this? I promise not to touch you..." Hermione quirked an eyebrow at him and gazed pointedly at their hands. "intimately," he continued with clarifying patience. "until you're ready. In return, all I ask is that you spend time with me." He rubbed his thumb over the back of her hand. "Before work and after dinner. I ask that you engage in real conversation and tolerate my presence. That's all."

"What about what you said last night? Will you allow me to see Ladon?" Hermione gruffly asked as she pulled her hand out from under his.

Malfoy stared at her for a long moment. Hermione knew the answer. She would see Ladon when she gave Malfoy all that he wanted.

She sighed deeply. Then chanced, "What did you..." A rush of grief washed over her as she thought of Phin.

"Don't," Malfoy warned. "Hermione, I mean it. I'll try to be everything you want. I'll give you more autonomy. I won't force you to sleep with me right away. That timing can be yours. But you will not discuss him." He tilted her chin up to lock eyes with his. "Do you understand?" He asked.

She jerked her head from his hands and scowled while swiping at her eyes.

"So, why don't you go grab a book and meet me in the drawing-room." He said again. He stood up, laying his napkin on the table, and walked to the doors. He held one open for her with a raised eyebrow. Hermione stared at her plate, stewing in her rage. She tried her best to ignore his triumph ringing across their bond.

Song choice for this chapter: "First of me by Hoobastank"

Chapter 26: Letters

Chapter Summary

Hermione wants to see Ladon and tries to suppress the pull of the bond.

Chapter Notes

My apologies! I finished the rough draft of this chapter at 2am yesterday and meant to save it to AO3 as a draft. However, my sleep-addled brain got the better of me.

This is the now edited version of the next chapter. I apologize to anyone who read it in its very rough form and I'm bummed for the comments I lost on it, because they were very kind!

Happy Reading!

Triggers: Extremely Dubious Consent/ Rape

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

Malfoy's weight shifted in the bed. Hermione felt the covers pull back and the loss of body heat. *6:30 am. He better shower quickly.* She fisted the duvet and tucked it under her chin, scrunching her eyes shut tight.

Three months passed since Hermione woke up at Grimmauld Place. Three months of small talk over meals, evenings by the fire in the drawing-room, and uncomfortable dreams and desires.

During the day, Hermione raged at Malfoy internally but kept her mouth shut in the hopes of visiting Ladon. She was desperate to see his face and hold him in her arms. She knew it was silly-Ladon was an inch taller than her now- but she just wanted to hug him and hum, *You Are My Sunshine* like she did when he was younger.

After her failed escape attempt, she realized her need to see Ladon before pursuing anything else. Escape would be tricky, and finding Phin might be impossible, but seeing her son was within her grasp. She needed to get to him and let him know that she was there for him. Malfoy tore their family apart, and she still had no idea where Phin was or what happened to him. However, she knew Phin would be concerned for both of them. He would want her to get to Lad as soon as possible. In all their preparations, he always told her, "*If he captures*

you again, fight like Hell, but above all else stay safe." She had to get to Ladon, and staying safe meant playing by Malfoy's rules for the time being.

So she kept her mouth shut, but she couldn't bring herself to behave cordially or pleasant. She hated him and was sick of pretending that she didn't. Regardless of the chilly way she complied with his demands, Malfoy didn't seem phased and always found ways to touch her. He often rested a hand on her knee while sitting together on the couch or guided her to lean against him as she read. Passing her in the hall, he skimmed his arm along her waist. When handing her something, he swiped his fingers along her forearm. Every touch sent shivers up her spine and caused a tightening in her lower abdomen. She bit her tongue and raged internally during the day, but the nights were a different story. Night after night, Hermione found herself plagued with dreams of Malfoy and the myriad of ways he could alleviate her burning need.

She resisted every touch and tried her best to tuck her physical cravings behind a nice compartmentalized wall in her mind, but at night her pent-up longing came through in her dreams. Waking up with soaked panties, cold and wet, grazing against her puffy lips, was a daily occurrence. Her unwanted longing for Malfoy to roll on top of her and drag his cock along her needy clit increased with intensity the longer she postponed their intimacy and the more time she spent with Malfoy and his incessant touches.

Hermione heard the shower stop and watched as he exited the bathroom and walked to her side of the bed. His pajama bottoms slung low across his hips as water dripped down his muscular torso. He bent to kiss her lips gently, then brushed her hair back and said, "I'm out, love. I know you have an important 8:00 am."

Hermione turned her head away from his and threw back the covers to step out of bed. She wanted to get into the shower and rinse off her arousal under the water without Malfoy noticing how attracted she was to his wet, tasseled hair and intoxicating scent. Malfoy waited by the edge of the bed while she stood. As she started to walk away, he brushed his fingers along the inside of her wrist.

"Hermione, you don't need to continue to suffer or be embarrassed. What you feel is natural. We're bonded—permanently and intimately." He rubbed his finger slowly back and forth over the tender flesh of her pulse point. "We have some time before work. I can help ease your ache." He said in a low, seductive timbre.

She pulled back her hand abruptly and stormed across the room.

Malfoy slept in the guest room for one week after her arrival, then walked her to the bedroom the next night, saying that his generosity was over and from that point on, they would sleep together. He pulled her into his arms each night and kissed her whenever he pleased. But other than that, he kept his word and hadn't forced himself on her yet. The sleeping arrangement didn't help her dreams. She often fell asleep, tense with anxiety over her competing interests, and woke in the middle of the night, pressed against his hard body, her legs draped over his, and a feeling of rightness in her chest. The first time she woke up like that, she realized her predicament and rolled away angrily just in time to hear Malfoy chuckle.

The first month was the hardest emotionally. Hermione's need to both get as far away from Malfoy as possible while at the same time longing desperately to give in to her body's demands drove her crazy. Two weeks after her arrival, when he came home one night to find her a volatile and emotional wreck, Malfoy decided that she needed a job. He told her to pick any position she wanted at the Ministry. Hermione refused at first-out of spite- but eventually decided to take him up on his offer. The next evening she found him in his office.

"Draco?" She asked by way of introduction. He once again insisted she use his first name.

Surprised, Malfoy looked up from his papers. "Yes?"

"The Department of International Magical Co-operation." She stated matter-of-factly.

Malfoy's brows furrowed. "I'd assumed you might choose Reg. and Control of Magical Creatures or even D.O.M."

Hermione thought a lot about his offer to work at the Ministry. Though she didn't like the idea of working with him all day in addition to dealing with him at night, she ultimately decided not to turn down any opportunity to increase her chances of escape. She wasn't looking forward to working with the mindless sycophants that surrounded Malfoy, but the D.I.M.C offered the potential for pulling in international help.

"Percy used to talk about his work there. He made it sound boring. I'd like to get out of the house but I don't want too much responsibility right now. I just want to see people other than you on a daily basis."

He narrowed his eyes at her dig, and Hermione felt him checking on her feelings and intentions through their bond. She willed herself to calm her nerves once again to not let him in on her deceit.

"Done." He said, seemingly satisfied.

Her 8:00 am with Marta from the French Ministry went smoothly. The purpose of the meeting was to monitor the merger progress between Hogwarts and Beauxbaton. They looked over the metrics regarding student attrition rates and test scores, affirming that the process was on course.

Reviewing the Hogwarts data sent a pang of guilt and grief straight to Hermione's heart. The numbers included Ladon's early-term test scores. Hermione pined over the fact that her son was a number on a page. She brushed her fingers lightly over the columns on the spreadsheet and ached to send him all her love and care. She thought back over the fight they had the day Malfoy took her. Ladon got what he wanted. He was at a Wizarding school. She hoped that he might find comfort in an education tailored to who he really was despite the terrible circumstances.

Later that evening, over a dinner of roasted lemon chicken, Malfoy asked, "How was work?"

"Fine." She bitterly replied while staring at her wine glass.

"Hermione, I know something happened. You felt devastated all day." He said, placing a hand at the base of her neck and rubbing his thumb along her collarbone.

She steeled herself for a fight. "When can I see Ladon?" She asked as angry tears welled up in her eyes. "He needs me, I know it. We were never apart for more than a day before you took me. He must be scared and confused."

Malfoy flashed with anger, then shook his head slightly and looked at her with sympathy. "I know, all to well, what it's like to miss him. Don't worry. I visit him every Friday. He's doing okay."

Hermione's eyes shot up to his in surprise. But Malfoy cut her off, saying, "If and when we visit Ladon has always been up to you." He removed his hand from her neck and grabbed her hand on the table instead. "We're getting close." Hermione felt her familiar rage creep up her spine. She hated his condescending, controlling face.

After dinner, per usual, Malfoy told her to follow him to the drawing-room. She scowled at him and huffed that she needed to grab her book from the bedroom.

While walking back with her book in her hand, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, she passed Malfoy's office and had a sudden thought. She spent the remainder of the meal stewing over the fact that Malfoy spent significant time with Ladon over several months without her. Seeing his office made her wonder if he kept any notes or trinkets from their time together.

She tilted her head down the hall to look for Malfoy. Then she checked in with his feelings and noticed nothing out of the ordinary. With that confirmation being her only assurance of safety, she ducked into his darkened office and darted towards his desk.

She schooled her emotions so as not to give herself away, then tried the top drawer. The thick, oak handle slid open easily. Gone were the days of Malfoy locking away his personal items. He no longer found the idea of her escaping a threat.

Drawer after drawer revealed nothing but notes from work, lists, and contracts. One drawer held familiar keepsakes, an inkpot, a small watercolor painting, and her betrothal necklace. She rifled through the last drawer, and as she prepared to shut it, the bottom rattled oddly. Curious, she ran her hand along the wood and pressed. It popped open, revealing a false bottom. Inside she found a stack of letters addressed to Malfoy from someone named Bromley Payne.

Hermione sifted through the letters as quickly as possible, noticing several reports on Ginny Weasley's location and some on herself. The second to last note at the bottom of the stack stood out to Hermione as she noticed the date, June 17, 2014.

Hermione briefly checked for signs of Malfoy's approach and then unfolded the parchment.

Sir,

I'm thrilled you accessed the whereabouts of Hermione and Theodore. I know the search has been very long and that you are desperate to hear news of your son. I traveled to Banff as you

requested and confirmed their whereabouts. Your son looks happy and healthy and much like yourself-see the enclosed photo. Hermione works in a pharmacy and Theodore in a local pub. They walk to and from work each day to a place at the base of the mountain where they must Apparate home. Attempts to follow them failed. They warded their home heavily.

As you suspected, Hermione and Theodore seem very much in love, and therefore I think you are right not to pursue a relationship with Hermione further. I know that was a hard decision for you, but as you mentioned to me before, you're happy with your life in England, and you wish them well.

I know the logistics of setting up a visit with your son are tricky. I started to devise a plan for how you may approach Hermione and Theodore without them running away. They seem very settled in this location and may listen to me if we are careful in approaching them.

Convincing them that you don't mean any harm but just want to have a relationship with your son might not be easy from what you shared. I will try to find a way to facilitate a conversation.

Sincerely,

Bromley Payne

Hermione felt shocked. *Malfoy knew where we lived in June and intended to leave Phin and I alone? What!?! She stared at the magical photograph of herself and Ladon walking home from school. Confused, she quickly flipped to the last note in the pile. This one was dated August 1, 2014, and the handwriting looked rushed.*

Sir.

Efforts to establish an avenue of communication between you and your son hit a significant complication. While tailing Theodore, I followed him across the United States border into Idaho, where he visited a magical store. Once he returned home, I entered the store to speak with the owner and gain more information. Some conveniently administered Veritaserm helped. Theodore makes that trek every few months to pick up supplies.

What concerns me is that the female store owner mentioned that Theodore showed early symptoms of a deadly American magical illness referred to as "the Decay." This illness creeps up on magical folk, and by the time the cough and rattling chest kick-in, the sick witch or wizard is nearly dead.

I suggest you travel to Banff as quickly as possible. As you know, if Theodore dies from this illness, Hermione will follow, and your son will be left entirely alone and helpless. The time for careful negotiation passed. Your son needs you.

I'm sorry to break this news to you, Sir. If what the store owner said is true, then Hermione may not be long for this world.

I'll await your word to see how you want me to proceed.

Sincerely,

Bromley

Hermione clutched the parchment as she finished the second letter, and a shadow covered the light from the hallway. "Can I help you find something?" Malfoy asked darkly.

Hermione fisted the letters and stared at him. "What is this!?" She spat, throwing caution to the wind and waving the parchment angrily.

"I didn't realize I needed to make it explicit that my desk is off limits." He bristled, then sighed and tucked his hands in his pockets. "You already know I searched for you."

"You found out where we lived in *June* and didn't show up until August? What are you playing at? Why does this Bromley guy act like you only wanted a relationship with Ladon?" Malfoy continued to stare at her, waiting for her to finish. "If that's true then why in the name of the gods am I here?" Her arms shook in her anger as she tried to make sense of what she read and what she knew.

Malfoy stepped closer, saying, "I told you, love. You were dying. I had to save you."

"I don't believe it." She sneered, crossing her arms. The letters scratched against her skin.

"I'm sure you don't. I did awful things to you in the castle." Malfoy admitted genuinely, and a long pause passed between them. He closed his eyes briefly, seeming to decide something. "The war and Voldemort got to me. All I ever wanted was to be with you. I...I didn't balance well my desire to have you and the power that I wielded. I regret that."

"Fuck you. How did you find out where we lived?" Her emotions whirled within her. She felt convinced that Malfoy orchestrated the illness that split her up from Phin. These letters didn't make sense whatsoever.

"The Hogwarts Registry. It updates every year on June, 15th. Ask someone at work tomorrow, they'll confirm it."

Hermione knew it. She and Phin tried their best to outrun that possibility by placing intricate wards around their home. They both felt it necessary after Malfoy reached out on Ladon's fourth birthday, confirming his awareness of Lad's existence. They foolishly hoped that being out of the country might negate the list's ability to identify their location. But they knew that the registry's magic was old and powerful. After Malfoy became Minister, Hermione gave-in and turned a blind-eye to Phin's use of dark magic to obscure the cabin further.

"Fine, I'll bite. So if you just wanted a relationship with Lad and you planned to leave me and..." she raised scared eyes to his and saw fire. She knew she wasn't supposed to bring up Phin. Malfoy quirked an irritated eyebrow at her hesitation and nodded infinitesimally, indicating it was safe to proceed. "...and you planned to leave *us* alone, then how do you justify your behavior now? You seem pretty happy to have me with you."

Malfoy closed the distance between them and leaned his back against the desk. Hermione stepped backward, trying to get away from him, but he reached out a hand to her instead.

"Hermione," His eyes bore holes in hers as he spoke, and the bond caused her chest to ache with the need for him to kiss her. "I was *reluctantly* willing to leave you alone. It was what you wanted. All I needed was a relationship with Ladon." She tilted her head away and rolled her eyes. Malfoy raised a hand to her chin and directed her attention back to him. "I know it hurts to believe, but Theo contracted an American disease. I bonded you to me to save your life because I care about you deeply." A tear threatened to fall down her cheek, and Hermione tried to turn her head away again, but Malfoy tightened his hold on her chin.

He continued slowly, "However, I told you years ago that I'm not a saint. Our bond is unbreakable. Therefore, I must have you completely." He swiped his thumb over her cheek, wiping away the tear, and Hermione felt her need quicken. "I'm sorry, but I can't add the intense desire from the bond to what I already feel for you and then ignore it for the next hundred and twenty-odd years."

She couldn't take it. It was too much. She had to believe that Malfoy was the devil. It was the only thing keeping her from giving in to the strong pull of the bond.

"No." She said, trying again to walk away. "If all this is true, then why didn't you show me these letters yourself? Why hide them away?"

Malfoy let her go, then said, "Would you have believed me had I shown them to you three months ago? No. You don't believe the letters now." He watched as she moved to the middle of the room. "I hoped that in time our pull toward one another might warm you to me."

Hermione interrupted angrily, "That, *and* you're blackmailing me into good behavior by withholding my visits to Ladon!"

He ran a hand through his hair and stood up. "I'm sorry, Hermione, but you've always proved to be highly motivated by others. I thought it might speed up the process. Also," He stomped to the opposite side of the office and stared at a large bookshelf in frustration. A moment of silence passed before he turned back with a pained expression. "I know it's horrible of me, but you kept my son from me for eleven years. I'm sorry if I felt some small justice in forcing you to wait."

At his confession, she turned to leave. She couldn't look at him. Her emotions were too confused and muddled. She wanted to kill him and run to him at the same time. Malfoy followed and used magic to close the door lightly before she reached it. He flicked his hand again and ignited two sconces with a low glow, then approached with a determined and predatory stare. He advanced on her until her back hit the wood of the door. Then he caged her in with his strong arm, grabbed the back of her neck with the other, and rested his forehead to hers.

Hermione's body and mind warred. She longed for his touch while at the same time felt the strong urge to run from the room, from his home, into the streets, and far away.

"I'm sorry." He whispered huskily. "You're everything to me. You and Ladon. I was willing to let you go because I'm not worthy of you and because you chose happiness with *fucking* Nott." He fisted his hand and thumped it against the door in frustration.

"But then he got sick," he continued. "And here we are." He tilted his head and ghosted his lips against hers. "We're bound for life, Hermione." He kissed her tenderly, and Hermione felt her heart jump. Her head hurt, and she needed air. "I won't disrespect you by pretending I'm upset by that. I've loved you for nearly twenty years. Please, give yourself over to me." He kissed her again. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'll spend the rest of my life begging for your forgiveness. Just...give yourself to me, and I'll take you to Ladon tomorrow. I won't hold you back from him ever again."

Malfoy's closeness felt like a drug. *He'll take me to see Ladon. I can fight another day. I was dying, and now we're bonded forever. There's nothing I can do about it.* She couldn't hold back any longer. She needed to sate the bond to think straight moving forward. Her toes tingled, and her body thrummed with devastating need.

"Okay." She whispered.

"What?" He pulled back to arm's length and said, shocked. Intensity burned in his eyes.

"Take me."

Malfoy crashed his lips to hers. Hermione tasted a hint of wine and felt him pull her bottom lip into his mouth. He dipped his tongue past her lips and groaned. She let his overwhelming want wash over her as she slid her hand down to his belt and brushed her fingers along his stomach. The room spun, and all she could think about was her craving to touch him and be touched by him.

Malfoy grabbed her hand and growled, "Not here." He twisted her arm and pinned it against her back as he lifted her off the ground, wrapping her legs around his hips. "I want the first time I have you to be on our bed." He kissed her again, then walked them down the hall and into his bedroom, moving as if she weighed nothing to him.

As he walked, she lowered her head and licked a long swipe along the hollow of his throat. He hummed his pleasure, and Hermione felt his satisfaction in her core. She knew, precisely, what made him come undone. Malfoy loved when she kissed him there. He closed the door behind them and pressed her body up against it while threading his large hand into her hair. From that position, Hermione felt his straining erection as it brushed against her apex. The constant wetness she felt in her sex over the past three months intensified, leaving her dripping with heat and sticky anticipation.

He ground against her for a moment, then picked up her weight again and dropped her gently on the bed. He stared at her with hooded eyes before brushing his hair out of his face and saying in his deep voice, "Salazar, I've waited so long to do this."

Hermione took in his large presence, his corded arms, and strong shoulders. She heaved a heavy breath and closed her eyes for a moment to slow her heartbeat. Somewhere in the back of her mind, a small voice yelled for her to stop, turn back, tell him no. But she made her decision already. She needed to let him fuck her. She wanted it. Wanted to get it over with and stop dreaming about it every damn night. Wanted to have control over when it happened. Most of all, though, at that moment, she just wanted- no needed- to make her aching clit stop throbbing with need.

To continue controlling what she could, she lowered her hands and slid her soft black yoga pants down her body, exposing her white lace panties. Malfoy watched her like a hawk, then leaned forward, holding his weight on his arm near her head and dragging her panties to the side with the crook of his middle finger. "Fuck, look at you. You're so wet." He slid a thick finger between her lips and dragged it from her entrance to her clit. She mewled in response to the sheer pleasure of finally being touched. She nearly came from the relief.

"You have no idea how hard it's been to feel your arousal and know how slick this pussy was for me and not sink into it." He hummed his approval as her eyes rolled back in ecstasy. He trained his eyes on her sex as he spread her lips and ran his thumb over her clit. Her breath hitched as he rubbed circles around her fat nub and flicked it lightly. Feeling her release building, Malfoy lifted his darkened eyes to hers and demanded, "Don't you dare cum until I say so!"

She bit her lip to stop the delicious momentum then sat up slightly, pulling away from his touch. "I can't. You have to stop if you don't want me to come. I'm too close."

Malfoy grabbed the back of her neck harder and tilted her head upwards to face him, crooning, "That's not how this works, sweetheart," before pulling her legs open again and pinching her lips together, trapping her clit between them and causing her to yell out in pleasure. He rubbed her lips back and forth between his fingers and watched as she strained to hold back the intense orgasm that threatened to explode from her.

Suddenly he let her go and stood, vanishing the rest of their clothes. The cool air caused her nipples to tighten further as she watched him fist his cock. Every stroke of his hand along his shaft sent delicious vibrations to her core. Hermione needed him to fill her up and plow into her. She needed him to run his thumb over her clit and let her come apart.

He towered over her, slowly moving his hand back and forth while raising an eyebrow in a heated challenge. "Say it, love," he demanded huskily.

Hermione bit her lip and shook her head. She knew what he wanted, she desperately needed relief. She turned her head to the side and dipped her fingers into her cunt.

Malfoy grabbed her wrist. "Ah, ah, Hermione. Say it!"

His heavy cock rested next to her needy sex. She undulated her hips, trying anything she could to gain the friction she needed. Letting out a heavy breath, she acquiesced, saying, "Draco, please."

He growled his approval and slammed into her in one deep thrust. The intensity of it caused her to raise up to her elbows to cushion the blow as he rammed against her cervix. He pulled out and slammed back in, then did so again. She stayed on her elbows, which pushed her chest out, and caused her full tits to bounce with each blow.

Malfoy leaned down and licked her nipples as he picked up the pace, ramming into her and groaning deeply. His aggressive entrance slammed against her clit, causing her to sing with heightened anticipation.

"Please, let me come." She begged, throwing the last dredges of her pride out the window.

"There it is." He said as his body flooded with greedy satisfaction.

"Please, I need to. Draco. Let me come." She said again.

He reached his hand between them and pressed his thumb to her clit, rubbing in time with his thrusts. She cried out as his rough digit dug into her slick center. He continued assaulting her body. He sped up, bringing her to the edge, before pulling back. He listened as she screamed in frustration and continued slamming into her.

Finally, she felt his cock swell with his impending release and his balls tighten just before he roared out- giving her permission to let go. She screamed again and again, "Ahh! Draco, Fuck! Fuck, yes!" as all the pent-up tension from the last three months shot to her core.

After coming down from their intense highs Malfoy wrapped her in his arms and pulled her head to his chest. She felt their sticky release between their bodies and caught her breath as he kissed her again passionately. Exhausted emotionally and physically, Hermione fell into a deep sleep.

-----Draco-----

Hermione soundly slept as he stood from the bed and pulled on his clothes. She looked more at peace than she had in three months. Draco smiled to himself at the fantastic turn of events this evening brought. He grabbed a robe from the walk-in closet then took one final glance back at his witch before picking up a coin and tapping it with his wand.

He landed outside a two-bedroom cabin on the side of a mountain and pushed open the door.

"Hello, Nott." He called happily as the hollow-looking man walked out of the back bedroom and snarled at him. Draco continued, "I have another memory for you to view."

Theo shot daggers at him while stalking up to the edge of Draco's magical barrier, cast to jail Theo within the home. For a long time, he considered killing Theo, but when it came down to it, Draco decided that imprisoning him in his empty house while Draco fucked Hermione and raised Ladon sounded much, much better.

Draco sat and rested his arm on a small side table. He left Theo's wand in his view to taunt him. He could see it but not reach it. He rolled the wand back and forth under his palm while saying, calmly, "She gave into me tonight. It was exquisite. Fuck, that woman is amazing."

Theo slammed his fists against the wards and raged, "She didn't give into you, psycho. You raped her. She hates you. She'd never willingly give herself to you!"

Draco smiled meanly, "Begged me for it, actually. Here." He tossed a phial filled with the memory through the impenetrable blood-ward that Hermione taught him how to construct so many years ago.

"You Bloody piece of shit!" Phin coughed angrily. "I'm not watching that, you sick fuck! I swear I'm going to find a way out of here, and I'm going to kill you! If she doesn't first!"

Draco smiled broader. "I'm terrified, obviously. However, you forget that I bound her to me, so nobody will be killing anyone. Now, be a good boy, watch that memory, and I'll get you some food."

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Breathe Me by Sia "

Chapter 27: The Queen

Chapter Summary

Hermione and Draco visit Ladon at Hogwarts.

Chapter Notes

Every single comment gives me life! Thank you for reading my piece!

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

-----Hermione-----

Hermione stood in the walk-in closet staring at a wide selection of robes. She wore the same robes every day to and from work over the past several months without giving them a second thought. Today felt different, though.

She slept like the dead, finally no longer restless with disturbing dreams. Malfoy woke her once in the middle of the night to take her again slowly and passionately. At first, her sleep-addled brain played tricks on her. Something about Malfoy's scent smelled like home, like their cottage on the mountainside. It made it somewhat easier to lean into his advances. He pulled her desire to the surface again, their bodies calling to one another. Afterward, he tucked her under his arm for the remainder of the night. She woke around 8:00 AM to his hard body on top of hers again. She didn't expect anything less. She knew his hunger before the bond. And if she was honest with herself, she craved his touch. The bond made it clear that it wanted more than one night of passion.

He entered the closet and closed the distance between them, wrapping his arms around her waist and pulling her back against his large frame. She felt her nerves calm with his touch. "You're concerned." He said into her neck as he placed his lips to her skin. Of course, he knew how she felt.

She tried half-heartedly to put some space between their bodies with no luck. She knew what she signed up for last night; there was no sense in fighting it too hard, especially since Malfoy planned to bring her to see Ladon today.

"He's never seen me wear robes before. Maybe I could..."

"No, love. You're done pretending to be a Muggle." He interrupted definitively. "You're the wife of the Minister of Magic. It's time to accept your role and stop running from it." He turned her around and tilted her head up to kiss her. "Don't worry though, Ladon is used to seeing adult witches and wizards now. He won't think you look odd." He pulled a navy blue robe off the hanger and held it open for her to put it on.

She hated how confused she felt. Part of her still screamed to get as far away from Malfoy as possible, while another, more resonant, intuitive part of her wanted to believe everything he said last night and give in to this new life. She knew it was the bond. It messed with her head. However, she decided to use it to her best advantage. Without the bond, it would have taken her considerably longer to give Malfoy what he wanted to allow her to see Ladon. *Focus on the positive, Hermione. It was a bitter pill, but I swallowed it, and now I can see Lad.* They walked out of the closet, and Malfoy led her to the fire.

"Ready?" He asked, looking at her kindly.

Hermione's voice caught in her throat. She nodded her head and brushed her hair over her shoulder nervously. Her heart raced, and her body trembled. This was it. She was about to see her son again.

Thinking back, Hermione knew that she experienced tremendous and significant love in her life. Growing up, her parents loved her unconditionally. She enjoyed the strong bond of friendship at school and later the breath-taking love she felt towards Phin. However, nothing prepared her for the devastating love she felt the moment she set eyes on Ladon. His tiny form curled to her chest, and she knew, instantly, that she would spend the rest of her life protecting him fiercely from whatever the world brought their way.

Having their family torn apart felt like fire in her veins, like a hole dug out of her soul. The emptiness she felt for Phin ached, but her need to protect Ladon from the darkness of life burned within her being. She needed to see him, hold him, look in his eyes, and know that he was safe.

Malfoy turned her towards himself and said, "Hermione, it's okay. We're all going to be together from this day forward. He's just at school. I'll bring you back any time you want, okay?" He lightly brushed his thumb over her lower lip then waited. She complied with his unspoken request by lifting on her toes to kiss him. "I love you." He heatedly said as she pulled away.

Singularly focused on her goal of seeing her son, Hermione ignored his assertion of love. She knew Malfoy believed he loved her, felt it through the bond. When he closely watched her over dinner, she felt appreciation and awe spread over her arms. When she complied with his requests, she felt a mirrored desire in her stomach. When she did an impressive piece of magic or said something bright, she felt his greed as if she were actually perched high on the pedestal that he metaphorically placed her on. She also knew that he had no idea what real love was. How could he? His parents' love was flawed at best. Then they sold him to a madman. At that realization, an irritating part of her wanted to hold him and love him the way he never experienced before.

Instead, she shook her head to clear it of those perverse thoughts and said, "I'm ready."

He tossed Floo-power into the fire. Once everything turned green, Malfoy barked, "Hogwarts." and held his hand out to her as they stepped into the flames. After a moment of swirling and bumping into one another, they stepped out of the fireplace, and Hermione froze.

She stood inside Dumbledore's old office, the place she first lost all of her freedoms.

2002

Hermione turned around and took in the kind form of Darren from the train, his eyes now hooded and dark. What the fuck!? You Bloody Bastard! Darren waved his wand in front of Hermione, and she felt her transfigured disguise revert back to her original appearance.

"There you are." He whispered. "I've been searching for you for a very long time."

Hermione froze, confused and horrified.

"Sorry, let me explain," Darren said and waved his wand again, this time pointed at himself. The tall, cold, muscular form of Draco Malfoy stood in Darren's place.

"Welcome home, Hermione." He sneered.

She felt a chill creep up her spine as she noticed the bookcase that led to her former jail cell. For some reason, in her focus on getting to Ladon, she hadn't stopped to think that she was going back to Hogwarts!

She cast her eyes around the room, quickly noticing that everything looked roughly the same except that the old Headmasters' paintings were back. Twelve years ago, those didn't hang on the walls. Several of the former Heads nodded a 'hello' to them, but Dumbledore and Snape's paintings stood empty.

"He'll be finishing up breakfast." Malfoy said next to her as he brushed soot from his robes. "I told the Headmaster that we were going to visit. We shouldn't have to wait long." Malfoy moved to grab her hand, and she pulled her arm back instinctively.

"Don't!" She snapped, unthinking. All the warm feelings from the bond flew out the window momentarily. She couldn't stand the idea of him touching her here. All she could think about was months of isolated anguish capped off by a night where he held Phin under the Cruciatus and attempted to rape her violently.

With a strike of anger, Malfoy quickly threw a ward upon the door to the spiral staircase. He turned to face her with disappointment and frustration in his eyes. "Is this going to be too hard for you? We can leave." He said through tight lips. She felt his desire to shove her back through the flames and lock her away. "I should have remembered that you don't like leaving our home. It causes you to forget the momentum we built."

Hermione stopped to consider him. She knew Malfoy felt appreciation and awe-what he knew as 'love'- . He *may* have been willing to leave her and Phin alone and settle for a

relationship with Ladon. But, he wanted to have her, to *own* her just like he always wanted the best broomstick, the most accolades, or the greatest power. It made him feel secure.

He argued that he knew how she felt or that he experienced remorse for how he treated her, but Hermione got the message. She played by Malfoy's rules. The only way he could show love was by conquering first. She glared at him and said, "No. I'm fine. It's just... hard to be back." *I'm a bloody Nimbus 2001 to a 35-year-old man.*

He stared at her for a moment, his stern expression softening as he rubbed his hand over the back of his neck. "I'm sorry. Of course, it is. Come here," he pulled her in for a hug. "I shouldn't have reacted so strongly." His eyes showed sincere compassion again. "Just breath. Let me soothe your nerves." He held her with a strong arm and rubbed her back slowly with his other arm. "I just want to keep you safe and happy. Try to think of the nicer memories here, from when we were kids."

Her shoulders slackened, and she felt the knot in her chest loosen. *Gods bless him. At least he's trying.*

He kissed her head, saying, "How about before we leave I take you for a tour through the building? It looks like new again. You'll enjoy the transformation."

"Okay." She said quietly, the bond purring back into action. His embrace felt right to her raging emotions. Maybe *there is truth to what he says. If I can see the building restored, it might help me to feel more comfortable here.* She wanted to see the building back like it was when she was in school. She didn't want to picture Ladon walking around the bleak halls from her time here during the war, and she knew she was going to need to come here to visit him if she wanted to see him. She needed to get used to being here and not falling apart.

Malfoy kissed her slowly and deeply, laying claim to her lips, then removed the ward on the door. They stood in silence for a few more minutes. Hermione mostly stared at her hands, willing them to stop shaking and Malfoy paced, looking uncertain as he ran a hand through his hair. Eventually, the door opened, revealing Neville Longbottom. A beat of shock passed before Hermione's eyes as she heard the two men exchange pleasantries.

"Headmaster," Malfoy nodded.

"Minister," Neville responded, but a screech of excitement drowned out both men.

"Neville!!" She yelled, never expecting to see her old friend again.

She ran across the room to throw her arms around him. However, a flash of anger and a quiet but dangerous "Hermione." stopped her short of her destination.

She obeyed Malfoy's not-so-subtle directive by refraining from the intended hug but barreled on regardless.

"What in the world are you doing here?" She asked animatedly.

"I took this post four years ago after Draco became Minister. You didn't know?" He asked, looking from her to Malfoy.

"Nott had her secluded on a mountainside without access to wizarding news," Malfoy said coolly behind her. However, Hermione thought it odd that this information didn't come up when reviewing the merger progress. She shook her head at the thought that Malfoy might be censoring her information. *I'm being silly. Why would he do that?*

Neville's expression fell. He looked back at her with intense pity. "Right, I heard that. I'm so sorry." He said, shifting his weight nervously. "I can't believe everything you've suffered. I'm so glad you're home." He looked as though he wanted to grab her hand but thought better of it after catching Malfoy's dark expression.

Hermione kept her face still but threw all her irritation and anger back at Malfoy through the bond. "I'm just happy to see you!" She said, moving forward. She knew not to correct Malfoy's lies, but she still rankled at the assertion that Phin was some evil mastermind Death Eater. She continued, "How did you survive the war!?"

Neville gave a smile that didn't reach his eyes, "Luna and I made it out of the country after the Battle of Hogwarts. Her dad gave us an unauthorized portkey." His face then fell with a deep sadness. "Though, she tried to sneak back into England to save him and was caught. I spent the rest of the time hiding out, alone, in Turkey until your husband, here, killed Voldemort."

Malfoy stepped forward, saying, "When we were ready to open the school again, Neville impressed us all on the interview panel. He already had experience looking out for the welfare of the students during our seventh year." He continued forward, brushed her hair off her shoulder, and placed a hand on the back of her neck. He rubbed his thumb over her skin possessively. Hermione watched as Neville narrowed his eyes at the curiously intimate public gesture.

He filled the awkward space by saying, "I imagine you two are looking forward to seeing your son. He should be up here soon. I just wanted to come and say 'hi.' It's really good to see you, Hermione," Neville finished. He gave one last curious look then turned to head back down the stairs.

Malfoy walked him to the door, saying, "Thanks again for the use of your office, Headmaster. We appreciate the privacy it affords us."

"Anytime," Neville said kindly.

Hermione watched him disappear behind the door. She stewed in anxiety and irritation but noticed she felt better knowing that Ladon was under Neville's watchful eye. Now surveying the room, knick-knacks gave away the fact that this was Neville's office. On the windowsill, she noticed Wiggentrete, Shrivelfig, and of course, Mimbulus Mimbletonia.

She continued, lost in thought for several more minutes until the door creaked open again slowly. Hermione watched as Ladon entered the room. His familiar gait slower and more

careful than usual. Her heart jumped to her throat as she watched him scan the room, eyes landing first on Malfoy.

"Hello, F-father," he said apprehensively. "It's not Friday. Is something wrong? Is my mom okay?"

Hermione moved into sight from behind Malfoy's large frame and walked swiftly towards Ladon, throwing her arms around him. She didn't wait for Malfoy's approval or permission.

As she crossed the room, she heard him croak, "What!? ...Mom!?" The quiver in his voice broke her heart.

"I'm here. Everything's okay." She said through fat tears.

"Mom!?" He said again in shock as he hugged her tighter. Hermione instantly knew that the sound of relief and anguish in his voice would haunt her forever. Even though Hermione buried her head in his shoulder, she knew he was crying. "I'm so sorry. I should have come home. I didn't know you were so sick." He said, crying heavily now, wiping his eyes on his sleeve, and pulling in deep breaths.

Hermione sobbed as well, but as she pulled back from his shoulder, she steadied herself. She had to be strong for him. She wiped her hands along his forehead, pushing his hair out of his eyes and cooing, "Shh! It's okay. You did nothing wrong. I'm here."

From the corner of the room, Malfoy cleared his throat. They both turned, remembering he was in the room.

"Your mother was finally healthy enough to make the journey. I told you she was desperate to see you."

Ladon's eyes fell to the ground.

Hermione watched in sadness as her son shrank into himself. *Did he call him father? What happened to Ladon since he left for that camping trip?* She looked up and took in the two men. Malfoy and Ladon were spitting images. Especially now, seeing Lad in Hogwarts' robes, she noticed that he could easily pass for a younger Malfoy himself. Except for Lad's expression and...

"Ravenclaw?" She said while smiling. She ran her hands over his robes in awe.

"I guess so." He said sheepishly. "Kids in my house are nice enough." His eyes turned cold as he stepped back, remembering something. "The Headmaster tells me you were a Gryffindor."

A moment of shocked silence passed between them. "Yes." She whispered, aware of how much she needed to tell him. "Lad, I...there's a lot I need to tell you."

"Don't bother, I already read all about you in *Magical Britain and the Second Modern-Day Wizarding War*." He shot back. "It was handy to find a copy in the library here so that I could read up about my history."

Hermione knew he was hurt, considering that all her and Phin's lies were now crashing down around them. "Lad, your dad and I..."

"Are so happy to be back together again after that whole ordeal," Malfoy interjected.

Hermione turned around and shot daggers at him. "Can we talk alone for a few minutes, please, Draco?"

Malfoy raised incredulous eyebrows ordering, "No, love. We're a family. We don't keep secrets from one another."

She turned back to Ladon, shocked and mad. She found Malfoy's hypocrisy astounding.

"Did Dad really kidnap you and keep you hostage?" Ladon asked. Hermione heard the anxiety in his voice.

"*Theo.*" Malfoy corrected.

"Phin!" Hermione and Ladon said together. She turned to face Malfoy as ice spread across the bond. *I'm pushing him too far.* She needed to handle the situation before he ended the visit and refused to bring her back again.

"It's...complicated." She said, staring at their hands.

Malfoy walked up behind her and placed his hand on her shoulder. "I told you, son, Theo kept your mother under a powerful love potion. Sometimes it's still hard for her to differentiate what she really felt from what the potion forced her to feel."

Ladon's face fell. He asked his question in a whisper with fear in his eyes. "Did the potion affect how you felt for...me?"

A ringing filled Hermione's ears. Somewhere in the back of her head, she heard Malfoy say, "No." firmly as she stood in shock. She felt as though a truck ran her over. Fat tears fell down her cheeks as she finally came to and grabbed him once again.

"No. Never. Your ... father is right." She said, signifying her obedience to Malfoy. She needed to have as much access to Ladon as possible, especially since he felt this insecure. "The potion NEVER affected the way I felt for you. My love was genuine and complete from the moment I first saw you."

He let out a sigh. "I don't understand magic," he said quietly, looking relieved but still worried.

Hermione tilted her head in confusion. "What, why?"

"It really looked like you loved us the same."

The three of them spent the rest of the morning in awkward companionship. Since mostly all of Ladon's house was in class during the first period, Malfoy asked Ladon if he wanted to show Hermione his dorm room. Ladon shrugged and replied, "Sure, okay." but Hermione knew he very much wanted to show her the space. She assumed it might help him feel more settled to combine his life before with Hermione (and Phin) and his new life at Hogwarts.

Ladon walked them toward the winding staircase leading to the fifth floor and stopped when they reached the old wooden door. Upon their approach, the bronze eagle-headed knocker blinked to life and asked Ladon, *"I never was, am always to be. No one ever saw me, nor ever will. And yet I am the confidence of all, To live and breathe on this terrestrial ball. What am I?"*

"That's easy," he huffed. "*Tomorrow.*" The door swung open, and Ladon led them into the well-lit Common Room.

Hermione watched him with pride in her eyes. It seemed he grew up overnight. Malfoy placed a hand on her shoulder and rubbed gently back and forth in a comforting manner. At his touch, she turned her eyes to his and watched him beam. He was as impressed as she.

The Common Room hosted tall, floor-to-ceiling windows. It looked more like a library in some fantastical kingdom than a study space for teenagers. The billowing royal blue curtains framed the room, and several alcoves hid secluded reading nooks amongst the tall shelves of books. The space was lovely and made her wonder why the sorting hat chose Gryffindor for her. She easily fit in this house as well. She imagined Phin sitting by one of the windows and thought about how, given different circumstances, he might do well here too.

"That's weird," Ladon said, looking around the room curiously. "I've never seen our house completely empty before. Some of the older students have this period free. I wonder where they are?"

"I cleared the room for our privacy," Malfoy admitted. "You told me that some of the other kids fawn over you already for being my son. I thought it wise to give us all some space."

"Oh. Thanks." Ladon said while scratching at his neck anxiously.

He showed them his room which was behind a long wall of books and down a short corridor. Inside the dorm, things looked similar to Gryffindor. Despite the blue hangings, the room easily could have been her room as a student. She glanced around the space and instantly knew which bed was his. A small wood and stone chess set sat on the side table. The sight of it nearly broke her heart again. His humble chess set looked so out of place inside the castle. It was yet another sign of everything that changed for them over the past few months.

They talked for a while before Malfoy stated, "We should be off. Your second period will begin soon, and I don't want you to miss too many of your classes today."

"It's okay. Our professor says that we will be learning an unlocking charm today, and I've known how to do Alohamora since I was eight." Ladon said dismissively.

Malfoy frowned and said irritably, "Yes, well. Regardless."

Hermione's breath caught. She didn't want to leave. She didn't want to worry Ladon further. "It's okay, Lad. We'll be back in three days." She insisted, inviting herself to Malfoy's regular weekly visit.

Ladon's eyes lifted hopefully as Malfoy said, "Hmm. We'll see how your mother is feeling. I'll be here either way."

Before they left, Ladon spoke up, "Mom! Here, take this." He walked back to his bedside table and picked up a queen from his chess set. Hermione's heart leaped. *Thank Merlin! He remembered!*

Malfoy looked at them suspiciously, and Hermione quickly inserted, "Ron taught me a way to play chess together when you aren't physically with someone." His eyes narrowed further, and she rushed on, "I was abysmal at chess, and he wanted to teach me over the Summer holidays. As long as I have a piece from Lad's set..." She tapped the piece saying, "Exemplum," The little pieces all jumped up and down twice, including the one in her hand. "We can play together from the castle and our home. You can join us!"

They arrived back at Grimmauld Place around 2:00 PM.

"There isn't any point in heading to the office today. We'll take the day off." Malfoy irritably said as he turned from her and walked to the closet to hang up his robe. Hermione followed, knowing that her life would be more comfortable if she hashed out his frustration.

"Draco?"

He turned and stared at her.

"You're upset." She continued.

He rolled up his sleeves, saying, "We made significant progress last night, but you still fight the bond."

She knew he referenced some of her behavior at the castle. She had a long time to think during their, mostly silent, walk around the old building. She wanted complete access to Ladon. She was also bonded to Malfoy and needed to give in to its pull to stay sane. She realized that meant she had one way to gain more control over her life. She had to set his nerves at ease. She had to make him believe she loved him. It was the only way she might break his hard exterior and get him to let her go free. If he felt real love, it might break him. Dumbledore always preached that love had the power to heal and protect.

However, Malfoy would not believe she had an overnight change of heart. It needed to be a gradual process. "You didn't tell me about Neville, and then you staked your claim on me by rubbing all over me." She huffed in exasperation. "I was already on edge from being back at the castle. I didn't need you to pee all over me."

"I'm sorry if I find the idea of you getting close to other men off-putting." He said pointedly.

There it is.

She walked toward him but stopped a foot away. Her eyes turned to his with a soft expression. "We've been through so much, you and I. In many ways, I feel we're victims of time. There may have been a moment for us in a parallel world where Harry won." She wrung her hands nervously. "I know you love me. I know you've protected me over the years. I'm sorry that I...didn't return your love, that I loved..." She stopped at his narrowed eyes.

"If what you told me last night is true, then I will try my best to give in to the bond. It's what is best for all of us." She continued.

She felt his palpable relief wash over her. He raised his hand to her cheek and tilted her head upwards. "Thank you." He said sincerely. "All I ask is that you try."

Hermione nodded, and Malfoy pulled her in. He bent to place his lips to hers and kissed her slowly as she felt something shift between them.

"But, Hermione," He pulled back and said with an authoritative eyebrow. "I'm not Nott. Giving in to the bond means giving into me. I will make demands of you, and I expect you to heed them."

She closed her eyes and nodded again, infinitesimally.

Malfoy darted his eyes to the ground with a pointed lift of his eyebrows, and Hermione sank to her knees. She opened her robe and unbuttoned her shirt to expose her breasts as Malfoy pulled himself from his waistband and fisted her hair. As she took him in her mouth, she felt the small chess piece pressing against her hip pocket and thought back to many years ago.

2009

Phin sat on the floor with Ladon playing with the chess set. Ladon knelt to examine the pieces, then flopped down on Phin's lap as he picked up the queen and said, "Who is the queen of our house, Lad?"

"Mommy!"

"Yes, she is!" He tapped Ladon's nose lightly. "And what do we do if the big bad king takes Mommy?" He picked up the king and wobbled him back and forth, menacingly.

"We give her the queen!" Lad shouted happily.

"Yes, that's right! Whenever trouble comes, we give Mommy this special queen, and she will save us." He hugged Ladon tightly. "Always get the queen to Mommy."

"Always get the queen to Mommy!!"

It was a game they played together repeatedly over Ladon's childhood. The story might change, but the message was the same. *Get the Queen to Mommy.*

Phin and Hermione knew that Malfoy might come again and take both Hermione and Ladon. If that happened, they wanted to have a foolproof way to get a magical weapon to Hermione, something she could hide and use against Malfoy.

It was Phin's idea. A few weeks before Lad's sixth birthday, he came in one night and held out a small chess piece to Hermione made out of black stone.

"What's this?" She asked curiously.

He set it down on the table and said, "I had an idea. I chiseled down the dark object that I used to get us out of England, and I placed it in this piece." She looked at him in amazement. He continued, "If he takes your magic or places you behind wards, this little queen should be able to help you."

She straddled his legs and kissed him passionately.

"We just need to find a way to get it to you."

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Lie by NF"

Chapter 28: "Good Girl"

Chapter Summary

Hermione does as she is told in order to protect her ability to see Ladon. Christmas break is coming and the wizarding world prepares for a wedding.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took me a bit longer than normal to get out. Thank you for the comments and kudos! I love all the speculating! There's lots to come in these last final chapters! Five more to go after this!

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

Daily Prophet

December 27th 2014

Minister Marries War Hereon

In an event for the ages, Minister Malfoy plans to unite all wizarding Britain in a celebration of love. As our illustrious readers know, we've covered the tender and heart-warming reunion of Minister Malfoy and his long-lost love, Hermione Granger Malfoy, over the past five months.

Though the Malfoys sealed their commitment in a private ceremony last August - which our sources tell us was a beautiful event conducted amid a cloud of fairylights- they are now throwing open the doors and welcoming us all to take part in a three-day wedding festival kicking off this Wednesday.

Festivities will begin with a ceremony and starlit ball under the magical ceiling in the Great Hall of Hogwarts on the 31st at 11:00 pm. The Minister also planned satellite dances across England for those unable to attend the main event. January 1st at noon, there will be a

parade down the cobblestone streets of Diagon Alley to signify the excitement of a new lease on life after years of dreary captivity for our Minister's beloved.

Finally, on January 2nd, The Malfoys will fund a 5 Million Galleon Day of Public Service. The event, hosted by the Minister, will honor Hermione Malfoy's widely known commitment to fighting for others' rights and equal status. The day will host volunteer events around England, including a Werewolf listening session in Godrics Hollow- to reduce stigma and encourage social integration, a family fun event on the estate of Malfoy Manor- to celebrate the unification of wizarding families and Muggle-born families, and a wand distribution event at the Ministry- to honor the recent legislation passed by the Wizengamont that states House-elves can now carry and use a wand. It's rumored that the Malfoys themselves will be at the Ministry event.

Since ushering in the end of the war, our cherished Minister gave us several reasons to celebrate. He saved us from He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, supported the rebirth of our society, and established policies to protect us from future wars and heartache. However, this wedding is more exciting and poignant than all the others. Throughout all of his giving to wizarding Britain, we've watched the Minister grieve over his lost love. Well, now we finally get to watch as Minister Malfoy gets what he wants for once - a beautiful wife and family to boot! Thank you, Minister.

We look forward to sharing in your special day!

Stay tuned over the next week for up-to-date coverage of the blessed event.

Hermione stood over a large conference table in her department. Marta from the French Ministry was back for another meeting to coordinate efforts around the wedding and the influx of foreign guests and dignitaries. Hermione sighed at the grueling preparations.

To avoid exposure to the Muggles, she worked with several foreign liaisons to establish portkey points all over Britain with timed arrivals. She needed to bring in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement to construct the necessary Muggle-repelling wards around the portkey locations and the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office to ensure that no Muggles absconded with any of the trinkets and added them into Muggle circulation.

The *Daily Prophet* lay open on the table, and Hermione gave it a nasty side-eye as she consulted a long parchment of details. Several other staffers milled around the room, pulling lists and discussing back-up plans.

"Your happy event is fast approaching," Marta said quietly. Something in her voice caused Hermione to look up. Marta always struck her as kind but also cautious and ...*calculating*?

"Yes," Hermione responded plainly. The two stared at each other for a moment, and Hermione wondered if she should risk indicating her need for help.

Things between her and Malfoy settled after she gave herself to him completely, but she still harbored the hope of escape. He took her to see Ladon every Friday, and even during the week, if she asked—which she didn't exploit. She knew Ladon had classes and friends and his own life to build.

During the evenings, she and Malfoy often went for walks through Muggle London or stopped at a nearby restaurant for cocktails or coffee. He preferred to avoid Diagon Alley if possible to spare them the press and on-lookers. Over the weekends, they spent lazy afternoons reading or visiting small, sea-side cottages. Malfoy wanted to purchase a new vacation home, something they bought together.

She tried her best to move closer to him inch by inch and advance her plan of lowering his guard. She accomplished this by curling into him on the couch, reaching for his hand on their walks, or asking him to play chess with her and Lad—several small touches and instances over multiple months. She noticed that these little moments built on one another, and each new interaction chipped away at his walls of self-protection.

However, the real move was to engage him in conversations and get him to open up to her—to be vulnerable.

Last Saturday, Malfoy sat reading the latest philanthropic giving report from his Harry Potter Foundation, one arm stretched across the back of the couch while Hermione rested on the floor. She poured over the chessboard in front of her.

Recognizing another opportunity, Hermione asked, "Why did you name the foundation after Harry? You two never got along." She moved her rook to E4 distractedly then turned her eyes to him. His expression tightened slightly, considering her motivations.

"I wanted to honor his memory and all that he did to bring about the end of the war." He offered, obviously.

She took in his appearance, guarded and tense, before rolling her eyes and turning back to the board. "Okay."

Malfoy placed the scroll next to him on the couch and leaned forward. His elbows rested on his knees and his legs spread wide. "What?" He asked curiously. "Why does that bother you?"

She continued to stare at the board, and they both watched as Lad's invisible hand moved his knight to G3. She smiled briefly at his cleverness and turned to face Malfoy again, catching the same look of awe in his eyes.

"It's nothing. Just, I know when you're lying, and I wish you'd open up to me. I'm trying my best to build something between us, but you refuse to let me in on your true intentions. What are you afraid of? I've..." She stopped and let her eyes drift to her fingernails for a moment in hesitation.

Malfoy tilted her chin towards himself, saying tenderly, "You've what?"

Her heart beat faster as she questioned the wisdom of pursuing this tactic further. However, she checked in with the bond and felt need and intrigue, so she decided it was safe to move forward. Shaking off his hand, she turned her face to the ground, whispering, "I've seen you at your worst and..." She watched his leg shift defensively and continued. "I'm still trying. I feel the pull of the bond. I want it to sing between us if we are going to be together truly, and the only way to do that is for you to open up to me more." She turned to face him again. "I know you, Draco. Better and more intimately than anyone. The good and the bad. Let me in."

His silver eyes burned with molten desire. Hermione's suspicions were correct. Above all, Malfoy wanted to be seen and known and loved. All his need to control stemmed from his upbringing as a pureblood prince, but he never felt loved in reality.

He sighed, then brushed her hair behind her ears and crooned, "Everything I do is intentional. I don't know any other way." Hermione's skin started to prickle with the anticipation that he was giving her what she asked. "I named it after Harry to garner public support and to improve my image. It was necessary to change my narrative and get to where I am today."

He stared at her pointedly as his hand dipped to graze across her throat. She was suddenly aware of how the scene looked, how she sat at his feet staring at him with saccharine eyes. She knew what he meant, he not only alluded to becoming Minister, but the subtext was that he needed to change his narrative to build power and get her back, bonded to him for eternity. He may have been willing to settle for a relationship with Lad, but this was always what he wanted most.

"But that doesn't mean that my motives were purely selfish," he continued. "I wanted to bring Wizarding Britain peace as well and to move our society forward, away from the terrors of the war."

A long beat passed between them as the bond hummed. Hermione felt it viscerally as if new cords wound around their wrists and souls. "Thank you." She whispered as he extended a hand to her and lifted her off the ground.

He placed her on his lap and drew her lips to his. Hermione felt deep, searing want and pleasure as he carded his hands in her hair and touched his tongue to her wet lips. The bond between them tightened like a bowstring waiting for someone to pluck it. She shifted as her core began to ache, and a familiar wetness bloomed between her legs. His strong hands held her as he explored her mouth, pulling her forward. She hoped he would sink them into her waistband and relieve her need.

After a few minutes of sensual touches over tingly skin and many passionate kisses, Malfoy turned and moved forward as he lowered her to the couch, one arm still on the back of the sofa, holding his weight and cording under strain. She never made it back to her chess game that afternoon.

She had to be careful. It was challenging to walk the line of moving closer to him while not succumbing to the draw of their connection. On the one hand, it was necessary to maintain their momentum, and obviously, her body desired his, but the most genuine part of the back of her brain knew that this wasn't what she wanted.

Mentally cringing at how easy it was for her to feign intimacy with Malfoy, she shook the memory from her head. Marta still stood in front of her, eyes probing Hermione's reaction. Suddenly, Hermione decided to see if Marta was open to helping her. The French Ministry knew Voldemort's reign almost as well as Britain and Scotland. She reasoned that Marta might harbor suspicions about Malfoy's supposed change of heart. Her palms began to sweat as she decided what to say. The statement needed to be innocent enough to not out Hermione if Marta wasn't an ally. She darted her eyes around the room nervously then started quietly, "I..."

Marta's face lit up uncharacteristically, and she shook her head in what Hermione thought looked like a minuscule warning. Hermione's face scrunched up in confusion as large hands dropped onto her shoulders, and a low drawl stated, "Hello, love."

She willed the tension out of her body so as not to give herself away and turned to face her supposed husband, asserting, "Draco, you startled me!" She huffed a breath and smiled at him with warm eyes that she hoped looked convincing as Malfoy lifted his head to the now quiet room.

"Hello, everyone, I don't mean to interrupt. Thank you for your hard work."

Several staffers offered excited words in response. "No, no, Minister, you could never interrupt." or "We're planning your day, Minister, and we are here to serve." or "Goodness, no."

Malfoy nodded appreciatively, then turned back to Hermione and Marta. "I know it's early, but I thought since Ladon's train arrives at 5:00 pm, you might want to take off now. I know you're anxious to have him home for break, and," he raised his voice for the rest of the room to hear, "I'm sure these fine folks can take over without you."

Hermione didn't need convincing. She waited for this day for months. Ladon was coming to stay for two weeks. She breathed a sigh of relief that she hadn't gotten any further with Marta's conversation before Malfoy showed up. "Yes, of course!" She said, moving to pack her things.

"We'll stop by the office on our way out so you can grab anything you may want over the next month and a half," he said, smiling. Malfoy informed her a few weeks ago that he planned to take her on an extended honeymoon after Ladon went back to school. He looked every bit the excited groom-to-be. When she finished her task of collecting quills and books and vanishing them to her office, she turned and threaded her arms through his. "We'll see you all at the wedding! Thank you for your help!" He said, squeezing her arm and ushering them to the door.

Marta placed her hand on Hermione's arm as they began to walk away and said, "We'll talk more soon." Hermione blanched, confident now that there was something there to explore. They shouldn't have had anything else to discuss. She filed that bit of information away for later.

"Yes, I'd love to. Find me at the wedding. I want to say 'Hi' and meet your husband you tell me so much about."

Malfoy helped her pack up her things and then walked them to his office on the mezzanine level where they Floo'd back to Grimmauld Place. His fireplace was the only one at the Ministry connected to his residence, and it required confirmation of his magical signature to engage. Not even Hermione herself could get back to Grimmauld without him escorting her.

Once back, Hermione busied herself righting Ladon's room and baking chocolate chip, oatmeal biscuits. She wanted everything to be perfect for his stay. She looked forward to time spent alone with her son. She was appreciative of the time with him recently, but it was always with Malfoy looking over her shoulder. She couldn't tell if he was trying to control what she and Lad said to one another or if he was trying to improve Lad's opinion of himself by spending time with the three of them. Either way, it meant that she still didn't know how Lad got from Banff to England or anything about those first three months.

She asked Malfoy multiple times, but all he ever said was, *"I told him that you were sick and I saved you, that I was his real father, and he needed to come home with me to London."*

While she bustled about the flat, Malfoy mostly worked in his office, chuckling to himself each time she passed his door in an anxious tizzy.

A few hours later, she pulled the last tray of biscuits from the wood fire oven when she heard, "Ready?" from the doorway to the kitchen.

Malfoy leaned against the frame, eyes raking over her body as she swept her hair out of her face and dabbed at her forehead. The stove was scorching and steamy. She changed out of her work clothes when she arrived home and now wore her favorite jeans and a loose-fitting, white t-shirt that draped over her body and showed a little too much skin. She felt hot and sticky as she turned to him and saw a shameless flash of want in his eyes. He pushed off of the door and stalked toward her. Hermione felt his arousal rolling off his skin in waves, licking down her arms and across her chest.

"Stop! Don't you dare!" She warned, playfully so as not to piss him off, but also dead serious. "We don't have time. We have to leave for King's Cross."

Malfoy stopped in front of her with sultry eyes. He pulled deep, heavy breathes and dragged the back of his hand under her t-shirt and along her side. "Are you refusing me?"

She reveled in his touch, the way it sent shockwaves from her head to her toes. The bond purred. Part of her wanted him to lay her out on the table. She wanted to feel the delicious stretch of his cock in her...

She stepped quickly back, batting his hand away. "Yes! We don't have time!"

Malfoy shot out his muscular arm and pulled her forward by the back of her neck. He rested his forehead to hers and sighed, "You may be right." He slid his hand under her bra and

swiped his thumb over her sensitive peak. "This is going to be hard. I've never had to censor myself in my own home."

"Well, too bad! Welcome to being a parent." She shot back in irritation pulling his hand away from her breast. She didn't have time for Malfoy and his intoxicating hands. She didn't have time to give herself over and then fret about the implications of her desire. Today wasn't about him.

His eyes darkened. "Watch yourself." He said in warning.

She sighed, knowing that she struck a nerve asserting that he didn't know what it was like to be a father. "I'm sorry," she confessed, "I'm just really anxious to get him home."

"Hmm," He agreed through tight lips and furrowed brows. "I'll expect you ready for me tonight." He demanded before looking her over one last time and admitting, "Fuck, you look amazing right now."

Trying to fix the awkward interaction, she raised on her toes and wrapped her arms around his neck. "I'm sorry, I'm nervous. I shouldn't have said that." She placed a quick kiss on his waiting lips. "I'll be ready and happily willing tonight, I promise." She needed life to go well over these next two weeks. She wanted nothing more than to spend as much time as possible with Lad, and she didn't want Malfoy's mercurial moods getting in the way. Lucky for her, there was always one guaranteed way to keep Malfoy happy.

Give him whatever he wanted.

They Apparated to King's Cross and picked Ladon up on platform 9 3/4. The press's thrum was hard to navigate, and loud applause broke out as Ladon exited the train first—all other students were asked to stay seated and wait.

The parents, guardians, and press were no longer able to hold back their excitement. Cameras flashed, and many cheers of delight rang around the platform as the public caught their first glimpse of the entire Malfoy family.

Hermione only had eyes for Lad as she watched him lumber over with his trunk. As he approached, Malfoy clapped him on the shoulder, saying, "Welcome back, son." and Ladon nodded. Hermione wrapped him in a big hug, and when she pulled away, she felt Malfoy's hand at the back of her arm. "Come here, sweetheart," he whispered. "Let's allow everyone to get the look and pictures they desire so that we can head home."

He pulled her to his side and kissed her forehead. Hermione — not letting go of Ladon's hand — turned her head into his chest and smiled for the press. She knew better than to make a

scene at this moment. When she pulled back, however, she caught Ladon's irritated expression and knew he didn't like seeing them behave so intimately.

They arrived back at Malfoy's home, and Hermione showed Lad around. She walked him to the kitchen first to shove a biscuit in each hand, then let him explore the large home while she followed at his heels, narrating what he saw.

"This is the drawing-room," She said as they peeked inside, "That's where I sit when we play chess," and "This is the library. There are several rare magical texts here if you want to read up on wizarding Britain, but don't worry, I'll tell you anything you want to know," and "Here's where you will stay." She pushed open the door, and Lad wandered in and ran his hand distractedly along the desk's wood in the corner. The room alone was probably the size of their entire cabin.

"Do you like it?" Malfoy asked. He followed them silently throughout the house, always close behind.

"Sure," Lad said dismissively, then added, "Where do each of you sleep?" to Hermione, bracing himself for the answer.

"*Our* room is just down the hall." Malfoy asserted.

Ladon blanched, "So, it's not just for the public. You two are actually married?"

Hermione's heart dropped to her toes. She knew it likely killed Ladon to see her with someone else, someone who wasn't Phin. Despite all of Malfoys attempts to convince Lad otherwise, all he ever knew from Phin was love and support. The thought of Phin felt like a sucker punch to the gut. She balanced her emotional state extremely precariously these days, a strategy that included a significant amount of compartmentalizing her grief. She turned to Malfoy in fear of what he might say but instead, he gave her a look that clearly said, *Tell him yourself.*

"It's not just for the public, honey. We're bonded. This is our life now." She whispered as Lad's face fell.

Malfoy walked into the room and sat casually on the bed. Hermione noticed the change in his behavior as if he pulled on a costume. His face held a conciliatory expression, and he suddenly looked kinder, more approachable. He took a deep breath and said, "Ladon, this must be very hard for you." He waited, and Hermione watched as Lad gave a suspicious nod.

Malfoy continued, "I wish I could make it easier. Life dealt us a terrible hand. You have no idea how much I longed to be with you as you grew up. How much I wanted to be that loving father figure for you."

Something changed in Lad's demeanor as he listened. He shifted his weight and relaxed his shoulders a bit. "I'm trying to get it right, but I have to be honest, I'm furious. I lost my family when Nott stole you two." He rubbed his temples in frustration, but the action looked more endearing than anything else. "I imagine you feel pretty angry too, right?"

"Yes!" Ladon said quickly.

"I wish I could protect you from that anger, from what caused it, from everything." He stretched out an arm to Lad, palm up in a gesture of openness. "What I can offer is that I loved your mother very much when we were together before." He lifted his eyes to hers, and Hermione felt their searing intensity. "From the moment I found out about you, I loved you deeply too. I'll spend the rest of my life trying to make it up to you and provide you the best life I can. I know it's going to take a while for you to trust me considering all that you've been through, but I'm going to try, every day, to make life easier for you from here on out."

"Okay." Lad said, but this time his tone sounded less defensive and more curious.

Malfoy placed his hands on his legs, pushed off of the bed, and walked by Ladon, saying, conspiratorially, "I usually stave off my anger by hexing things in the basement. There's some old jars down there that are fun to blow up if you ward the walls first. Want to try sometime?" He smirked in a self-deprecating manner.

"Okay." Ladon perked up, excited now.

Malfoy placed a hand on Hermione's shoulder and lightly squeezed as he walked out of the door, saying, "I'll go order some pizza. You two catch up."

"Okay," Hermione responded, glad for the moment alone with her son. She watched him walk out the door and marveled at Malfoy's ability to spin his narrative. *That scene was near genius.* She recognized that Malfoy intuited Ladon's hesitancy and expertly crafted a message that drew Lad in. Wrapping people around his finger was a terrifying gift of his. Although, when she allowed herself to digest his behavior, she realized the key to his successful story weaving. *He believes what he says.*

She and Lad spent the next half an hour unpacking his trunk and setting up his room. They talked about Lad's grades and his impressions of Hogwarts. Ladon was stressed for Hermione, but he was doing well and enjoyed the castle as much as she did growing up. She remembered her first year fondly. That was the year she made lifelong friends and had few cares in the world other than trolls and three-headed dogs. Little did she know how dark and complicated her world would become.

Malfoy came back up to the room to fetch them when the pizza arrived, and the three of them sat at the formal dining table eating pepperoni pizza with their hands. She half-expected Malfoy to use a fork and knife, but he surprised her by picking up several slices and tucking in as the sauce and grease dripped down his hand. He made small jokes that set the room's tension at ease, and even Lad joined in poking fun at Peeves and the Bloody Barren.

Hermione watched the scene as she ate her food. For a moment, she pictured a life where the war didn't happen, and Malfoy grew up to be a carefree dad. After more biscuits, Ladon stood and said that he would grab his chess set from upstairs and meet them in the drawing-room. As he left, Malfoy vanished the plates, and pizza box then leaned down to kiss Hermione on the top of her head.

"That dinner was nice." He said, sounding pleased. "I'm going to get some more work done. I'll leave you two to catch up more." He straightened and walked out of the room toward his office. Hermione stood tentatively. She felt amazed that he was allowing her so much time alone with Lad.

She walked to the drawing-room and caught Lad setting up the chessboard on a small table near the bookshelves. She sat behind the black pieces—Ladon always chose white—then watched as he made his first move.

"Are you okay, honey?" She asked quietly, afraid to hear his answer.

"I guess," he said while staring at the board. "I miss Liam." Ladon stopped talking and took a deep breath, "and Dad." he whispered.

"I know." The lump in her throat felt hard and suffocating.

"Are you okay, Mom?" He asked in a way that tore at Hermione's heart.

She spent a lot of time thinking about it. There were probably millions of ways that she could indicate to Ladon that she wasn't safe. The slightest expression might tell him how trapped she felt or desperate she was to get away. But she decided against drawing in his help. She reminded herself that he was only eleven. She had no business placing all of her burdens unto his shoulders. Anyway, what could he do? She didn't want to scare him or put him in danger needlessly. Malfoy seemed to care for Lad honestly, but if Lad tried to free her, somehow she shuddered to think how Malfoy might respond. She knew him to turn dangerously volatile when backed into a corner. It was a sight she never wanted Lad to see.

She did, however, need some answers. "Yes, I'm okay, just a little on edge because of everything we've been through. I worry about you." She paused to grab his hand as he picked up another piece to make his next move. "And I miss you deeply."

"Me too," He admitted.

"Honey, was Bev's boyfriend, Draco?" Hermione asked just above a whisper. She needed to know because if that was true, then there was no way Malfoy's hidden letters were authentic. Darren was in Banff for weeks before Malfoy supposedly showed up. Ladon looked at her quizzically. "You know, Darren, who took you camping. Was that Draco?"

"No. Darren turned out to be some guy named Bramley or something," Ladon said with an irritated scowl. "D-Draco showed up that evening at our campsite and told *Darren* that he 'got you.' The next thing I knew, Draco picked up some coin, tapped it with a wand—which scared the crap out of me because it was in front of Liam—and then he grabbed my arm, and we landed at the castle. He told me that Dad kidnapped you and that he was my real dad. Then the next day, I started school."

Hermione felt her suspicions crash down around her. She felt so sure that something was amiss with Draco's letters, but everything about his story seemed to check out.

"Mom?" Lad asked, looking up at her with anxiety in his eyes. "Why would he say he 'got you' if he came to save us?"

She stared at her sweet, smart son. A part of him knew something wasn't right. She couldn't burden him, though. He was too young. Maybe when he was older, if she was still stuck here... "I'm not sure, Lad, it must just have been an odd turn of phrase."

They spent the rest of the evening chatting about less consequential items while moving around the chessboard. For a moment, Hermione allowed herself to imagine they were back at the cabin and perfectly carefree. Lad told another joke, and Hermione found herself belly laughing, something she hadn't done in a very long time. Just then, a shadow darkened the room.

"Hermione," Malfoy said from the doorway. She raised her eyes to his and saw that their time was up.

She chanced a glance, raising her eyebrows and asking, *A little while longer?* But Malfoy shook his head then turned to Ladon.

"It's been a long day. What would you like for breakfast tomorrow?"

"How was your night?" Malfoy said while closing the door behind him and igniting the fire across from their bed.

"Good, thank you." She said distractedly.

His presence loomed over hers, radiating heat and anticipation. He tilted her chin upwards then said, "Hermione," reminding her of the promise she made earlier. She stilled then took in his scent of soap and mint before letting the bond take over. She knew what she had to do. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, feeling the pull of his closeness and the tug of desire, then crossed her arms over her waist and made to remove her t-shirt.

"Leave it," Malfoy said heatedly. He placed a large hand over her arm and stared into her eyes as he vanished her bra and jeans. She felt her heavy breasts fall from their restraints and her tight nipples brush against the soft fabric of her shirt.

She lifted her hands to remove his buttons one by one and felt the fabric slide against her tits with each move. The delicious friction caused her to mewl as Malfoy bent his head to kiss her commandingly. She felt the intense need coiling between them. The bond mirrored their arousal back and forth between them as she felt his ache from his hardening dick and he the way her pussy began to drip. Hermione felt Malfoy's cock twitch with need, and it started the slow and heavenly tightening in her lower abdomen.

Malfoy walked her to the bed. He was shirtless, and his jeans hung low over his hips. He unbuckled his belt as he walked. Reaching the bed, he vanished the rest of his clothes and pushed her down on her back. Hermione watched as he stalked over her and rested his weight

on his forearm by her head. She felt the spring pull tighter between them and awaited the glorious moment when he would sink into her.

He didn't, though. Instead, he pushed her shirt up and licked at her tight peak slowly, biting and sucking until she writhed underneath him.

"Look at me." He demanded, and her eyes widened obediently.

She felt him dip into her mind. Malfoy rested in the subspace of her consciousness, feeling all her lured responses to his hands and lips and cock. The added layer of shared feeling amplified their connection and their arousal. He ran his hard head over her taut clit, and Hermione nearly yelled out in pleasure.

"Why were you so nervous tonight, love?" He asked while examining the mirrored sensations in her subconscious. "Were you talking about things you shouldn't have?" He dipped further into her mind, and Hermione saw a flash of the drawing-room. She instantly seized up in fear.

"No! I just asked him about how he got to London, that's all!"

Malfoy slid into her wet cunt and tilted his hips at just the right angle so that his hipbone ground up against her needy clit with each stroke. Hermione heard the lewd squelching noises of their coupling as he pumped in and out of her.

"You're going to show me everything as soon as I'm done fucking you, right?"

"Yes, I promise. Please, not now."

He hummed his satisfaction and pulled out of her mind, pumping a few more times into her before pulling from her cunt as well. He fisted his cock and held himself next to her clit as he pumped his hand over himself and grazed her swollen sex with each thrust.

Hermione felt the way his rock-hard dick throbbed with nearly painful pressure and the way his balls clenched, ready to gush. She tilted her head back and relished in the mirrored feeling of his angry shaft and her wet, hot pussy. The head of his dick smashed into her clit, and the roughness of it sent gooseflesh up her arms and a shot of excitement from her toes to her core.

Malfoy's release slammed into her just as hard as his blunt head to her clit. The feeling shot her over the edge. She felt hot spurts of his come splash against her cunt and mewled at the intoxicating feeling of his claim over her. He breathed heavily as the last of his spent dripped over her, then he rolled off and rubbed it into her clit, bringing her over the edge again and causing her to see stars.

Eventually, he got up and pulled her into the shower. The water slid over their heated bodies as he ran his lips over her neck, lips, fingertips. He washed her body slowly with scented soap, then guided her to her knees and placed her in front of his half-hard member.

"Suck me off. Get me hard again."

She did as she was told, lapping her tongue up the underside of his cock and pulling it into her mouth. She pumped her head a few times as his large shaft filled her up and nudged against the back of her throat.

Once his dick raged again, he pulled her up by her arms and turned her to face the shower wall. He bent her over, placing her hands on the wall, and ran a hand down her spine. She felt the water beat down over her soft skin and awaited his next move, his heavy cock brushing against the back of her leg.

His hand moved to her round ass and dipped into her cleft. She felt a cleansing spell and the silky smooth addition of body wash as Malfoy's fingers breached her tight walls. By now, she was used to him taking her ass. He constantly reminded her in the heat of their intimacy that every bit of her belonged to him.

He pumped a finger into her slowly, stretching her tight entrance. Reaching around and running his other thumb over her clit, she felt her body giving way again to another hard release. She thrust back and forth, seeking the friction to send her over the edge, and Malfoy crooned, "Look at my greedy little witch. You're hungry for my cock in your tight ass, aren't you."

"Yes," she cried. It was the only answer, and she knew Malfoy well enough to know that if she disagreed, he'd edge her into subspace before taking her anyway.

"Yes, what?" He growled, pushing another finger past her tight ring.

"Fuck me, Draco. Fuck my ass."

The hum of his desire shot to his balls as he pulled his fingers out, fisted his cock, and shoved into her. She felt incredibly full as he ran his thumb over her clit and grunted, "Fuck, your so tight."

With each thrust, her tits slammed against the cold tile. The sensations of the thumb on her clit, the fullness in her backside, the mirrored feel of Malfoy's hard cock, it all coalesced into an earth-shattering orgasm that buckled her knees and washed over her with a wave of heated pleasure. Malfoy pumped, again and again, holding her up by the waist and continuing his assault on her sensitive clit as he finally came and spilled rope after rope of hot come into her channel.

Breathing heavily, he rewashed them both, then wrapped Hermione in a warm bathrobe and kissed her, saying, "Good girl."

He walked her back to the bed, and she lay still as he grabbed her chin and entered her mind pouring over every inch of her conversation with Lad. Satisfied with their discussion, Malfoy eased from her mind again, tucked her under his arm, and brushed her hair back, saying, "Sleep, love. You did well."

Hermione closed her eyes tight and willed away the warring feelings of deep satisfaction and pure rage.

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Take What you Want by Post Malone feat. Ozzy Osbourne"

Chapter 29: Crucio

Chapter Summary

A glimpse into how Phin spent the past five months. Also, a visitor and a wedding.

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning: Torture

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

-----Phin-----

297, 298, 299, 300

Phin wrapped his long arms around his knees, hugging his legs to his chest and breathing hard. Sweat dripped down his arms and back as he progressed with his daily routine.

301, 302, 303, 304

Every other morning and evening, he did three reps of five hundred crunches and push-ups. In the afternoon, he worked on 500 chin-ups, wrapping his hands around the bar in the closet. He had to reinforce the rod to hold his weight, but after several attempts, he succeeded wandlessly. When finished with the chin-ups, he did 100 burpees and a five-minute plank.

Phin focused on cardio for two hours in the morning, afternoon, and evening on the off days. He liked to switch back and forth between jumping jacks and running up and down a make-shift set of stairs that he built out of boxes and drawers then reinforced in the same manner as the bar in the closet. He didn't spend much time running. He tried at first but couldn't get enough distance traveling from the back of the cabin in their bedroom to the ward.

Draco came to the cabin roughly every four days. Phin didn't like to think about that because it made him raging mad, causing him to throw his routine out the window, and spend the day punching holes in the walls or lying flat on his back on the floor staring at the ceiling, unable to move from the creeping depression.

Routine kept Phin sane and alive. He focused on exercise throughout the day to give him something positive to do. The rest of the time he spent trying to break through the ward or strategize a path forward. As he moved about the day, he often repeated the information he knew, over and over, to try and formulate a plan.

It's December 30, 2014. I've been trapped here for 150 days. Hermione and Ladon are alive and healthy. Ladon attends Hogwarts, where Neville is the Headmaster. He's in Ravenclaw. Hermione works at the Department of International Magical Co-Operation. She has the queen. She is bonded to Draco. Our bond is severed. He has access to her location anywhere in the world. He rapes her daily...

NOPE!

376, 377, 378, 379, 380

Over the past five months, Phin collected a lot of information from Draco's memories. At first, he refused to watch the sick gifts that Draco brought him, but after starving himself for nearly twenty-four days, he finally gave in. Luckily, he had a steady stream of water from the faucet in the kitchen. He and Hermione cast the necessary spells to bring fresh water to the cabin from the mountain spring out back, and Draco was apparently happy to leave that accommodation. Phin suspected that it was because Draco seemed to have no desire to end his life. No, Draco's goal wasn't death. It was torture.

August 9, 2014

Phin's eyes cracked open, his chest felt hollow and his throat raw, but other than that, he felt better than he had in days. He cast his gaze around the darkened room, trying to orient himself. It was nighttime, but he didn't feel the dip in the bed from Mia's weight or the warmth that usually came from her head on his shoulder. The cabin was eerily quiet as well and a sudden chill swept over his arm.

"Hello, Theo," came a familiar, dark voice from the corner of the room.

Phin shot up, throwing a hand out to his bedside table where he typically kept his wand and caught sight of Draco seated in the corner of the room. Panic filled his chest as his hand grasped at the empty tabletop, and Draco said menacingly, "Crucio!"

Flames of agony spread over Phin's skin as his body twisted in pain. He heard distant screaming as he flailed around, trying to stop the excruciating curse from snapping his bones and ripping him limb from limb. Images of Draco hovering over Mia, ready to rape her the night they escaped, burned his eyes as he pushed through the searing torment.

As quickly as the curse began, it stopped, leaving Phin shaking and pulling deep lung-fulls of air. He clutched the sheets and rested his sweaty brow against the mattress.

"4,309 days. You stole my witch, lied to my son, and raised him as your own for four thousand three hundred and nine fucking days."

WHAM! The curse crashed through Phin's body again, sending him reeling from the renewed attack.

When the curse lifted again, an eternity later, and Phin caught his breath; he growled, "What did you do to them!?! Where are they!?"

"Crucio!"

Another round of agony spread across Phin's chest as he started to lose consciousness. The pain and the searing dread he felt knowing that Draco found them nearly crushed his soul. All their careful preparations and planning failed.

A soft whimper escaped his lips as he curled in a ball on his side. Tremors ran under his skin as he lay staring at the wall. His body felt tight and jumpy, waiting for another round of the spelled punishment. After a while, he tried desperately to dip into their shared bond to find out any information he could about Mia's whereabouts, but in a sweeping moment of terror, he realized that where the bond once hummed, he felt nothing.

"Why don't I feel her anymore? What did you do to her? Please, tell me." Phin croaked.

"Gladly, you traitorous bastard." He heard Draco shift in his seat and watched him lean forward. "I severed your pathetic connection and bound her to me once and for all." He said while fisting his wand and resting his arm on his knee. "Then I took my family back to London where I own the hearts of the public, the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, and the full power of the Ministry of Magic. You will never see my wife and son again."

Phin's world crashed around him. Draco described his worst nightmare. When he and Mia bonded, he finally breathed a sigh of relief that no matter what, they would always be able to find one another, and Draco would never trap her completely. But now, with the confirmation of the hollow space where their bond used to rest, he knew for sure that somehow the unimaginable occurred.

"Get it over with. Kill me, Asshole!" He whined in pain that was both physical and mental.

Draco chuckled and stood up, saying, "No, I've decided to keep you alive. Let's see how I feel in 4,309 days." He stomped toward the door and, before exiting, cast one more "Crucio!"

Through Phin's haze of delirium, he watched without lifting his head as Draco's sideways form marched down the hallway and stepped through a shimmering ward near the front door.

The next twenty-four days were a blur. Phin lay in bed, wasting away, wishing he could die while imagining what Draco might be doing to Mia and Lad. Every few days, a surge of resistance and hope would creep up through his mental state and force him to get to the faucet and down all the water he could, but other than that, he refused to eat. Draco showed up regularly, always with the same message.

"Watch this memory, and I'll bring you food."

Each time Phin refused, Draco merely shrugged and vanished.

On the twentieth day, Draco added, "Watch this memory, or I'll immobilize you, force food down your fucking throat, and make you watch anyways. You have until the next time I return to decide."

That's how on the twenty-fourth day, Phin got to see his son again.

Draco arrived and waited as Phin approached the barrier. Phin nodded through tight lips, eyes painted with fury, and Draco smiled. He floated the memory and Pensive through the ward, then sat and waited.

Phin took a deep breath and steadied his raging emotions. He reasoned that nothing in the memory could be worse than what he spent the past several weeks imagining. He popped the cork on the phial and dipped the memory into the bowl before peering over its surface.

Phin found himself inside Hogwarts. Draco and Ladon stood in the Headmaster's office, and Phin noticed a look of terrifying vulnerability in Lad's eyes that nearly broke him. He wanted to reach out, grab his son and Apparate away as far as they could.

"I know you're scared," Draco said, crouching down to Lad's eye-level. "You're safe. I'm here for you."

"Who are you, and why do we look so much alike?" Lad muttered. "Where're my parents?"

"Your mom was very ill. I took her straight to St. Mungos. The man you know as your father was a sick, dark wizard. He captured your mother and kept her under a love spell. We look so much alike because I'm your true father. Nott took you when your mother was pregnant. I've scoured the world for you. I'm so glad I found you."

"What...what do you mean my dad was a dark wizard? What spell? What's St. whatever you said? Where am I?"

"Here," Draco handed Lad a stack of newspapers and a book. "You can read everything in great detail within these texts. It's a long story that I'm sure your parents kept from you." He stood up and brushed his hands down his robes. "Your mother didn't know any better. This is Hogwarts. Did they tell you anything about Hogwarts? It's a school for magic."

Lad blanched angrily, "I know about Hogwarts!" Then his voice wavered as he asked, "We're in England?"

"Scotland, but yes," Draco said, kindly.

"Can I see my mom? Where's my dad?" Lad asked

"Not yet," Draco responded, looking empathetic. "She's very ill, but I promise you that I'll bring her back to health and get her here to see you as soon as she is able. Don't worry, the Medi wizards at St. Mungos—" He added quickly, "—That's an outstanding Hospital—are

exceptional and," Draco paused to adopt an air of humility, "I'm the Minister of Magic. They'll pull all the stops to make sure she recovers quickly."

Lad nodded, then asked again quietly, "And my dad?"

A flash of anger crossed Draco's expression, but Phin felt pretty sure Lad missed it as he stared at his shoes. Draco recovered and asserted, "I know it is going to take some getting used to, but I'm your dad." He placed a hand on Lad's shoulder. "I'd like you to call me 'Father' from here on out. Now, how about we get some food. I'm sure you're hungry."

After that first memory, Phin saw numerous interactions. He watched as Draco met with Lad at the end of his first week at school. They walked the castle grounds and talked slightly awkwardly about the sorting hat and timetables. He saw another flash of memory where Draco asked Lad to show him his room. Phin watched as all the fellow Ravenclaw students dropped their jaws at the sight of Draco in the Common Room. He heard several students shout "Hello, Minister!" and other students sidled up to Lad, asserting their friendships. Before Draco left, he asked Lad if he had time to read the book or newspapers, and Lad answered, "Yes, Father."

After Draco left the food and Disapparated, Phin ate in silence and then promptly threw it all up over the anxiety of watching his son fold under Draco's pressure.

The following week Phin stalked towards the door apprehensively as he heard Draco enter the cabin. He knew what was coming, and as much as he wanted to see Mia, he dreaded what the memory might show.

Phin walked behind Draco and Mia as they moved through the atrium of the Ministry. Draco moved with his hand on her waist, and Phin cringed in anger as he watched Mia smiling at the witches and wizards they passed. Several people stopped to clap, and one clutched her chest and cried, "How precious. We're so glad you are safe, Mrs. Malfoy!"

As they reached the Department of International Magical Co-Operation, Malfoy nodded at a staffer that awaited them with an armload of scrolls. He turned his back to the eager Department head and paused to squeeze Mia's hand. "Are you going to be okay? I know this is a lot."

"Yes, thank you," she said without hesitation before lifting unto her toes and pecking his cheek. "Shall I expect you at lunch?"

"Yes," He confirmed with a smirk. "I'll take you out to a new cafe I found. They have goat cheese and chive crepes that I know you'll love."

"Okay, sounds lovely. Thank you, Draco."

The memory ended with one final sweet look from Mia. Phin sat at the table, breathing heavily and shaking with confusion. He braced himself for the worst. He thought Draco might show him taking Mia or some scene where he exploited their bond somehow. Instead, what he witnessed was, in a sense, more difficult to watch. He hadn't anticipated seeing Mia happy.

"What did you do to her to make her act like that?" He growled.

"Nothing, Nott. I healed her and then got her a job," He said arrogantly. "I'm sorry, were you expecting something else?"

And that's how it went for months. Draco showed up every few days and showed Phin a memory of his son warming up to him or Mia acting as if she wanted to be nowhere other than in Draco's company. Phin knew that Malfoy was a conniving and manipulative Bastard and that he was sharing very curated memories intended to torture Phin the most. Still, as much as he tried, the events he witnessed had a way of creeping into his fears in the middle of his lonely nights.

Then at the beginning of November, Draco arrived with the memory Phin feared the most.

He watched in horror as Mia stood, pressed against the door of a dimly lit office, and whispered, "Take me."

Forced by the memory's limitations, Phin followed the two down a hallway as Mia sucked on Draco's neck. However, Phin refused to walk inside the room. He knew full well what happened next and he didn't want to see it. Instead, he slumped down to the floor by the door. He sat in the hallway, intertwining his fingers, and resting them over the back of his neck. His head hung between his legs.

"You have no idea how hard it's been to feel your arousal and know how slick this pussy was for me and not sink into it." He heard Draco say as he shook with anger.

Several minutes later, he heard Mia mewl, "I can't. You have to stop if you don't want me to come. I'm too close."

Phin roared, trying to drown out the sounds of the memory. Nothing worked. He heard it all, every last sound including, "Ahh! Draco, Fuck! Fuck, yes!"

Draco forced him to endure several more memories of the same caliber over the next two months. The last being two days ago when Phin watched Mia stare at Draco from her place at his feet. The look in her eyes still churned his stomach.

424, 425, 426, 427, 428

He had to stay sane and sharp to get through this. He had to believe he prepared for a time when he could leave the cabin, which was once their safe haven and now represented nothing but pain. He had to think he would get back to his family at some point.

Phin heard the door open and groaned. Draco just came recently. He wasn't due back for a few days. Phin looked out the window, using the sunlight to guess at the time. It was roughly mid-morning. Draco either came in the early morning before the sun rose or in the middle of the night, which meant, after Mia went to sleep or during the middle of his day at work. He never arrived at this time of day.

Phin hesitated for a moment. It was easier to hide his increased muscle mass when Draco visited during the dark. Seeing him in the light of day might give away his exercise routine. He wasn't sure how that might play out. He quickly threw on the oversize shirt he successfully transfigured to hide his frame and then messed up his hair before walking cautiously into the hallway.

To his great surprise, he didn't find Draco waiting by the door but instead saw Ginny Weasley examining the ward with great interest.

He walked quickly toward the redhead and stopped short of the shimmering barrier.

"What!?" He asked in shock. "How?"

"Oh, good. You're alive." She said sincerely, still eyeing the ward. "What is this? It's stronger than anything I've ever seen."

"Yeah, well." He ignored her question. Phin had no idea how Draco constructed his prison. "How are you here?"

She stopped her study of the magical wall and stared at Phin, "The portkey." She said, plainly. Phin stared back in confusion. Ginny continued, "The plan?"

Phin narrowed his eyes then said, "Mia gave you a portkey? How?"

"She sent me coordinates soon after we all escaped. I traveled by Muggle transport and ended up on Mt. Olympus in Cyprus. She told me that I'd find a small red whistle and that If I ever needed to find you and her, that I could use that portkey to arrive at your location."

Phin growled, "She traveled to Greece without me knowing?" He stomped back and forth through the living room while he processed the fact that Mia created the necessary portkeys and traveled across the world while he was on one of his treks to the U.S.A. He stopped for a moment and then kicked at a nearby chair leg when he realized she must have done so before Draco found the parchment, which meant, "While she was pregnant!?"

"I guess so," Ginny answered.

Phin wanted to rail at the gods for causing him to fall in love with the world's most idiotic, stubborn-headed witch. "Ginny, can you pass me my wand?"

She followed his eyes to the table near the door and picked up his wand before trying to levitate it through the ward. It bounced off the barrier and landed on the floor.

"Sorry," She said while picking it up.

"It's okay. Thanks for trying. Why did you come now? I'm sorry I won't be of much help. Draco found us and took Mia, er, Hermione back to London." He said while taking a seat at the kitchen table.

"I know that. I'm getting close to making a move to free her. I just thought I would check to see if you were still alive before I approached her."

He stared at her for a moment in disbelief, then said, "Excuse me, what?"

Ginny sat in the chair by the door and pulled a *Daily Prophet* out of her robe. "Hermione's been all over the news since her return. I knew where she was from the start and knew she was in trouble. I was living in France trying to build connections to find a way to out Draco; he has most of Europe under his spell but, I know the truth."

Phin leaned forward, intensely interested in Ginny's tale.

"When she took a job at the Ministry, I saw my opportunity to get to her. I pulled my connections with the French Ministry and convinced them to let me go undercover to see if I could get Hermione to help us take Draco down."

"They're bonded! You can't take him out!" Phin interjected

Ginny gave him an incredulous look and said, "I *know* that. The French Ministry needs enough evidence to put Draco on trial for his war crimes. Voldemort nearly took over France as well on his journey across Europe. Many in the French government are still very suspicious of Malfoy's claims of innocence."

Phin looked at the front cover of Ginny's *Daily Prophet* and groaned, "They're getting married?"

"More like Malfoy is submitting Britain to a three-day spectacle of their fake romance. We see an opportunity to extract Hermione. If given a chance, we're going to take it."

Excitement shot through Phin's body as he heard Ginny call their love 'fake.' It took him a moment to process the rest of what she said. However, when he did, he stopped her from continuing. "To extract Hermione? What about Lad!?" He stood and walked to the ward as Ginny darted her eyes around the room, looking anywhere but at him.

"Listen, Theo. I know you raised Ladon, but he *is* technically Malfoy's son. France is nearly declaring war by *planning* to extract Hermione. We anticipate the fallout being massive in scale. If the opportunity presents itself, we'll only have time to grab her. Anyways Lad might not even be at the event."

"Weasley, first-off. Nice to see you, but fuck-off!" Phin paced, furious. "Lad is *MY* goddamn son! If you think Mia will leave the country knowing she is leaving our son with Draco, you're insane!"

"Still a Bastard then I see, Nott." She said defensively. "I know it will be a hard sell, but if Hermione comes with us and we can convict Malfoy, he will be put in Azkaban on a life sentence, and you will get to raise him however you want. It's the only plan that works. That's why I'm here. We hoped that if you were still alive, I could get that message to Hermione, and she would come with me."

"Don't you dare!" Phin started, slamming his fists into the barrier.

Ginny cut him off. "There isn't any other option. The French officials are anxious to either get to Hermione or call this investigation off. Risking war with Malfoy isn't something they want to do. They want Hermione because I promised that she would give us the damning evidence we need to bring him in. I'm sure Hermione will be glad to know you're alive. I'll try to get you information as it comes up."

She turned to walk out, and Phin yelled, "Ginny!! Damnit! You know better than anyone how fast he'll turn Lad into a pawn. Don't do this! I can help you find another way! Stop!!" She gave him one final look of contrition, then tapped the whistle in her hand and vanished.

-----Hermione-----

December 31, 2014

Hermione stood in the Great Hall at Hogwarts, surrounded by dignitaries and magical experts from around the world. The enchanted ceiling showed a starlit sky as the *Daily Prophet* foretold, and the room dripped with greenery making the space look like the interior of an enchanted garden as opposed to the student mess hall that it was.

Floating candles lit the dance floor as a twelve-piece string band played from the dais. Malfoy stood by her side under the alcoves where she once had a whispered conversation with Phin during another celebration many years ago.

The fact that Malfoy chose to hold their public wedding at Hogwarts was not lost on Hermione. She knew that the company might be nicer but that the ceremony represented the same thing that it did during the war — his capture of her. And this time there was no Phin to get in the way. He was making a point to the world, but mostly to Hermione. He was rewriting history.

Stylish as ever, he wore a charcoal gray, tailored robe that hung off his frame and accentuated his muscular build.

Hermione shifted her weight nervously and felt her creme-cloured chiffon robe hug her curves. Compared to the robe she wore back in 2002, this option was positively modest. Its high neck and back covered any opportunity for cleavage or skin. Making a note of the difference earlier that evening, Malfoy merely stated, "*I don't need to show you off any longer. You're mine. The world knows it. I have no desire to flaunt your assets.*"

Malfoy leaned over and whispered, "Are you enjoying yourself, love?" as he fingered her dangling diamond and gold earrings.

"I suppose. The hall looks lovely." She said, not wanting to fight. She scanned the room, looking for Marta and hoping for a chance to get away from Malfoy to have a private conversation. She thought about it for the past two days. She needed to be calm and school her emotions if she found an opportunity to chat with Marta alone. Malfoy rarely checked her memories these days, but he did the other night, and if she attempted a risky conversation with Marta, she needed to avoid exposure.

"The past few days with Ladon have been nice." He offered, then leaned down to kiss her lips as a distant round of applause broke out around the room. Hearing the cheers, Malfoy turned and waved a hand in the air, smiling. Next, he faced Hermione and gave her a '*your turn*' expression.

Determining the best move to ensure a happy Malfoy, she turned to the crowd demurely and smiled before returning her gaze to Malfoy and staring at him with hooded eyes. His expression softened with confusion as she raised on her toes and wrapped her arms around his neck, kissing him again with poise and passion.

"Fuck, Mistress Malfoy." He crooned, placing a kiss on her forehead and pulling her close with an arm around her waist. "Keep that up, and I'll need to end this celebration early. And you know all too well how mad the foreign governments will be after all the prep it took to get here."

Hermione leaned into Malfoy and continued her inconspicuous search of the room. As she did so, she thought back over the past few days. Malfoy was right. They were friendly in a sense. As strange as it was, Lad seemed fairly at ease around Malfoy after his story weaving and her refusal to implicate him. In fact, she woke late the following day and stepped out of Malfoy's bedroom as the two of them were coming up from the basement, breathing heavily and smiling.

Lad still looked guarded, but he gave a half-smile as Malfoy mentioned that she would need to grab breakfast alone since they planned to go play Quidditch for a bit before coming back to shower.

While much of her hated Malfoy with a fiery passion, she recognized that she was glad for the fact that Lad wasn't as miserable as she. She even agreed with Malfoy's insistence that Lad stay with his classmates and friends — Torren and Daven Davies — tonight instead of attending the ball. He didn't need to watch their fabricated show of love.

I hate him. I hate him. I hate him. She repeated as he ran his hand up and down her side, and her body began to sing. It was becoming harder and harder to feel her hatred of him, especially when he acted sweet to Lad or threw extravagant parties in her honor that were tailored to all of her special interests. She legitimately looked forward to their day of service on the second — though she would never admit it to him.

Seeing Lad soften towards Malfoy was a blessing and a curse. She didn't want Ladon to suffer, but she feared that they were becoming too complacent, which not only meant that

Malfoy was getting what he wanted, but also, it was dangerous. No matter how nice Malfoy acted in public or with Lad, she knew better. He could be charming when he wanted to be, but at his core, Malfoy was controlling and authoritative and only willing to play nice when he got his way.

"Minister?" a voice broke through Hermione's thoughts. A foreign leader from Trinidad or Haiti, Hermione couldn't remember, stepped over and asked to speak with Malfoy for a moment.

He eyed Hermione hesitantly, then leaned over and whispered, "I'll just be a moment. Stay. Put."

She smiled up at Malfoy and said, "Yes, love," as he stepped away and Hermione caught sight of the small figure of Marta headed her way.

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Till It's Gone by YelaWolf"

Chapter 30: Hermione's Memories

Chapter Summary

Hermione faces a choice, attends the wedding festivities, and receives several gifts.

Chapter Notes

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

Malfoy stood five-feet away as Hermione watched Marta approach. She chanced a discrete sideways glance in his direction and saw him in deep conversation.

"Any luck yet?"

"They are progressing. Our Mediwizard's reported several improvements last month," the elegantly dressed dignitary responded.

"When do you estimate the reintegration process to begin?"

Hermione drowned out the conversation as Marta arrived in front of her. Malfoy seemed engaged in business. That was good. Hermione knew, though, that she didn't have much time.

"Marta, great to see you! Where's your husband? You promised that you'd introduce us." Hermione simpered.

"Splendid to see you too, Lady Malfoy. Oh, he walked away for a moment. I'll make sure to bring him over before the night is up."

Marta leaned forward, indicating her intent to give Hermione a warm hug. She blanched at first. Malfoy had a strict 'No touch' policy for the evening. However, she decided to risk it. She and Marta weren't friendly enough to hug, so Hermione hoped this was part of a ruse, and she was right.

Just as their shoulders touched, Marta whispered, "Meet me in the restroom in twenty minutes."

Malfoy grabbed her hand and pulled her into his side. He leaned down to kiss her cheek and whispered, so only she could hear, "I thought I was clear. No conversations without me." Then he raised his head to look at Marta and gave a charming shrug. "Can't keep my hands off of her."

"Draco, you remember Mrs. Rousseau from the French Ministry." Hermione recovered.

"Marta," Malfoy said warmly, extending his hand to hers and pulling her fingers to his lips.

"A beautiful event for a beautiful couple." Marta crooned. "Thank you for inviting us."

"Of course, after all the hard work you put in to make the event a success, how could I not?" He said with a smile.

Marta glanced over at the patiently waiting foreign leader that Malfoy must have left abruptly, then said, "I'm sorry to interrupt. I just wanted to say 'hi' and give you my blessings for a long and happy marriage."

"Thank you, Marta," Hermione said as she watched the witch turn and melt back into the throng of happy guests.

Malfoy continued his conversation, and Hermione played her part as the quiet and happy wife, all the while keeping her eyes trained on the large clock-face at the front of the room. Since it was New Year's Eve, the event planners brought in the charmed clock to herald in 2015. She watched the hands tick by and thought about how the last time she saw the enormous clock and the swinging pendulum was while she sat for her O.W.L.s.

Marta approached her at 11:16 PM. At exactly 11:36, Hermione tugged on Malfoy's elbow, saying tactfully, "Draco, I'll be right back. I need to visit the restroom."

He placed his hand on hers and said, "Of course, sweetheart." while eyeing a nearby female Auror then tilting his chin, ordering her to follow.

Hermione glided past the appointed warden towards the doors to the Entrance Hall, her robes billowing in her wake. The restroom was in a hallway near the doors to the Great Hall. When she arrived, the Auror stopped, saying, "Hold-up, Ma'am," then opened the door and quickly noted that the room was empty and all the stall doors hung open. Malfoy told the DMLE that there was increased risk at the event because "*Theodore Nott was still at large.*"

Hermione interrupted the woman's investigation and pushed past the Auror, saying, "Wait here, please. I need a moment to myself away from the crowds." The Auror looked uncomfortable, so Hermione rolled her lips and widened her eyes, saying, "It's still hard for me to be out in public." She turned her eyes downward and rubbed her hands together. "There's no one in there. I'll be fine."

The Auror reluctantly nodded, and Hermione entered the room alone. As soon as the doors closed, she cast a Muffliato and watched as the determined-looking form of Marta appeared out of thin air. She stomped toward Hermione, holding out a small glass phial and saying, "Here, quick, take this."

Hermione recognized that Mad-Eye would roll over in his grave at the idea of anyone taking an unknown potion from a stranger. But she was desperate, and Marta seemed like she wanted to help, so she downed the swirling liquid in one gulp.

"It's a potent and fast-acting calming draught to settle your nerves. We don't want to tip Malfoy off." Marta said in a rushed tone.

Malfoy? Not Minister? Hermione noticed as the wave of calm crept over her skin. She was more confident than ever that this conversation was going to lead to something positive. The cognitive dissonance between her intense excitement and peaceful emotions felt strange. Time seemed to slow as she thought about how lovely it might be to receive help.

"It's me," Marta said, and Hermione hesitated, confused but still floating on the waves of serenity. She noticed the pleasant cadence of water dripping in a nearby sink.

"Ginny. I'm here to get you out."

Utter shock shot through Hermione's veins and smashed against the wall of tranquility. Her breath caught, and her brain froze. *Ginny Weasley. That's nice.* It took a moment for the words to catch up to her, and when they did, she thanked the gods that Ginny thought to ply her with potions before revealing herself.

Hermione tilted her head, saying, "Ginny? Oh, how lovely," then realizing something, she added, "Do you mind confirming your identity, please."

"Mt. Olympus." The woman who looked like Marta said with conviction.

Instantly, Hermione knew it was true. Ginny was here and safe. "How will you get me out?" She wondered out loud. "He bound me to him. He can find me anywhere." She finished with a delightful smile.

"I know, I'm working with the French Ministry. We can portkey out of here right now, and my colleagues will stall Malfoy, giving us enough time to get you behind wards in Paris. You'll need to offer up your memories and give a statement as quickly as possible. When he comes to collect you. We'll arrest him."

Escape sounded wonderful. Hermione liked the idea of going. She thought that she preferred not to be with Malfoy any longer. Ginny pulled off her gold bracelet and tapped it with her wand. It glowed with a bright light as she held her hand to Hermione.

"We need to go, now." She reached forward as if to grab Hermione's arm.

No.

Something in the back of Hermione's mind began to claw at her sense of calm. She lifted her arm to take Ginny's hand then dropped it. "What will we do about Ladon?" She asked out of curiosity.

Ginny's face fell. "I'm sorry, Hermione, he's too heavily warded. We have one opportunity, and we can only grab you. The wards at the Ministry are too great to make escape possible at your work. The protections are lower today to accommodate the mass of guests. It has to be now."

Hermione stepped backward, realizing that didn't sound right. "I think I'd like to take him, please." She said, then looked around, eyeing the sinks and large mirror. She caught sight of herself and noticed the way her mouth turned down.

Out of all of Ladon's features, there was only one significant indicator that he held her genes. His mouth. He had her smile. *NO! Snap out of it! You can't leave Lad!* Screamed a small voice somewhere in the depths of her consciousness.

Listening closely, she thought she heard the sound of the Hall door opening. She thought briefly to herself that this conversation was taking too long.

"I know we can't Apparate out of the castle, but you have a portkey. Let's head to the Davies' first and grab Ladon, then go. That'd be nice. I prefer that."

"We created this portkey in France. Altering it now would trip a provision with the DMLE and send hundreds of Aurors to this bathroom's door before we could blink. We *will* get to Lad. But it can't be tonight. We just have to arrest Malfoy first. Come on, Hermione. We need to leave." Ginny stepped forward again, looking as though she intended to force Hermione's compliance and deal with the repercussions later.

"No," she said happily, "No, thank you. I'd like to go get him first." She turned to walk out the door.

"Hermione, he's alive." Ginny blurted out.

She turned to face her with a confused daze, and Ginny continued, "Nott. He's alive, and I saw him yesterday at your cabin in Banff. We can get you to him. We'll get the *three* of you back together, but you have to come with me, now!" She said, walking forward.

Something broke in Hermione's chest. A tearing at her happiness ripped into her, and the gloomy shadows of blistering grief threatened to seep through the cracks like oil dripping into her soul. *Ginny is here. Phin is alive. I could take her hand and be done with Malfoy by morning. But I'd need to leave Ladon.* The situation broke her, but really there was only one choice. Realizing what she needed to do, Hermione walked back to Ginny and, instead of reaching for the portkey, picked up the phial that Ginny still cupped in her hand.

"Meet me on platform 9 and 3/4s." She said.

"You're making a mistake! I can't promise that!" Ginny roared.

Hermione turned towards the door, then pulled a long strand of memories out of her temple and deposited them into the glass tube, etching a message onto its surface with a spell before shrinking the item, Disillusioning it and tucking it into her shoe. The last thing she did before using the loo and walking back to the hallway was to turn her wand on herself and say, "Obliviate."

Hermione and Malfoy stepped out of the fire into the drawing-room. As he exited the flames, Malfoy looked her over suspiciously- for the hundredth time that evening- before saying, "Go change. I'm going to check in with my team to make sure Ladon is secure."

She nodded, then walked to the bedroom and into the closet. She couldn't shake the ominous feeling that something was missing. When she walked out of the restroom, the Auror who escorted her looked concerned. Malfoy stomped down the hallway in their direction and stopped in front of her before saying, "Thank you, I'll take it from here."

The Auror scurried away as he cast a ward on the hall to give them privacy, then leveled her with an angry gaze that caused her to freeze in place. Turning, he pushed open the door to the restroom and cast a Homenum Revelio. The spell bounced around the stone walls landing on nothing. Pacified, Malfoy turned back to Hermione and pressed her into the wall.

"What took you so long, Hermione?" He asked menacingly before delving into her mind. "I know you're not foolish enough to try and deceive me like before," he threatened. Despite his jovial persona, he was anxious all night. Hermione suspected that the event caused him to feel out of control- an emotion that he never handled well.

She felt off. There was a lightness in her reactions that shouldn't be present while Malfoy pushed her around and invaded her mind. He held her chin as he watched her walk into the room, scan the space, then turn and enter a stall. She had no idea why he was so upset. She didn't feel like she was gone that long.

"Draco, what's wrong? What did I do?" She asked while threading her hands into his hair. She hoped to distract his anger. Also, his proximity caused her fingers to twitch with the need to touch him. Several guests walked down the hall, and the noise from the event roared as the doors swung open. He pulled from her mind and stared at her with a mistrusting expression before shaking his head.

"I thought..." He stopped and rubbed at his forehead, baring his forearm to her. His mark lay hidden under a concealment charm. "Nothing." He ran his fingers through his hair and grabbed her hand, pulling it down to his chest. "I'm sorry."

"The crowd is making you jumpy. Come on, let's go. We don't want to miss the countdown." She said demurely.

The rest of the evening passed by in a blur. At 11:59 PM, the lights dimmed, and the music quieted down as the guests all rang out in a joyous, "10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1!" Hermione and Malfoy stood on the dais. Malfoy tilted her head up at the stroke of midnight and kissed her slowly to more raucous applause.

"To a happy new year," His deep voice rang out to the crowd before turning his eyes to Hermione and saying a bit quieter- but still for the benefit of the guests, "and to our bright new future!"

They spent the next several hours dancing and drinking. Aside from his occasional suspicious glances, Malfoy smiled and joined in the festivities. Having not found any evidence of wrongdoing earlier, he relaxed and began to enjoy the party. He looked younger and happier than usual. Hermione enjoyed her new carefree mood. Something seemed to wash over her when she visited the loo. She now felt lighthearted and able to play her part easily.

The music slowed around 3:00 AM, and Malfoy hugged her close, twirling her about the dance floor with a large hand on her lower back. Hermione rested her head on his shoulder, appreciating his smell and the feel of his strong arms. The bond between them warmed.

Back in the closet, she slipped off her robe and stepped out of her shoes. She dropped several inches as the heels added significant height. As she rolled her ankles to loosen the ache that built over many hours of entertaining guests and dancing around the Great Hall, she accidentally kicked her right heel over and heard a light clinking noise.

She pulled on the silk nightgown Malfoy bought for the occasion and bent down to investigate. Running her hand along the inside of her closed-toed heel, she felt the slight resistance you might experience rolling a piece of dry rice under your finger, then pinched the small item and dropped it into her open left hand. Whatever the object was, it was charmed to be invisible.

Hermione's stomach dropped. She had a sinking suspicion that there was only one person who might hide something in her shoe, and suddenly her loss of time and strangely happy mood began to make sense. She clutched the invisible object in her palm, walked to the bathroom, and locked the door. She didn't want to risk Malfoy catching her as she dug deeper into the mysteriously concealed item.

Shivers ran up her arms as she tried to listen out for Malfoy approaching. She canceled the charm hiding the small item and noticed that it was a tiny shrunken phial. Next, she tapped the glass to enlarge it and saw a swirling mist within its confines. A deep, anxious shake hit her chest as she turned the phial and read the message in her own handwriting,

"Watch this the morning you take Lad back to the Hogwarts' Express. No Sooner!"

She tried to slow her heart rate and calm her nerves as Malfoy sank into her later that evening. Something obviously happened when she visited the restroom, and Hermione guessed it had to do with the fact that she never saw Marta again that evening.

The curiosity clung to her skin as they rode the magical carriage down the streets of Diagon Alley the next day and throughout the day of service. She tried her best to put it out of her mind and focus on the events at hand. She didn't want Malfoy to search her memories again.

To distract herself from the constant aching nag of suspicion, she redoubled her attempt to keep Malfoy happy. She knew his prolonged happiness might come in handy if the memory caused her to attempt something risky.

She found that other than the looming mystery of what the hell happened that was serious enough to cause her to wipe her own mind, she enjoyed the events. Malfoy even surprised her at each affair, making it easy to feign happiness.

The parade ended with an announcement from Malfoy that all the women held captive at the castle would receive governmental reparations for their suffering to the tune of 100,000

Galleons each. The proclamation garnered loud applause, and Hermione noticed several tears shed amongst the women in the crowd.

"What?" She asked in amazement, turning to face him where they stood on a large stage.

"I can't take back what happened, but I can do everything in my power to make their lives easier from now on." He responded sincerely. "You've taught me to care more deeply for others than I ever knew how to before. Thank you."

The next day offered even more surprises. At the werewolf listening session in Godrics Hollow, Malfoy unveiled his discovery of a new, more powerful, one-dose potion to curb transitions. "My team was hard at work for the past five years, and we are happy to share that from here on out, no werewolf will needlessly suffer." Then he looked down and smiled at Hermione kindly before adding, "And in honor of my bride, who fights for equality for all, I'm installing Thomas Fernsby, a werewolf turned during the first wizarding war, to serve as the head of the potion distribution operations and Werewolf Liaison Office. Fernsby represents the first-ever werewolf Ministry official."

While walking the grounds of the Manor later that afternoon, Malfoy mentioned his plans for the estate. Hermione smiled as hundreds of children scurried around the hedgerows chasing after friends on broomsticks or taking turns riding unicorns and hippogriffs. The sight of pureblood children and muggle-born children interacting and their parents mingling filled her heart with joy.

"What do you think we should do with it?" He asked, waking her from her reverie.

"Sorry, what?" She said, threading her hand through the crook of his elbow.

"The Manor. We have no use for it. I never intend for us to live here together. I know it's not what you want."

"No, you're right." She said, staring at the large, opulent home.

He smiled at her slyly, then said, "What about a primary school? A place to encourage all witches and wizards from the start. Somewhere Muggle and Pureblood parents can build relationships and respect."

"Draco," She said, genuinely shocked. "That's a wonderful idea."

He pulled her to his side and kissed her forehead, saying, "I'm glad you think so because construction starts tomorrow."

Finally, at the wand distribution event, Malfoy made one final proclamation. "Thank you all for coming to this long-overdue event. For many generations, house-elves suffered injustices at the hands of wizards. That ends today." Hundreds of tiny wrinkled pairs of hands clapped for joy along with the large crowd of witch and wizard attendees. Cameras flashed, and reporters scribbled furiously on their scrolls.

"As my last gift of the weekend to my enchanting wife, I'm establishing a museum in honor of her beloved friends, Dobby, Winky, & Kreacher. From here on out, anyone who visits Hogwarts and all the students who attend will be able to learn about the atrocities house-elves endured and the role Hogwarts School played in perpetuating an abusive system. The museum will be located near the kitchens and will serve as a reminder of how far we've come."

After the hubbub of the Wedding festivities died down, Hermione and Malfoy spent the remainder of Lad's Christmas Holidays playing games or reading in the drawing-room, visiting Wizarding shops and restaurants, or flying broomsticks around Malfoy Manor. Hermione never flew but instead chose to walk the grounds. Malfoy gifted her a robe charmed to stay warm despite the cold, so she hugged it to herself as she ran her hand along the Holly bushes or gazed at the frozen stone fountains.

A creeping, horrible thought started to scratch at the base of her skull, and she hated herself for it. Malfoy continued to treat Ladon well. He seemed happier than ever, which made their interactions easy and even, dare she say it, enjoyable. Then each night after Lad went to bed, Malfoy held a hand out to her and walked her back to the bedroom where she spent several hours fisting the bedsheets while he licked at her aching cunt or filled her with his rock-hard cock.

The horrible thought grew persistently over those two weeks. It was a cancerous wondering that filled her with self-hate. *Would it be terrible to throw out the mysterious memory and honestly commit to a life lived with Malfoy?* Even though she hated herself for thinking it, knew it was a betrayal to herself and especially to Phin, she couldn't shake the thought of all the good that came from their marriage. Werewolf and house-elf rights, reparations, muggle-born and pureblood relations. In her darkest moments, she scolded herself for her desire to escape. *How selfish are you, Hermione? Think of all that you could do for Wizarding Britain by giving in to this new life!*

That's why three nights from when they planned to take Ladon back to school, Hermione met Malfoy in his office. She finished saying 'goodnight' to Lad then forced herself to continue her momentum towards discovering what the secret memories held. The problem was even if Hermione wanted to watch the memories. She had no way to do so.

She knocked on the doorframe to the room where she first gave herself to Malfoy again and watched as his eyes rose to meet hers.

"Draco?" She asked quietly.

"Yes?" He answered from his place behind his desk. He smiled at her warmly and beckoned her to enter.

"I was hoping you might be willing to show me more memories of my parents like you used to..." she darted her eyes around the room, searching. "but I don't see your Pensieve anywhere." She already searched the entire house and knew that she needed to ask for his help. She didn't remember seeing it in his office but realized she might have overlooked it.

He glanced back down at the parchment on his desk before raising his eyes again and asserting dismissively, "I thought you took it when you ransacked our home in the castle." Darkness clouded his expression, and he lifted his eyebrow in a challenge. She needed to tread carefully; Malfoy hadn't shown his anger in a while. She wanted to keep it that way.

"No. We...*I* didn't take it." She responded hesitantly.

He tilted his head, examining her reactions, then asked innocently, "Where are they, love? Where'd you move them?" Hermione knew better; Malfoy's question wasn't innocent. He was waiting to strike. She felt the tension coiling around the room through the air between them. They rarely acknowledged the fact that she ran from him. The topic of her parents was quickly devolving into dangerous territory.

Adopting a similarly unaffected innocence, she responded, "Perth." She tilted her head in confusion. "*You* told me that." *Fuck you and your arrogant passive aggression.* She patted herself on the back for her strong response while thanking the gods for the reminder of his wickedness which helped her fight against her new complacency.

He pushed back from the desk and widened his knees, saying, "Come here." They both knew she lied. Malfoy obviously traveled to Australia and found them missing. If not, he wouldn't have asked.

Hermione padded across the room and sat in his waiting lap. He brushed her hair over her shoulder and kissed her neck, then he dipped his hand into her panties and ran his thick fingers along her folds. "I don't appreciate your cheek, Mistress Malfoy." He said as his middle finger pushed between her lips and grazed her clit, sending shockwaves from her core to her toes. *Fuck! Why does this have to feel so good!?*

"But, don't worry. I'll let you make it up to me." He whispered into her ear.

The following day she woke to the feel of Malfoy's palm on her back. He slid his hand along her naked body as she rested with her stomach pressed against the mattress, her nipples tight as they rubbed against the soft sheets. It took a while to clear the fog of sleep from her mind. She awoke in the middle of a R.E.M cycle, likely the only one she achieved in the short time she rested. Malfoy kept her up the entire night, pushing and pulling her body to his desires.

He dragged out her first orgasm, circling her clit and causing her to cum on his hand, then took her over his desk from behind. Afterward, he carried her to his bedroom, where he laid her on her back and fondled her peaks and valleys, drawing her arousal to the surface again slowly until she mewled his name and begged him to fill her.

And so it went, hour after hour. Tender coupling, followed by soft caresses that led to deep, penetrating want and aggressive fucking.

"Love, wake up." He whispered silkily. "You need to get ready. I have a surprise for you."

"Mmmmm," She whined. "Draco, I'm too tired. You've surprised me enough."

His deep chuckle shook the bed as he stood and pulled back the covers, slapping her ass lightly. "Come on, up you get."

An hour later, they stood in front of Gringotts after escorting Ladon over to the Davies' for the day. A pair of Goblins met them at the front doors and ushered them in with a bow.

"Welcome, Minister, Lady Malfoy," the taller one said. "We've cleared the atrium for your arrival to offer you privacy while you access your vaults. If you'll follow me this way."

"Thank you, Nagnok," Malfoy replied.

They filed past the tall, ornate desks and staff on their way to the cart. Hermione cast her eyes to the ceiling as they walked. The paned glass sparkled as she thought back to the last time she stepped foot in the bank and how she broke all the glass on her way out- riding on the back of a dragon.

The journey to the deepest caverns of the underground chambers was as she remembered. They flew past hundreds of doors cut into the rock, some small and wooden, others large and gilded. However, nothing prepared her for the shock she felt when they reached the lowest level.

The first thing she noticed was that the goblins never replaced the tormented dragon they kept chained in their corridors' belly. Instead, a shimmering mist hung in the air that dissipated as Malfoy waved his hand. She peered at the vanishing fog in curiosity, wondering what properties it held but focused again on Malfoy and Nagnok as she heard the goblin croak, "Your level, Sir."

Malfoy held out a hand leading her off the cart, and she took in his appearance. He stood in the towering rock walls, at the bottom of Gringotts chambers, alone in what now represented his *level!* The realization caused her breath to catch in her throat. She knew Malfoy was wealthy. He always had been. However, the war ended with him as the sole survivor from several of the oldest wizarding lines. He now amassed the Lestrange, Black, and Malfoy fortunes' wealth and those of houses Carrow, Yaxley, Travers, Rowle, Flint, Avery, and Rosier, all Death Eater families with no remaining survivors.

A chill crept up her spine at the overwhelming impact of his sheer power and influence.

He led her to one of several waiting doors and opened it wide. Hermione saw the Lestrange vault many years ago, so she knew what to expect. Mounds of gold and precious magical artifacts lined the walls. Rows and rows of Galleons spread across the floors, and gleaming, jewel-encrusted necklaces dripped over hooks along the walls.

He guided her into the damp vault and said, "I wanted to get you something to commemorate our union." His deep voice echoed across the room and absorbed into the stone walls. "I thought about presenting you with any of the priceless diamond rings within these hallowed walls but knowing you, that didn't feel right." He pulled her forward and kissed her forehead. "You already have access to every book you could ever want to read, so that didn't fit either." He squeezed her shoulders. "Then last night, you gave me the perfect idea."

He reached behind his back and pulled forward a solid gold and silver inlaid, Pensive. She stared at the valuable object. Pensives were rare and incredibly expensive. The one that Malfoy held out to her was likely worth more money than she ever imagined.

His piercing silver eyes drilled into her soul as he leaned forward and purred, "Here's to making and collecting a lifetime of happy memories, love."

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter: "Mi Gente by J Balvin & Willy William"

Chapter 31: Whistles & Fire-calls

Chapter Summary

Hermione watches her memories from New Years' Eve and develops a plan.

Chapter Notes

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

Hermione's nerves rolled off her skin in palpable waves as she walked down the stone steps to the basement of Grimmauld Place. Malfoy woke earlier and slipped from the bedroom like he did most mornings for the past two weeks. His routine included dressing, then walking to the kitchens to grab a cup of tea and wait for Ladon. Once Lad arrived, they spent the next hour in the basement talking and smashing things. From what Malfoy told her, Lad was getting good at casting a Reducto, a spell he wouldn't officially learn until fifth year.

Hermione fumed over this schedule most mornings, not liking that Malfoy taught Ladon a highly destructive spell at such a young age. However, she appreciated that Malfoy found a way to bond with Lad, which helped him feel more comfortable and less frightened. She reasoned that it was better to sit him down when he was older and explain to him the realities of Malfoy rather than scare him now when he was still a child.

This morning, though, Hermione appreciated Malfoy's distraction. As soon as she felt the tell-tale signs of his happiness and physical exertion through the bond, she hopped out of bed and padded down the hall to his office where he kept her new Pensieve.

She had a lot of time to prepare herself for what she might witness in the memories. They would surely cause her stress and anxiety to spike. That was the only reason Hermione figured that it made sense to see the memories this morning. She could easily play off her nerves on the fact that later they planned to take Lad back to the Hogwarts Express for his new term.

Watching the events from New Years' Eve floored her. Ginny worked for the French Ministry. They were trying to free her, Phin was alive, yet her situation looked roughly the same.

After watching the memory, she hastily destroyed it and pocketed the glass phial before taking a long shower and running over all the potential strategies. *Phin's alive, and he is living at our cabin in Banff.* That information felt off. It wasn't like Phin to leave her to fend for herself. No matter what the circumstances were, he should've tried to save her and Lad. *He broke into a Bloody Death Eater training compound for gods sake! Unless...* She poked holes in the information at hand, trying to ferret out the complete picture.

Then there was Lad. There were very few options for getting to France safely with her son. Leaving him behind on New Years' would've put him in danger of Malfoy's exploitation or

wrath. Ginny assumed that Malfoy would chase her to France, but Hermione knew better. Malfoy was more intelligent than that. No, she wouldn't leave her son, period.

Her shower-pondering took a while. The water splashed over her skin, and her fingers started to prune long before she crafted a kernel of a plan.

She stepped onto the dusty limestone and heard Ladon's voice from the large room in the back, off of the cellar.

"Did you do this a lot as a kid?" Lad asked, tentatively.

Malfoy's deep timber responded, "No. I never knew how to handle anger and disappointment when I was your age. No one ever taught me how to...I guess they thought I didn't have anything to be disappointed about." Hermione heard shuffling feet and a pause of contemplative silence. When Malfoy spoke again, he was quieter, "That and they didn't care enough." There was another long pause, "I want better for you."

She waited at the base of the steps to hear the conversation. Their voices echoed across the damp basement, but they couldn't see her from their place deep within the room at the far corner. However, after a beat, Malfoy continued, "Hermione, what a surprise."

"Huh?" She heard Ladon ask.

"Your Mother is waiting to speak with us."

Her cover blown, Hermione met them in the large room and noticed piles of broken pottery and glass strewn around the floor. "Good morning," She muttered as a greeting and walked to Malfoy's side. As she approached, she raised to her tiptoes to place a kiss on Malfoy's jaw, and he put a hand at her waist.

"Hey, Mom." Lad said, suddenly becoming very interested in some fuzz on his sleeve.

"Did you need something?" Malfoy asked, looking down at her. Hermione never joined them in the basement before. "What's wrong? You're a ball of nerves. You've been a mess since you woke up."

She left Malfoy's side and walked towards Ladon, saying, "Nothing, I'm just..." She pulled Lad in for a sad hug and squeezed his hand before continuing, "It's been nice having you home. I'm sad to see you go again."

"I'll be okay, Mom." He shrugged away and gave a cautious look at Malfoy, seeking his approval. Hermione noted that Lad didn't want to look weak in front of his '*Dad*'; the thought tore at her insides a bit. He never looked that way towards Phin. Lad used to know that all his feelings were safe and valid.

"I know you will. I just miss you when you're away, that's all."

Malfoy walked over and put his arm on her shoulder. "I agree, Lad."

Don't call him that! Irritation threatened to wash over her, but she fought to keep it in check.

"It's been nice to be together as a family." Malfoy finished.

Hermione turned soft eyes to Malfoy, feigning appreciation for his vote of confidence, then huffed out a laugh. "I'm being silly, I know." She smiled back at Lad then sprang forward, wrapping her arms around his neck before pulling back to ruffle his hair. "Throw me a bone. I'm just your sappy Mom, okay!"

Lad smiled warmly, but as he pulled away from her again, he flinched. "Ow! Mom!" He quickly raised his hand to his neck.

"What happened?" Hermione and Malfoy said in unison.

She pulled her arm back and noticed a small bead of red on Lad's neck. Examining her sleeve in response, she found a jagged bit of her jacket button to be the culprit. "Oh, honey! I'm sorry!" She squeaked. "I'm a clumsy fool today with my nerves."

Lad huffed a smile and quipped, "Now, I'm definitely going back to school. You're trying to kill me!"

Unfortunate as the moment was, it broke the tension and caused all three of them to laugh. Shortly afterward, Malfoy ushered them all upstairs, ordering quick showers and a breakfast of sweet rolls and scrambled eggs. They ate in companionable peace before heading off to King's Cross.

Hermione's anxiety still raged as they stood in the drawing-room, ready to leave. Ladon bent over his trunk, double-checking that he packed everything he needed to bring back to Ravenclaw Tower, and Malfoy watched as she paced. Before they Apparated to platform 9 and 3/4s, Malfoy hugged her close, saying, "It's okay, sweetheart, breathe. We'll start visiting again every Friday once we return from our honeymoon."

The jump to the train station was tricky. Malfoy insisted that arriving directly on the platform was the safest mode of transportation. He shrank Ladon's trunk then held out his hand to Apparate the three of them together. Hermione gave him a quizzical look, knowing she was fully capable of Apparating herself to the station. Still, Malfoy responded with an unyielding quirk of his eyebrow, so rather than put up a fight, she placed her hand on his forearm obediently.

The platform buzzed with the excitement of chattering students and hooting owls. Lad immediately let go of Malfoy's hand and walked over to a group of Ravenclaws. Noticing that he was safe and settled, for the time being, Hermione cast her eyes amongst the parents and guardians, looking for any sign of Marta. She didn't see her anywhere. Hermione started to feel a creeping sense of disappointment and dread as she began to worry that her chance for escape passed when she failed to take the opportunity on New Years'.

However, after a few minutes, she noticed a tall woman with long black hair and pinstriped robes standing a few yards away. She waved to someone boarding the train and fiddled with a small red whistle in her manicured hand. Hermione let out a sigh of relief as she recognized

the familiar portkey. Then, checking that Malfoy was distracted, she discreetly caught the raven-haired woman's eye.

With the next part of her plan in place, she quickly moved to Lad. "Come on, Laddie, introduce me to your little buds!" She said, saccharinely, resting her hands on her hips and hoping for the desired effect.

Thankfully, Ladon shot her a look that could kill, then huffed, "Mom, we really need to get on the train. I'll see you soon, okay." He gave her an awkward hug then tilted his head to his group of friends, indicating it was time to move along.

Malfoy walked over from stowing Lad's trunk in the luggage cabin and clapped him on the back, saying, "Wait a minute. Don't forget to say goodbye." Then he pulled Lad in for another flat hug.

Hermione darted her eyes to the woman with the whistle and moved a bit closer to Malfoy's side. He turned to look at her with a pleased smirk but frowned when he saw worry etched on her face again. The woman pushed through the crowds as she made her way over to them.

"Hermione, honestly. It's going to be okay." He said while running his hands up and down her arms.

They watched Ladon wave his final goodbyes and board the train, surrounded by several friends. As the smoke stack blared and the axels began to churn, a Pureblood wizard that Hermione recognized from the New Years' Eve celebration tapped Malfoy on the shoulder and drew his attention away for a moment.

Several things happened at once. Hermione felt a spike of fear spread through her body as she watched the train pull away from the station. The dark-haired woman sidled up behind her, growling, "Let's go! We're leaving, now!" as she grabbed Hermione's wrist.

Hermione spun around abruptly and slid a glass phial into the woman's pocket before pushing her away. The Polyjuiced Ginny shot her a look of utter shock and disdain. Hermione knew that Ginny saw this move as a betrayal, but there was no way around it. Ginny advanced again, reaching out for her, but Hermione pushed her away and screamed.

"DRACO, HELP!!"

Her anguished wail broke through the hustle and bustle of the station as if all the air siphoned out of the large glass windows above. She felt terror rip through the bond as Malfoy realized she was in trouble. He whipped around and caught sight of a tussle between Hermione and the woman. Rage flashed across his face, and in an instant, Ginny turned on the spot and Disapparated.

Malfoy pulled his wand from his holster with lightning speed and shot a red curse in the direction of the retreating woman while roaring with unrestrained anger.

The last thing Hermione saw was twenty or so Aurors descending upon them before Malfoy grabbed her arm in a vice-like grip and dragged them back to Grimmauld Place.

They arrived in the drawing-room. Hermione doubled over and clutched her arm, dragging in heavy breaths and shaking. Malfoy violently tilted her face to his and stared into her eyes with razor-sharp focus. He searched her expression with incredible intensity before slamming his arm backward and warding the fireplace.

"I'm..what?...I..." Hermione sputtered from shock.

Malfoy shot her another furious glance before warding the door to the hallway and barking, "Sit down!"

"I..." She started again.

"Enough! This room is heavily warded. You won't be able to get out, and no one is coming in except me. I'll deal with you when I get back." He spat, then turned and Apparated away.

Hermione watched the clock. Thirty minutes passed, then an hour, then three. Night fell over the room as her skin crawled and the stuffy air vibrated with her manic energy. She couldn't do it, couldn't leave Lad behind on New Years' Eve, and couldn't leave Phin behind today.

There was a reason Phin was still in Banff, and she was confident that Malfoy had something to do with it. Regardless, if Ginny found him at the cabin, then Malfoy knew exactly where Phin was living. If Hermione ran to France with Ginny and Ladon, she knew Phin would be in danger. No, she had to find a way to get them all out at the same time.

The first few parts of her shaky plan progressed decently. She just hoped that Ladon missed the scene on the platform. She didn't want to worry him further. Now she needed to manage Malfoy's response. She vibrated with pent-up nerves as she awaited his return.

Near 1:00 AM, the air shifted, pulling her from her thoughts. Hermione turned her attention from the window to the fireplace noticing that Malfoy returned. He stood, gazing into the flames. His imposing body thrummed with anger as he rested his arm on the mantel, and the fire outlined his dark figure.

She sat on the couch where he commanded her earlier. She hadn't moved all day. "Draco?" she started hesitantly.

"I declared war against the French Ministry."

Hermione blanched. Malfoy's voice sounded cold and terrifying. "How do you know it was them?" she asked quietly. She placed her hand on her neck subconsciously. She had no idea what he thought and feared that he might stomp over at any second to grab her by the throat.

"When I heard you cry out for me..." his shoulders shuttered, and she moved instinctively off the couch, stopping behind him. Something in the breaking of his voice told her to go to him. She threaded her palms up his back, then under his arms, and flattened them against his hard chest.

"I didn't try to run! I don't know what happened. She just grabbed me." She placed her forehead on his back, willing him to believe her. "I needed you, and you saved me," Hermione whispered. "...again."

He placed a large hand on hers. Then he heaved a deep sigh, and responded, "I know. I watched the memory of every single person on the platform. My team recognized her as a French Auror." He turned and pulled her body between his frame and the blazing heat of the fire.

"You could've left with her," he said, as he pushed her hair behind her ears, tenderly. "but instead, you called out to me." His silver eyes burned as he stared at her with an expression of devastating awe. This was it. After months of painstakingly building trust, after endless nights of convincing him that she succumbed to the bond, everything led to this moment.

She quirked her head confusedly. "Of course, I did, and I knew you'd save me. But," she turned her eyes to the floor. "You were so angry when we arrived home. I thought you might hurt me."

A tremor of want skated over his arms and legs. He smashed his lips to hers, and Hermione felt the searing relief eek from his body. "I didn't know what happened at first." It wasn't an apology. "but" he kissed her again and said into her lips, "I love you. I'll *never* hurt you."

The energy sliced between them as the flames' heat warmed their skin, and Hermione felt her palms begin to sweat. The bond thumped a heavy drum beat, calling them into each other's arms.

Hermione shed a tear, asking, "Is Ladon safe?" *Please, Merlin, let him be safe and unaware.*

"Yes. The train arrived at Hogwarts hours ago. He didn't see anything."

She let out a deep sigh of relief before he hummed deliciously, "Show me your memory."

She opened her eyes wide, inviting him to see for himself the last bit of confirmation. Malfoy watched the scene unfold as Hermione caught sight of the dark-haired woman and began to feel scared and nervous. When the woman grabbed her arm and Malfoy experienced her intense need for him. His arms shivered with desire. "*DRACO, HELP!!*"

He pulled from her mind and gazed at her again with the same blistering devotion. The intensity of it frightened her. He looked as though he could easily take her or destroy her. Her ears rang with nervous anticipation, and his fresh smell of soap washed over her senses. The bond coiled with dangerous energy.

His hand raised to her throat. For a moment, Hermione feared the worst of his intentions as his fingers curled into her skin. "What are you going to do?" She breathed.

His voice was molten and calm as he continued to stare into her eyes. "I'm going to feed you my cock." He raised a commanding eyebrow to her, led her to the ground by the back of her neck, then he placed his thumb on her chin. "Open up, love," he demanded.

Hermione licked her lips and turned her wide eyes to his before obeying. She watched Malfoy leisurely lower his zipper and unbuckle his belt before freeing his raging shaft and placing his blunt head on her tongue, crooning, "That's it."

He pushed past her lips and down her throat as he fisted her hair and held her head in place. Often, Malfoy demanded that she suck him off. He usually arrogantly stood as she hallowed her cheeks and dragged her lips over him while tugging at his balls. This was different. Malfoy pulled from her mouth until just his thick head grazed her lips again, then sank back into her mouth, fucking her with complete control of both of their bodies.

Hermione's pussy began to drip with the way he kneeled at the altar of their shared connection. He picked up the pace, and she felt a mixture of her saliva and his precum drip down her chin. She felt his unadulterated desire as he pulled away again, and she tasted his salty essence. "Tell me you love me," he bade. Then, he watched her as he dipped his cock back into her throat, paying close attention to the way she took every last inch of him. Hermione saw heat and passion in his gaze but felt penetrating vulnerability from his request.

She let all of the sparking intimacy between them pour into her soul. It popped and crackled along her skin and sank into her marrow. He pulled out again and she obeyed, "I love you."

Malfoy nearly blacked out into a euphoric subspace as he slammed into her mouth, drawing out every last drop of pleasure. She felt her jaw begin to ache, and her tongue curl around his dick, trying her best to keep up with his assault on her throat. When he finally came, he stared into her eyes and tenderly rubbed his thumb over her temple as he watched her drink him in.

He hummed, "That's right. Take it all. You're such a good girl. Fuck, that's it," as he fisted his cock and milked out every last drop unto her waiting tongue.

He then pulled her to her feet and turned her back to him as he slid her clothes from her body with achingly slow precision. Once naked, he pushed his thick fingers into her cunt while pulling her earlobe into his mouth. "Merlin, you're so fucking wet," he growled before dragging his other hand over her hard nipples and cupping the weight of her heavy breast.

He caressed her aching tits with maddening control and said, "Tell me, again."

Hermione tilted her head back against his strong shoulder and savored the feel of his hypnotic fingers.

"I love you, Draco Malfoy, please, let me come."

Malfoy groaned his approval and lowered her to the ground. He took his time drawing out her release as he hovered over her and scrutinized her every expression. His thumb drew lazy circles around her tight nub, and she felt a steady pulse slamming against the press of his fingers. At one point, he dipped his head lower and dragged his fat tongue over her, and sucked down hard before pulling back up again to watch the way her eyes fluttered in response. When her breathing started to catch and the searing intensity picked up, Malfoy

shifted his weight, and she felt his hard, smooth tip replace his thumb. Malfoy crawled over her body and licked her nipples as he swiped his heavy cock through her moist sex.

Hermione's eyes rolled back at the feel of his blunt head. He fisted his cock, and she felt the sharp swipe of his knuckles slamming against her clit. The contrast of heat, dull pressure and strong fingers created a symphony of sensations. Her core began to tighten, and the pulsating hammer of anticipation bloomed over her nerve endings.

"Oh, god!" She cried out as he increased his ministrations' pressure and speed, and she started to pull in shallow fast drags of air.

She felt his weeping shaft meld with her soaked pussy, and the added pressure of his raging dick ignited her release, sending shockwaves of pent-up ecstasy through her core. As soon as she began to fall over the edge, Malfoy pushed past her spasming walls. He slammed into her throbbing channel.

He pumped into her aggressively, stretching out her orgasm and sending her barreling back into oblivion when he began to thump against her womb. He chased another searing climax with agonizing intensity and filled her with his cum as his cock throbbed within her walls.

He stayed inside her, fully sheathed, breathing heavily and running his fingers through her hair as he softened. They fell asleep, joined together as he clearly had no intention of pulling free from her. A little while later, Hermione shifted uncomfortably under his weight and felt him harden. The intimacy of their prolonged connection shook her. Malfoy insisted on calling all the shots. He entered her body when he wanted and exited her body only when he felt utterly sated.

She ached from use, and she squirmed with discomfort, but the movement caused them both to moan. When fully erect again, Malfoy rolled over and pulled from her newly aroused pussy.

"Mmm, that's the best way to wake up. Look at you. Freshly fucked and wanting more."

He knelt between her thighs, pushed her knees to her chest, and then cast a quick cleansing and lubrication spell and sank into her backside.

Having fucked her thoroughly, Malfoy pulled her naked, spent body into his arms and walked them to the bedroom, lazily fingering her pussy lips as he went. He laid her down on the bed, pulling the covers up before wrapping his large arms over her.

Hermione steadied her breathing as best as she could. She had a sinking suspicion that there was a reason he sometimes left in the middle of the night and came back smelling like the woods near her home in Canada.

After about an hour, Malfoy crawled out of bed and moved to the walk-in closet. She watched through the slits in her eyelids as he pulled on basketball shorts and a t-shirt then extracted a gold coin from his top drawer. He stalled his movements before proceeding

further as she assumed he listened for her breathing. Once satisfied, he tapped the coin and disappeared.

As soon as he left, Hermione checked in with the bond. She felt a faint hum but recognized that Malfoy was a great distance away. She couldn't make out his mood. Once she confirmed that the bond wouldn't give her away, she shot out of bed and headed for the fireplace in Malfoy's office, grabbing a robe as she ran.

Malfoy would know if she left Grimmauld Place, but Hermione wasn't going to leave yet. She grabbed a handful of silvery powder from the mantel in the office and tossed it into the fire. Malfoy was so convinced of his hold on Hermione that he left Floo powder out in the open these days.

When the Floo-call connected, she knelt and pressed her face into the fire, yelling, "NEVILLE!" She waited and heard nothing. The office was dark, and the sleeping former Headmasters all jumped in their frames. "NEVILLE!!" She screamed again as fear and anxiety shot through her. "NEVILLE, PLEASE!! COME QUICK!"

The door to her former prison crashed open, and the light filled the space as a startled Neville ran into the office.

He stared at the fire, confused, and asked, "Hermione?" He cast a quick Tempus saying, "It's 4:00 AM. What's wrong?"

"Neville, please, I'm in danger. I need you to listen to me, and I *need* you to believe me. No questions asked. I don't have much time!"

His face screwed up in worry. "Oh..okay, Hermione, whatever you need. But, where's Draco?"

Hermione started to cry. She swiped at her eyes to drag away the hot tears that fell down her cheek. "Neville, please. listen. Everything you know about Malfoy is a lie. He's not Britain's savior. He's a narcissistic, Machiavellian psychopath!"

"Woah, Hermione, hold up. That's pretty harsh." Neville stated, holding up his hands in defense.

"Listen, please! He captured me during the war and kept me hostage as a..." She couldn't say '*sex slave*.' The words caught in her throat. Everything that Malfoy did to her was humiliating. She shook her head and continued. "I escaped with Theodore Nott and lived on the run for eleven years." She spoke with lightning speed and desperation, imploring him to believe her.

"What!?" He asked shakily. "Hermione, slow down. You two have a son together. Ladon is obviously Draco's."

"He impregnated me before I ran." The phrase hung in the air for a moment, thick with the words she couldn't say before. "Theo and I raised him as our own until Malfoy caught us in

August. He says that I was sick; I don't know what to believe. All I know is that I can't trust him."

"Hermione, slow down. He says you were sick? What are you talking about? You two look like the perfect happy couple whenever I see you together."

Hermione scratched at her forehead in frustration. She didn't have enough time to undo all of Malfoy's careful narrative weaving. "Neville, please. We look happy because if I don't, he threatens to kill my loved ones before violently raping me. Okay?"

"What?" Neville whispered in horror.

"I need your help. You have to get Lad and take him to the front gates. Ginny Weasley is going to meet you there. I gave her hundreds of incriminating memories. She can tell you more. Please, get him to safety. I need to escape, but I can't do that if Lad isn't safe." She desperately hoped that Ginny found the memories she slipped into her pocket and the memory of Hermione speaking into the bathroom mirror earlier. It was a message describing her plan to Ginny and begging her to help.

There was a beat of silence before a shocked Neville spoke up. "Hermione, are you sure you're not confused?... I just got to sleep. Draco declared war on France, our French students, and their families are all going crazy. We tightened the wards. No one is allowed near the castle. We heard that someone from the French Ministry tried to abduct you this afternoon. It's been all over the news." He shifted his weight and looked uncertain.

"I'm not confused!" She needed him to believe her, and she feared that she was running out of time. "He lied about everything!"

"What potion did you help me correct in our third year?" He suddenly asked suspiciously.

"A Shrinking solution! Yours turned orange instead of green, and Snape wanted to feed it to Trevor if you didn't get it right. We fixed your potion, but Snape still took 5 points from Gryffindor. Happy!?"

She cast her eyes around, searching for anything she could say to convince Neville, then felt a pang of sour excitement. "What happened to your DA Galleon?"

"What!?" Neville shot back incredulously.

"You're DA Galleon. Malfoy collected all of them to find me after Harry died. What happened to yours?"

"I gave it to Luna. She took it with her back to England. We thought her Dad could use it to communicate with us if she couldn't get him out of the country,"

"Malfoy killed her! I saw her die in his memories. He must have taken the Galleon and brought her into Voldemort. Please, Neville, please believe me. He's a monster."

Neville looked as though she slapped him across the face. "She said...someone was onto her trail...said it was someone we knew but didn't want to write more in the letter." He raised his

eyes to meet hers. "Hermione, if I help you and this isn't true, he'll have me thrown in Azkaban or kill me. I've seen the possessive way he looks at you and Ladon."

"Yes! You've seen it! Help me! Please!" She begged again. She feared that Malfoy might grab her by the neck at any moment and pull her back into his office. "Floo-call, the French Ministry, talk to Ginny. Find a way to get Lad to her. That's all I ask. It has to be tonight, though."

"Okay, I'll do it." He said reluctantly.

-----Draco-----

The morning light broke through the curtains and woke Draco from a deep sleep. He was up the whole night, first handling the fucking disaster with the damned French Ministry, then for hours, pushing and pulling Hermione's body to his exacting wants. Finally, after she fell asleep, he Apparated to Banff. He couldn't resist showing Theo everything that they'd been up to over the past two weeks as a family, capped off by Hermione calling out for his help and telling him she loved him.

He threw his forearm over his eyes and groaned, *Fuuuuck, my wife is going to be the death of me. She loves me; it's about damn time.* He shifted his hips, noticing his lengthening cock. He was already hard again.

Draco arrived home around 6:00 AM and enjoyed Hermione one more time before calling it a night and passing the fuck out. He needed to get up though, they were leaving for their honeymoon today, despite everything that was going on with France. He wasn't giving up his well-earned time away with his wife. He wanted to call into the Ministry, leave explicit instructions for rooting out the bastards who plotted against him and then take off.

He might make some short side-trips while away if a few key persons needed persuading. Most of France loved him, but he knew there were still hold-outs from Voldemort's war who didn't believe his change of heart. *Fuck them. People can change! I'm living proof!* He figured that he could pull out from Hermione for a few hours to change some minds along the way if need be, but other than that, he wanted to be left alone to enjoy his bride. Draco slid a hand under the covers and leisurely stroked himself several times before reaching an arm out to Hermione to wake her up.

However, all his hand hit was the cold mattress.

He sat up quickly, feeling something was off and surveying the room. She wasn't in bed, and the bathroom door was open. He promptly checked in with the bond and realized that he couldn't feel her emotions. He felt the connection but couldn't make out her feelings or location.

Anger instantly flooded his system. He shot out of bed and stormed to the closet pulling open a drawer and finding the portkey to Banff nestled on the velvet next to his cufflinks. That

meant she hadn't found out about his secret yet and must be hiding somewhere else. Though, he had no idea how she cloaked the bond's connection and hid her location.

He pulled on some jeans and a t-shirt and stomped to the bedroom door. *If she ran from me again, I'm going to fucking kill her.*

Three more steps confirmed his suspicions. Draco reached for the door and threw it open only to find himself warded into the bedroom with the impenetrable blood-ward of which he was now exceptionally well acquainted. Blinding rage sliced past his eyes as he roared out in fury and slammed his hands against the invisible barrier!

Chapter End Notes

Will she find Phin and get Ladon out of harms way? Will Draco still have some moves up his sleeves? Hmm... we'll see!

Song choice for this chapter: "Wicked Game by Yola Recoba"

Chapter 32: A Race to Safety

Chapter Summary

Hermione enacts a plan to escape Malfoy and save those who she loves.

Chapter Notes

Here you go, friends! This is the final chapter!

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this story. I've really enjoyed the process of putting this piece together and hearing your thoughts. If you get a chance and you haven't commented or given kudos to the piece I would love your support. Also, please subscribe for future stories!

Happy Reading!

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

-----Hermione-----

As soon as Malfoy rolled off of her at 6:30 AM, he passed out. Hermione waited until his emotions calmed and his breathing steadied before she slowly and quietly pulled her wand from the bedside table and cast a sleeping charm at his back.

She threw off the covers, dressed, and ran downstairs to the drawing-room. Her chess set perched on the small antique table by the window; all the pieces stood, waiting for their next game. No matter how many times they played over the past few months, Hermione never let Malfoy play with the black pieces. The dark object's magical signature was faint, but she didn't want to risk Malfoy guessing what lay at the piece's core.

She hastily fisted the queen knocking over several pieces in the process and ran back to the bedroom. Her hand slid along the woven wallpaper as she steadied herself rounding the last corner.

Arriving at the suite's door again, she halted to a stop and took a moment to catch her breath, her lungs already burned. After pulling in four slow drags through her nose and pushing them out her mouth, she opened the door and crept through the room to the closet. Malfoy slept soundly, his bare, ripped back stretched over the mattress as he lay on his stomach. His arms were under his head and pillow, and his Dark Mark stood out, visible and ominous.

She tip-toed to his dresser and pulled open the top drawer where she saw him extract the gold coin earlier. Sitting on the green velvet was a shiny gold Galleon that, when Hermione touched it, hummed and signified magic.

Please, please work! She set the queen down on the dresser and then used the Flagrate spell to cast a mid-air rune. The flames burned brightly in front of her in the shape of a Laguz or a sharp-lined letter r.

Malfoy was right the other day when he told her in his vault that she "*already had access to every book.*" She did, and on one of their trips to and from the library at Malfoy Manor, she pulled down a withered, centuries-old book of runes and added it to her pile.

Back at Grimmauld Place, she used a Difindo and a mending charm to swap out the covers for an old copy of the Count of Monte Cristo. She charmed the pages to look correct when Malfoy glanced over her shoulder, and through the next several months, Hermione poured over the possible uses for historic runes not mentioned in the *Study of Ancient Runes*. That's how roughly a month ago, she came up with a strong hypothesis for how to confuse the bond. She hoped to find a way to sever the connection completely, but that information remained elusive.

Laguz, the rune for water or ocean, was once used in 400 BC by a notorious wizard known as Alefnod the Devious to control the minds of several witches and wizards. Alefnod proved that harnessing the power of Laguz led to the disruption of unconscious mental processes, and he used his new ability to build an army and overthrow a neighboring kingdom.

The spell called for drawing the flaming rune in the dirt and encircling it with several witches or wizards who all said the incantation, "*Un same*" together in unison. Hermione instead drew the rune in mid-air and held tight to the queen while chanting "*Un Same'... Un Same'... Un Same'.*" She focused on the connection to Malfoy and the subconscious way they were always aware of one another. Thin blue lines crept from her temple to Malfoy, where he lay sleeping. Then with a slash of her wand, she vanished the rune aggressively.

Instantly the threads disappeared, and the thrum of Malfoy's feelings that always persisted, ceased. Hermione felt a vague awareness of their connection, but she no longer experienced the acute intimacy with his every emotion. *Thank Merlin!* She silently cheered as she moved on to her next task.

She clutched the Galleon and focused all her magical energy on the tiny object. It was next to impossible to duplicate a portkey and required several casters to achieve. However, all Hermione had was her wand and the queen.

Gemino! Hermione cast nonverbally; she didn't want to risk waking Malfoy. Although, after waiting several seconds, nothing happened.

"*Gemino!*" She tried again, whispering this time—still nothing.

Finally, she closed her eyes and squeezed the queen as hard as she could, focusing even further on the task at hand. She felt the intense rumbling of the dark object's magic. "*Gemino!*" she shouted and heard Malfoy grunt and roll over. Fear shot from her spine to the

base of her skull in response to his movement. Distracted, she hardly noticed that the small coin in her hand doubled.

When her initial shock faded and she realized that she was successful, she dropped the original portkey back into the drawer and moved quickly out to the room. Next, she slit her palm and cast impenetrable blood-wards on the windows, fireplace, and door frame. She needed to get to Phin and back to France before Malfoy caught on, and she hoped that the charmed sleep, wards, and duplicated portkey would throw him off her trail.

After doing all she could think of to ensure a safe escape, she took a deep breath and hesitated. Once she left, there was no going back. She knew it in her bones that when Malfoy found out that she ran again he wouldn't stop until she was under his thumb and at his knees for eternity. It was already a miracle that he may not have killed Phin in August and that he was kind at times to her and Ladon. Once she left again, she knew that it was over.

If she didn't get Phin, find Ladon and arrive safely behind wards in France before Malfoy caught her, then realistically, Phin was going to be dead, Ladon was going to be traumatized, and she was going to... she didn't want to think what he would do to her.

A small voice in the back of her mind told her that if she turned around now, she could destroy the portkey, remove the wards, come up with an excuse for the muted connection and tuck herself back under the covers before he woke up. Malfoy never needed to know how close she got to running again.

At that realization, tears welled up in her eyes. How could she do this and put her family at risk? Ginny said that Phin was alive, and Ladon seemed okay. She put up with so much from Malfoy already. If she went back to him now, she could endure more; she was strong. Anyways they were bonded. There was no getting around that. At some point, the sleeping charm and spell she cast to confuse the bond would wear off. She would never be completely free from him.

No! She shook her head violently and continued on her course. She didn't know what to do about the bond, but hopefully, someone in the French Ministry might help her figure out that part later. Feeling determined once again, she tapped the portkey, disappeared out of the hallway at Grimmauld Place, and arrived on the other side of the world.

Her feet touched down on a soft blanket of evergreen needles. The familiar smell of fresh air, pine, and clean water from the lake below assaulted her senses. Hermione lifted her anxious eyes, heart still pumping furiously, and took in the sight of her beloved home.

Sweet, Salazar, it worked! I made it! There was still a large part of her who worried the portkey might take her somewhere completely different; she worked off assumptions and hunches. She stood for a moment, astounded by how lucky she was up until this point. However, she worried that the luck might run out at any moment and needed to take full advantage of her circumstance while she could.

She left England around 7:00 AM, which made it roughly midnight. She reasoned that Phin should be home, theoretically, if Ginny told the truth about seeing him here. Praying to the gods for continued good fortune, she tentatively walked towards the cabin. A myriad of emotions rolled beneath her skin. She worried about what Malfoy may have done to Phin to keep him here. *What if he wiped his memory? What if he somehow convinced him I wanted to leave? What if...*

She reached the front door and turned the knob cautiously, both anxious to see Phin and worried about discovering what happened to him in her absence. The door slid open easily. It wasn't locked or warded. When she stepped onto the wood floors, the smell of cedar, and mint, all the fragrances she associated with their home washed over her. She also noticed a strong, musty scent like a wet towel sat too long or the windows needed opening to allow air to circulate through the home.

She took five more steps into the living room and met a powerful ward. As she rubbed her hands along the invisible barrier, a confirmation of sorts settled in her chest. He kept Phin caged in their home.

Malfoy never mentioned what happened to Phin, he wouldn't let her talk about him at all, but he eluded that Phin may have died due to the mysterious illness they contracted. If Phin was alive behind this ward, Malfoy lied. She thought about his assertion that Phin contracted the disease that forced their bond and huffed a laugh. She never truly believed it, but with Phin caged, she *knew* it was another narrative. He caused their illness; of course, he did.

"Get the fuck out of here! I'm not interested in anything else you have to show me!" Phin roared from their bedroom in the back.

Her heart leaped from her chest and dropped to her stomach. He was here, alive, and he sounded healthy, but he was also caged and angry. *Show him? What did he mean by 'show him'?*

As if she summoned it into being, Hermione's eyes then fell on Dumbledore's Pensieve; it sat in the middle of their dining table, and the chair in front of it lay sideways on the floor as if someone stood up too quickly. *More lies, it was here all along. What has he forced Phin to watch?* The possibilities churned her stomach.

"Phin?" She croaked as her hands began to shake anxiously.

A shuffling noise floated across the cabin as if he rolled out of bed and pushed back the sheets. Then his awestruck figure loomed in the doorway.

"Mia?" His deep voice broke, and she heard anguish, grief, and desperation in one.

She nodded slowly with her hands flat against the ward, reaching out to him, and he moved swiftly, closing the distance between them. His fist hit the barrier near her hand, and he asked painfully, "Where did we first meet on the run in 1998?"

"Southpool." She said soothingly. She read the hurt and excruciating want across his face. He couldn't let himself believe it was her.

"How do I know he didn't see that in your memories?" His voice broke again as he talked more to himself than her.

"Phin," She implored, trying to set his mind at ease.

"Where were you when you decided to bond with me?" He interrupted.

"Our bathtub, here in our home. Phin, it's me."

He closed his eyes and shook his head, leaning his forehead against the ward. "This is cruel," he whispered.

"Phin, please, it's me." Tears ran down her cheeks now, hot and salty as they touched her trembling lips.

"What was the first thing I ever said to Ladon?" He asked, squeezing his eyes tight and avoiding her gaze.

She found it hard to speak through the agonizing lump in her throat. "You said that *your* son was the most beautiful creature you ever laid eyes on." She instinctively moved her hand up to brush his hair off his forehead, knowing he wouldn't feel her touch through the wall. Phin's large shoulders sank, and she marveled over the fact that her strong, capable husband looked so vulnerable.

His tortured expression didn't change, so she continued, "Then you smirked at me apologetically and shrugged in a way that made us both laugh. We spent the entire day together curled on the bed, holding one another. Just you, me, and our tiny child." He opened his eyes and met her gaze, hope reflected in his glassy orbs. "You were so excited that you spent all day tapping out that infuriating, jingle-bells rhythm on my feet under the sheets, and for once, I didn't have the heart to yell at you to cut it out."

That did it, his eyes widened, and his breath caught as he said with caution, "Mia!?" She nodded again, smiling this time, and he asked, "How are you here?" His face showed joy, reverence, and shock but quickly turned to fear as he darted his eyes to the open door behind her.

As if time started to move again, Hermione remembered that she had a mission— get Phin, collect Ladon, and arrive behind wards in France. Although, freeing Phin wouldn't be easy. "That's a long story, and we don't have enough time. I'll tell you once we're safe."

"Where's Draco?" Phin growled. "Mia, you're amazing, but I've spent months behind this ward, I don't know how..."

"I know what kind of ward it is. I used it in the castle the night I threatened to kill myself, remember?" She interjected.

"The blood-ward? but then..." He paused, looking crestfallen. "Do you have his blood? How are we going to remove the barrier without it?"

"Sort of." She quickly said as she pulled off her jacket. Phin gave her a skeptical look. He hated when she plowed ahead and didn't explain herself. It was a habit of hers that she had since childhood. Harry and Ron always yelled at her for doing that too. She stopped then and said, "I took Lad's blood thinking there was a chance Malfoy may construct one of these wards if he caught..." She stopped and shook the horrible thought from her mind. "I wanted to be prepared."

Phin stared at her with empathy, then said, carefully, "That's a stretch, Mia. If Malfoy cast this, then Lad's blood probably won't work." She glared at him angrily, and he stood back, holding up his hands in surrender.

Hermione pulled the queen out of her pocket and cast an Engorgio on the tiny drop of dried blood still attached to her jagged button. Next, she swiped the arm of her jacket down along the ward and watched as it fizzed slightly like carbonated water.

It wasn't the desired effect. Hermione knew from reading Snape's potion book that the ward should bubble aggressively at the touch of the caster's blood. Phin looked at her concernedly and with reservation.

"Mia, did you incapacitate him somehow, or is he coming?"

"Phin, I need to concentrate." She whined, trying to think through the problem ahead of her. She raised her eyes to his and noticed his stern expression. "I cast a sleeping charm and then one of these wards. He *shouldn't* be able to get out."

There was a beat of silence, then Phin said in resignation, "You need to leave me."

Hermione huffed and cast another engorgement charm, increasing Lad's blood's surface contact with the ward. Still, nothing happened. "I'm not doing that." She continued to think as fast as she could about other potential solutions to try.

"It's Draco. If you didn't permanently incapacitate him, then he's coming. You need to go." He walked away from the ward, righted the upturned chair, and sat at the dining room table.

Hermione stopped working and said, exasperatedly, "No! Phin, I can figure this out!" She placed her hands on her hip, "I set the ward in England with *my* blood. He shouldn't be able to break free. Now stop talking and let me think."

"Mia, he has your blood, and you know it. You already did that to him once. He isn't going to fall for it again. You need to go. Get Lad and run to Ginny Weasley."

Hermione knew he was right, knew Malfoy must have prepared for the possibility that she would cast the ward against him at some point. However, she couldn't think about that now. Leaving Phin behind wasn't an option. She would have escaped from the train station with Lad and Ginny yesterday if that were the case. No, she was going to get them all out or die trying. At least if she died, Malfoy would go down with her.

She needed to distract Phin, so she asked quietly, "What did he make you watch?" as she tilted her chin to the Pensieve.

Phin let out a derisive breath and crossed his arms. Hermione chanced a sideways glance in his direction as he stared out the window and said, "You know that too."

She went back to work stoically, not allowing herself to digest this new confirmation of Malfoy's evil ways. She could worry about that later.

A glimmer of a possibility crossed her mind as she set back to her task at hand. She clutched the queen harder and touched the ward, chanting "*Originem, Originem, Originem*" over and over again, hoping to pull Malfoy's DNA to the surface. Slowly the ward began to bubble.

Phin shot up from his seat at the table and stomped to the ward. "It's working!" he cheered her on. "Keep it up!"

Hermione kept chanting as the spell began to dissolve the invisible barrier between them. The bubbling ward started moving outward from where her hand touched the wall and then spread further along the barrier in front of her. Hermione kept chanting but felt her magic draining. The effort it took to pull the spell forward drained her drastically.

Inch by inch, the ward dissolved in an excruciating pace. The irregular hole it made on the surface seemed to expand and contract with her ragged breathing.

"Hermione, you're doing it. You're brilliant!" Phin encouraged her. The hole was the size of a dinner plate now as she chanted, and her palms began to sweat. "You're almost there just a bit further!"

"Ahhh!!!!" She yelled out in the effort it took to keep going, then finally screamed, "Finite Incantatem!" The wall melted away entirely, and Phin raced forward to catch her as she started to fall.

Once steady, he smashed their lips together hungrily. For the briefest moment, all was right in the world. Phin's hold felt perfect and strong. His lips were warm and welcoming. Her heart beat quickly with devastating love for her partner.

Then everything changed, and she screamed out again, but this time in agony.

"AHH!!"

Flames of burning pain writhed beneath her skin where Phin held her tight. "Stop, stop, please, it hurts!!"

Phin threw his arms out away from her in shock and fear. The instant he let her go, the pain subsided, but white-hot rage mirrored across the bond shortly afterward. Her infidelity and Malfoy's anger broke through the cloaking spell she cast.

"Mia?? Are you okay?" Phin panted, roving his eyes over her. His hands hovered near her shoulders, then arms, traveling over her body, afraid to touch her for fear of causing her more pain.

"That BASTARD!!" He bellowed in anger kicking at a nearby table leg and fisting his hair as sparks of out-of-control magical energy flew from his body. He stormed to the table near the door and grabbed his wand, yelling more curses into the dark room.

"Did he tell you that he cursed the bond to hurt you if you strayed?" He demanded

Hermione hunched over, trying to catch her breath. She shook her head, staring at the floor in shock. "He'll know I'm here." She said quietly, realizing several pieces of her escape plan were now crumbling around her feet.

"Quick! Make the portkey to the French Ministry." She tossed the queen at him clumsily. "We need to go, NOW!"

Phin rushed through the room, grabbed the dark object, and initiated the spell to get them out of Banff and to France as fast as possible. Meanwhile, Hermione felt like the world was moving in slow motion. Something about the pain she experienced caused her to freeze. *No matter what, I'm bonded to Malfoy, and I can't ever touch Phin again without pain.*

The best-case scenario now was that Malfoy ended up in Azkaban, and she and Phin raised Ladon in a perpetual state of forced friendship. There was no longer any opportunity for them to be intimate ever again. The realization stalled her.

"Okay, Mia, let's go. It's ready." Phin said, holding his hand out to her. Hermione stared at it momentarily before meeting his eyes as he lowered his arm again, realizing his mistake. Thankfully he used an old, corduroy throw pillow from the nearby couch to act as the portkey- there was enough space for her to hold on without touching him.

They landed in the 6th District of Paris at Place De Furstenberg, where the Wallace Fountain stood as the visitor's entrance to the Ministère des Affaires Magiques de la France. Hermione and Phin read about the Ministry of Magical Affairs of France extensively while researching Voldemort's whereabouts on the run together after the Battle on Hogwarts. Therefore, they knew where the visitor's entrance sat and how to access the atrium below. Luckily, Hermione and Phin both visited Place De Furstenberg while on holidays with their families growing up.

They quickly moved to the fountain, and with a sideways glance in each other's direction, they each coughed in turn. As the roots of the nearby Paulownia trees enclosed them in a birdcage elevator, Phin turned to Hermione and said cautiously, "We made it."

Hermione didn't respond. Something felt off. Phin was right; Malfoy likely *was* able to remove the ward she placed him behind. She wondered why he didn't come to Banff immediately once he felt her betrayal. She rubbed her wrists together anxiously, noted that she wouldn't feel safe until all three of them were behind wards and surrounded by helpful Aurors in the Bureau de la Justice Magique.

She continued to fidget as the elevator descended through the brick pavers and concrete of the tree-lined street above and stopped in the magical atrium. They stepped out onto the white and black marble checkerboard floors and noticed the room sat empty.

"Where is everyone?" Phin asked anxiously. "It's nearly 9:00 AM. Ministry officials should be on their way to work."

Suddenly, several figures appeared out of thin air, yelling in unison.

"Stay where you are!"

"Arret!"

Hermione's stomach dropped as she heard shouts ring out around the walls, and they found themselves surrounded by English and French Aurors alike.

She didn't understand what was going on. Anyone should be allowed to enter the atrium of the Ministry. Her vision blurred momentarily as the onslaught of overwhelming circumstances hit her again and again. *Why are they surrounding us?* She thought dazedly, watching the Auror's raise and point their wands at her and Phin. *Why are the French and British Aurors here?* Deep in her consciousness, she knew why. Malfoy. It was always Malfoy.

"Come here, Darling. You're safe now." Malfoy's cool voice sliced through the tension of the room as fear flooded her system again.

The crowd of Aurors parted, and he moved into the circle followed closely by the French Minister of Magic. He wore his battle robes; the jet-black fabric and the black leather cuffs and belt wrapped him menacingly. His muscles strained under the robe, and she felt through the renewed bond that his ire boiled below his false charm.

"W...where's Ladon?" She croaked as she heard Phin scream out in a fury. She turned to face him as chains encircled his hands and feet, and he slammed to the ground on his knees under the weight of several Auror's spells. "No! Stop! What are you doing!?" She yelled out in response.

"Come. Here. Hermione!" Malfoy bit out, drawing back her attention. "Don't worry, our son is fine. I intercepted those who intended to kidnap him. He is safe at home, awaiting our return. Leave your captor. You're free now. I'm here."

She didn't move. Her feet felt cemented to the ground in front of her as she processed the fact that Malfoy had Ladon. Her plan failed.

"He's a fucking, lying Bastard! Don't let him take her!" Phin yelled out furiously!

Malfoy raised his fiery eyes and barked, "Shut him up!" at the Aurors. Hermione heard Phin's screaming die in his throat. "You're done terrorizing my family, Nott!" He pushed past Hermione and marched forward, casting a stinging jinx aggressively.

Phin groaned in pain and fell over on his side, clutching his chest. "Minister!" The French Minister of Magic admonished Malfoy. "I know you're upset, but we caught him. It's over. There's no need for..."

Help, get help. Find Ginny. Stop Malfoy. Her brain moved furiously, grasping at straws. "Please, Minister, where is Ginny Weasley?" Hermione interjected. "I need to speak with her urgently! She has information that I..." Malfoy silenced her wandlessly and nonverbally.

"Shh, love. It's okay," Malfoy crooned, walking towards her again. He turned to the crowd asserting, "She's been Confunded. I'm taking her home. I'll be back to deal with Nott." He took a few more steps then turned back again, saying, "Don't forget Minister, Nott is an English citizen and therefore falls under *MY* jurisdiction. I'm extraditing him for sentencing in Britain."

He reached Hermione and placed a hand on either side of her cheeks. Then he pulled her in as if to kiss her temple reassuringly. His dangerous voice whispered for only her ears to hear, "Ginny Weasley just admitted to trying to kidnap our son. She apparently conspired with Nott to meet you here and torture you and Ladon as punishment for my victory against the dark side." Hermione stared past him to Phin, refusing to look Malfoy in the eyes.

"You can't save him. He's already dead." He said, then kissed her forehead. Hermione gave him a furious look, then cast her gaze to the French Minister again, waiting to scream out once more for help. "Not another word, love, or you'll never see Ladon again for the rest of your very long life."

Her breath quickened, and he brushed her hair out of her face as he added, "I may decide to lock you away anyways as punishment for your *fucking* infidelity." He kissed her lips chastely, then removed the Silencio and asked for the benefit of the room, "Shall we go home, sweetheart?"

Tears of anger and desperation filled Hermione's eyes as she kicked herself for walking into another of Malfoy's perfectly executed traps. He dissolved the ward, got to Ginny and Ladon, and then headed them off, arriving in France first and weaving another narrative. She felt astounded by his ability to declare war on a country and then do an about-face and secure their help in less than twenty-four hours. Knowing him, he likely apologized to the French Ministry profusely, then blamed everything on Phin— tying up his competition in a neat little bow.

She refused to patiently wait as Malfoy murdered Phin and locked her away from her son for eternity. She refused to play the part of a pawn in his many games. Hermione lowered her eyes submissively and reached out her hands, making to grab unto him for support. Her wand rested limply in her palm.

Holding his wand in his right grip, Malfoy reached out to her as well. The moment their wands were close enough, she jabbed her wand tip to his and yelled out,

"Priori Incantatem!!"

A rare moment of shock spread over Malfoy's perfectly composed features as yellow light burst from their wands. In the replicated vision of his previous casts, the Silencios broke forth one after another. The stinging jinx followed and bounced toward Phin. Next, they witnessed the charm to charge a portkey. Then the whispery forms of Ginny Weasley and Ladon fell from his wand, and the waiting crowd watched as Malfoy Imperiused Ginny feeding her the

false narrative that he planted earlier. She fell to the floor, rolling around in pain as his Crucio leveled her. Lastly, or first, as it played out in the actual scene, the waiting crowd watched as Malfoy stunned his son. Ladon fell to the floor unconscious as Ginny screamed out in terror.

"NO!!" Malfoy roared in anger next to her as he moved to grab her arm. He pulled a trinket from his pocket that she knew must be a portkey—he clearly planned to drag her back to Grimmauld Place.

"STOP!! ARRET!! ARREST HIM!" The French Minister yelled as mayhem broke out. The French Aurors followed their commands and pointed their wands in Malfoy's direction while the British Aurors stood dazedly. Malfoy raised his wand in defense, but he held no chance against the French forces' sheer numbers.

In the melee, Hermione ran from him and sank to her knees in front of Phin. She pulled him up from the floor and winced when the pain seared from their touch. She watched in awe as the French Aurors surrounded Malfoy and dragged him away into the depths of the Ministry.

"Phin, are you okay?" She breathed as a smile spread across his face.

"Brilliant, you are!" Phin said breathlessly. His eyes held nothing but wonder for her ingenuity.

"We don't have time to waste. We need to go get Ladon." She whispered urgently as they both got to their feet. Just as they started towards the exit, the British Aurors seemed to wake from their stunned trance. In unison, they turned their wands on Hermione and Phin. The next thing Hermione knew, the British Aurors ripped her from Phin as they both screamed out in anger and frustration.

Hermione sat in a sparse and uncomfortable holding cell for hours. She paced the room, fuming with the need to get to Ladon before Malfoy spun a new web and secured his release. She had no idea where Phin was and felt the excruciating ache to get to him and run away as fast as they could.

However, she knew that escape was impossible unless Malfoy ended up behind bars. With their bond back to normal, she felt every bit of anger and hope that Malfoy experienced as he worked his way out of a life sentence in Azkaban. If he talked his way out of imprisonment—which he did before — then he would chase her to the ends of the Earth. She *needed* to find a way to see him to Azkaban. There was no other way forward.

After what felt like days, two Aurors approached her cell, one French and one British. "Lady Malfoy," The British man said, nodding in her direction, "Follow us, please."

They escorted her through many dark halls and eventually into a large conference room where Malfoy sat with the French Minister in conversation. Hermione's skin began to crawl in terror until she noticed the slight hum and glow of magical cuffs on his wrists.

"Please sit," The French Minister said. He indicated the seat across from Malfoy. She moved to the chair as the door opened again, and two other officers ushered Phin into the room. He looked weary but unhurt.

"Your spell this morning set in motion many events. Mrs. Malfoy." The French Minister began.

"Please don't call her that." Phin barked from his place in the corner of the room.

The French Minister scowled, saying through tight lips, "Sir. you will remain quiet unless spoken to, am I understood?"

Phin glared silently, and Hermione noticed an irritating smirk pull at Malfoy's lips.

Having settled the disruption, the French Minister continued, "Because of the revelation you introduced us to, we checked with Ginny Weasley, reversed the Imperious curse, and questioned her in detail." Hermione shifted in her seat. That all sounded good. But she feared why Malfoy looked so pleased with himself.

"Okay, and?" She asked hesitantly. Her legs bounced under the table, and she placed her hands on her thighs to calm her nerves.

"Ginny shared with us a phial of extremely incriminating memories." The French Minister stated. "I want to tell you that I am horrified by what you've suffered. However, due to the high profile nature of this case and the precarious conditions we are concerned that the memories won't hold up in court, so while we believe these accounts to be true, the only information we have to arrest your husband with..."

"You said it again," Phin growled, "He is *not* her husband!"

The French Minister rolled his eyes in exasperation, placing his hands on the table. "One more outburst, Mr. Nott, and I will have you removed."

Phin shot daggers but refrained from speaking further. The Minister plowed on, "We, therefore, spent the morning negotiating. Minister Malfoy insists that the British Ministry will refuse to believe our claim of wrongdoing. Additionally, he reminded us that as you are his wife you are an unreliable witness and that imprisonment will lead to another bloody war." At this point, the Minister shifted in his seat uncomfortably and stared at his hands, avoiding her gaze. "We believe the evidence you provided, but we aren't interested in a war with Britain. We can't afford it."

No, no, no! He NEEDS to be behind bars; they're going to let him go! Her hands began to shake as she prepared for the worst. Malfoy was going to be set free, and she would end up caged in his home, unable to see Ladon. At the first available opportunity, Malfoy would have Phin murdered. She felt light-headed, and her ears started to ring.

"However, the Minister offered an interesting proposal." The French Minister interrupted her anxious spiral. "If we forgo a public trial and destroy the memories you provided, he is

willing to submit to house arrest for his crime of the Imperio and Cruciatus curses against Ginny Weasley..."

Hermione's eyes shot upward. *What!?*

"... with the understanding that he will never seek election again. He demands that the sentence last no longer than ten years..." *Ten years that is long enough to find a way out of the bond potentially!* Her heart started to race again with the glimmer of hope. "...and he desires mandatory visits with his wife, in your familial home, every weekend from Friday evening to Sunday evening."

Time stopped moving. She stared at the French leader in shock. *Surely, he disapproved of such a clause?* But the Minister's gaze fell again in shame, and she knew it to be true. He felt backed into a corner and needed her to save the day. Just as she was the one who provided all the tools to bring down Voldemort, the world required *her* to sacrifice herself at the feet of another dark wizard.

"MIA, DON'T YOU DARE!" Phin yelled out, breaking her from her thoughts, and the Auror's instantly silenced him. He started towards her, but the French Aurors slammed him against the wall.

"Additionally!" The French Minister yelled over the din, "He requests that we make the agreement magically binding and that the deal is contingent on you remaining more than 100 meters from Mr. Nott at all times."

Hermione sat up straight, "What about Ladon?" She asked in resignation.

"Monthly visits." Malfoy drawled.

"No!" She sneered at him before turning back to the French Minister. "I'll do it, but he doesn't get to visit with Ladon!"

Phin moaned furiously behind her, still silenced.

"Annual visits." Malfoy glared at her in a challenge. "And I call the shots on the weekends, completely, though I promise not to injure her or engage in any illegal acts."

Devastating grief wracked her body as she knew what she had to do. It was the only way to keep them all safe and to give them time to find a way to escape his clutches once and for all. It kept him behind bars and made it so that he wouldn't influence Ladon any further.

"Deal." She coldly stated as Phin roared in anger behind her, and a satisfied smirk spread across Malfoy's features. The French Minister thanked her and slid the magically binding document to her across the table.

As Hermione signed away her soul, the Minister turned to Phin and said, "Mr. Nott. It is unlikely that you will be welcomed back in England. You have a home here if you so choose. Also, the French Ministry supports your claim as Ladon Malfoy's adopted Father."

Malfoy turned his head sharply in shock, spitting, "What!?"

"...As such, if you choose to immigrate to France and are therefore under *our* jurisdiction, then, seeing as though his biological Father will be incarcerated and his Mother preoccupied a good deal of each month, we grant you the rights to raise your son accordingly."

Seven months later

Hermione entered her London flat and took off her robe. Her weekends with Malfoy were as to be expected. She arrived promptly at 7:00 PM on Friday, escorted by British Aurors and listening to various shouts and jeers as they walked through a crowd of angry witches and wizards. *"Tell us what really happened!" "Why did Minister Malfoy resign!?" "He only committed those acts in France, saving YOUR life!"* Britain largely blamed Hermione for Malfoy's arrest, seeing as though the *Daily Prophet* swiftly reported that Hermione was now raising Ladon with Phin.

She spent two nights each week on her knees in front of Malfoy or laid out across his desk, or under him on the bed, couch, floor... then he always walked her to the door saying, "See you next weekend, love," as hot tears filled her eyes.

Hermione took in her empty flat and boiled water for tea before tossing silver powder into the fireplace and calling over to Phin's.

"Are you okay?" He asked, like always, through tight lips and angry eyes. They spent months debating her decision, and while he ultimately agreed it was the only way forward, she knew that his burning hatred and jealousy ate at him.

"Yes." She responded. Then, "no," she added quietly.

They talked for hours—Phin always acting as her rock. Despite the terrible circumstances, their love prevailed over the horrible situation, and together they eventually found a rhythm. They stayed connected via Floo-calls and coped intimately by lying in bed in front of two-way-charmed-mirrors and running their fingers over their own bodies—imagining the feel of the connection they used to enjoy.

They shared parenting responsibilities of Ladon and did their best to talk him through everything they experienced and continued to tolerate. Lad remained guarded and angry, and Hermione shed many tears over his loss of innocence.

Life was far from perfect. In fact, in many ways, she felt like she was still treading water. However, Malfoy lived alone in his home most of every week, paying the price for his abuse, and Hermione was determined to work herself to her bones and find a way to sever their bond before his sentence ended.

Her call with Phin ended as he said, "Mia, I love you. You're my everything. We'll find a way through this."

Leaving the fire, she picked up her tea and moved to her window seat. The lamps over her street shimmered and the smaller glow from several twinkling office buildings created its own magic. She took a deep breath. She still had a long way to go to be secure, but she was free, and despite their distance, she had the love of her partner.

Her favorite moment came every weekday night as she dipped into her bond and felt Malfoy's searing anger at his loss of power. During the days, she noticed his drive to scheme his way out of his current situation and begin to weave a new narrative, but each night, as he fell asleep, he burned with devastating loneliness.

Chapter End Notes

One final update coming next week. In the epilogue we will see if our genius Hermione can overcome the bond and improve her circumstances.

Here's the bone I will throw you as my atonement for putting you through this love triangle: If you are a fan of Draco, you may want to stop here in this world where Hermione is still under his thumb. Feel free to end the story thinking of all the ways Draco exploits his power over her on her forced weekend visits.

If you are a Phin fan the epilogue is for you! However, lets be honest, the epilogue will really be for Hermione!

Song choice for this chapter: "Can you hold me by NF feat. Britt Nicole"

Chapter 33: Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Here is the final addition to this piece. I want to share a final thank you to everyone who spent the past six months as I wrote about these tragic characters. If you get a chance, go back through and check out the songs I added to each end note. There was definitely a clear musical playlist that brought me through this work. I hope to see you all again with my next story.

Trigger Warning: DV & Rape

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

Hermione rolled over as the sun from her bedroom window streamed in through the curtains. *Friday. fuuuuuuck!*

She pulled the covers over her head and willed away the morning light. It felt odd to dread the weekends, but that was her life now. She preferred her workdays, where she spent hours pouring over research, or even her weekday evenings where she pulled on thick flannel jammies and tucked herself into bed early.

While most of Europe couldn't wait for the weekend- looking forward to lazy days with friends or loved ones and the ability to take charge of their schedules- for Hermione, it was a different story.

Maybe tonight will be the night!

That hopeful thought pulled her from her place of comfort and helped her to face the day. She got up, changed, and called over to Phin's before heading into the Ministry. Phin stood in his kitchen, leaning against the sink. He held his cup of morning tea in one hand and hugged his chest with his other arm, staring out the window.

"Hey," She coughed as she took in a bit of ash.

"Morning," Phin responded quietly. He smiled in a way that didn't quite reach his eyes. Hermione hadn't seen his carefree grin in ages.

"I take it he's still asleep?" She asked.

Phin huffed, "Kid acts like he never sleeps at school."

Ladon came home for the Christmas holidays on the 21st and spent the first week and Christmas morning in London with Hermione. They opened gifts together and ate a quiet meal of turkey and Yorkshire puddings before she packed him up and sent him by Floo to Phin's house on the evening of Christmas. Hermione often reflected on the fact that her Floo connected to Phin's. It would be so easy for her to walk through the flames and be in his arms within seconds. However, the magical contract she signed kept them apart, and even if they were to override its magic somehow, there was still the curse Malfoy placed on their bond. She still couldn't touch Phin without pain. Lad stayed the remainder of his break in France. Phin planned to take him back to Hogwarts on Sunday afternoon.

Feeling bad for their predicament, Neville allowed Hermione and Phin to connect their respective Floos to his office, which made delivering Lad to school and picking him up much easier. It took a while to hear the whole story after everything went down last year, but apparently, Neville came through on his promise to help. He got ahold of Ginny that evening—she was at the French Ministry awaiting his contact. Malfoy's declaration of war threw her plan into chaos. She no longer felt safe risking the trip to Hogwarts and instead waited for further instruction from Neville per Hermione's memories.

They theorized that Muggle transport was the safer choice, so Neville woke Ladon and walked him to the castle gates before Apparating them to Dover. Ginny took the 6 am ferry from Calais and planned to take Ladon back across the straits in the same fashion. However, shortly after Neville left Ladon in Ginny's care, Malfoy showed up. It turned out that the potion he used to tie their bond to the bloodline also conveniently gave him access to Ladon's whereabouts.

Lad's eyes still went cold when he talked about what it felt like to be roused in the middle of the night by his headmaster and handed off to a red-headed stranger. Whenever Hermione or Phin tried to engage him in conversation about Malfoy's actions that night, Lad typically walked away.

"Do you want me to wake him up?" Phin asked, bringing her back to the conversation.

Hermione shook her head, "No. Let him sleep." She didn't like Lad to see her beaten down on the days she had to visit Grimmauld Place. "I have to check in on some projects before..." She tried her best not to mention Malfoy, for her sake mostly. She liked baring him from her relationship with Phin.

Phin's brows furrowed as she continued, "I won't be able to see Lad before he goes back to school. Can you remind him that I'm going to visit on Wednesday?"

"Of course, Mia. Will you check in with *me* before you see Draco?"

There was a long pause where Hermione considered sharing her potentially reckless plan with Phin, but the moment passed. She didn't want to get his hopes up or hear his angry words of caution.

"I don't think so, but I'll call you as soon as I get home on Sunday."

Phin scowled but nodded in understanding. "I love you. Be safe," he said.

Throughout the past year, Hermione followed through on her commitment to visit Malfoy each weekend. Initially, Phin demanded she try to go back on her word. So, the very first weekend after the French Ministry jailed Malfoy in Grimmauld Place, Hermione sat at her kitchen table as the time to leave passed.

Her skin burned with the need to see Malfoy and feel his touch. His anger flared across her chest and arms, and her palms began to sweat. Then fifteen minutes later, her Floo roared to life.

"Mrs. Malfoy..." The French Minister started but corrected at the sight of her. "Hermione," he said instead with a tone of remorse. "He's threatening to negate the agreement."

She knew he would.

The French Minister continued, "He called my office at 7:01 pm and said that if you aren't on the front steps of your home by 7:30 pm that he will see it as an act of war and come get you."

She hated this man. In her opinion, the French Minister was a scared, unimaginative puppet. Hermione placed her head on her arms, willing away the fire in her veins that called her to Malfoy.

"No! He's trapped. You have his wand. You shouldn't have asked this of me in the first place, and you know it." She said into her folded arms. Phin's words traveled through her mouth in defense.

"I know. You're right." He said, and Hermione recognized that at least he had the decency to look ashamed of himself. "But, he still holds the public will in Britain and without a new Minister in place yet the English Arours are likely to follow his directives still." His hand entered the fire as he rubbed at his forehead. "Please." His eyes darted to the floor. "You're bonded. Surely, there's a part of you that wants to go."

"Get the fuck out of my house," she spat as she stood up to grab her robe from the door.

Hermione worked exceedingly hard to convince herself that Malfoy's hands were Phin's to get through the weekends. His lips, his cock. Although, as with everything, she needed to be careful. Once in his eighth month of confinement, as Malfoy took her tenderly, he dipped into her mind and saw the scene she used to distract herself. It was the night she and Phin celebrated their second anniversary together back in 2000.

He ripped from her thoughts, and she felt her airway tighten as his eyes filled with rage.

While trying to catch her breath, Hermione skated her fingers over the covers, reaching for her wand on the bedside table. Malfoy caught her movement and lunged to stop her, but she beat him to her destination.

"NO!" She screamed while coughing, and Malfoy flew across the room. His dangerous frame seethed against the wall as she dragged fresh air through her lungs.

"Don't forget, love. I call the shots. The magical contract you signed won't allow you to keep me pinned for long." He sneered.

"Don't forget you aren't allowed to INJURE me, you Bastard!" She ran a hand through her curls and wrapped the bedsheet around her body as she kept her wand pointed at his chest. "I'm going home. I don't have to stay here if you are going to be violent with me!"

"You still owe me five hours." He shot back angrily.

"Try and stop me. I showed up. I played my part until you tried to hurt me." She spat back while collecting her clothes from the floor and pulling on her jeans.

"I'm NOT done with you, wife!"

"TRY AND STOP ME! You're wandless and trapped." She yelled in frustration. She stomped to the fire picking up Floo-powder, and stepped into the flames as he roared behind her.

"HERMIONE!"

It felt good to assert herself and draw boundaries, but the pleasure was short-lived. Hermione had to go back the following weekend, and as soon as she walked past the threshold, she found herself pinned against the wall of the front hallway, a wand to her throat. Malfoy didn't *hurt* her, but he kept her tied to the bed all weekend as he took her roughly. He probed her mind, continuously forcing memories of their time together after the wedding to her forefront.

When she stumbled through the doors to her flat at midnight, she slumped to the floor as Phin raged, "Why are you so late!? What did he do!?!?" He anxiously waited all night in her fire for her to return. Malfoy kept her exactly five hours longer to make up for the time lost the previous weekend.

"He has a wand." She began, sobbing into her hands.

After that night, Phin stormed to the French Ministry and demanded that they increase Hermione's protection. Later, she found out that he railed at the French Minister for hours before offering up the remainder of the Nott family fortune to encourage the Minister to intervene and send Aurors to remove Malfoy's new wand. Additionally, he ensured that the French froze Malfoy's assets to keep him from pulling future favors and strings.

Things calmed down after that as they found a rhythm again. At the end of each month, Malfoy walked her to the front door and said, "119 more months, love." or "118..." or now, "107..." He always found ways to remind her that he waited eleven years for her once before and that ten years was nothing to a wizard.

Hermione spent the day working feverishly to keep thoughts of Malfoy at bay. After her escape last year, she no longer found the idea of international cooperation appealing. She transferred to the Department of Mysteries and now spent her days developing new curses and spells. The work was fascinating and allowed her to use her intellect to its fullest capacities. She enjoyed her days in the lab concocting new theories or her time in the warehouse testing and evaluating.

The Wizengamot still hadn't picked a new Minister, though they were close. Hermione hoped that in a few months, she might receive the support she needed to enact meaningful change. There was a rumor that Neville was in the running.

At 6:30 pm, she left the office to head to Grimmauld Place. She decided to walk to give herself time to collect her thoughts and empty her mind. When she arrived at the front door, Malfoy swung it wide and grinned at her arrogantly.

He held a hand out to her and pulled her into his side, kissing her forehead and saying, "Happy Anniversary, love."

"Mmm," She responded prickly, through tight lips. "Hello, Malfoy."

She tried to ignore the way the bond jumped with excitement as his hand moved down her back to rest on her waist.

Malfoy turned her to face him as he closed the door. "I've planned a nice night for us. Let's not ruin it so early with pointless arguments." He took her robe from her shoulder and hung it in the closet by the door before kissing her and walking them to the dining room.

As Hermione entered, she noticed a large vase of poinsettias and an extravagant meal laid out with full table service. The sight took her back for a moment. He shouldn't have been able to put together such a spread. After the French froze Malfoy's access to his assets, they sent a house-elf to make basic meals each day, but this was above and beyond. *How?*

Malfoy answered her unspoken question. "I had an interesting call with the French Minister this morning. It turns out that the stores of the extra potent Wolfsbane potion my team developed dried up, and there's been an uptick in violent werewolf attacks across Europe. I apparently forgot to catalog the full potion ingredients last year, so the Minister and I were able to work out a deal."

Hermione rolled her eyes as her stomach churned, and Malfoy pulled out her chair. "He was extremely grateful for my willingness to offer assistance. He mentioned something about privileges for good behavior."

A cold chill spread up her spine as Malfoy poured them each a glass of wine. *He is pulling favors and ingratiating himself to the people who KNOW what he did.* She felt a drive to move forward with her plan tonight, even if it wasn't fully fleshed out yet. Malfoy was going to be out within months at this rate.

He held his glass out to her and said, "To our anniversary- or at least our *public* wedding anniversary." He took a sip as Hermione seethed, "And to the completion of one of our ten

years of separation." He took another sip and placed his glass on the table, winking, "It will be over before you know it, love."

I'm going to annihilate you. "To nearly a year of your confinement. There's still another week to go." She nodded and took a sip. His eyes darkened. They stared at one another for a long time as many emotions passed between them—anger, spite, desire.

Then she shook her head and smiled, saying, "That's lovely that the Minister rewarded you for your cooperation. What other privileges did he offer?" Hermione learned a lot from Malfoy over the years and felt like her inner Slytherin was growing. Through the smiles and niceties, they both knew what she meant- *How close are you to being released early?*

They spent the rest of dinner talking politely. Hermione wasn't aiming for a fight. If Malfoy was in a good mood, it would make her efforts easier. Plus, they hardly ever yelled at one another, so proficient at double-speak as they both were.

After dinner, he pushed back from his chair and directed her into his lap. Hermione gave into the bond, stripping slowly, wrapping her arms around his neck, and sliding down onto his rock-hard shaft.

She spent each week pushing away the bond and each weekend trying to squash its effects. Not tonight though, tonight was a goodbye to the man who caused her more pain and sorrow than she could articulate. However, he also slipped into her mind through the bond and his insidious manipulative nature. After so many years of training her body to respond to his touch, she now faced the horrible conflict of desiring him. Tonight she wasn't holding back, hoping that tomorrow that drive and want would be a feeling of the past.

Malfoy recognized her change and growled his approval- his darkness calling out to hers. She moved back and forth over him, throwing her head back in pleasure as he grabbed her hips and stood. He laid her out across the now empty table and thrust into her while she writhed beneath him. "Fuck, Hermione."

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.

Her emotions warred within her as she shed a tear for everything that this man put her through and everything they experienced together. His protection before Harry died, his terror over her in the castle, their work to kill Voldemort, their child.

Malfoy sensed the shift in her mood and took full advantage. He carried her to the bedroom and bathed her skin with scented soaps before tilting his head back and telling her to use her hands to bring him off again. Then he moved her to the bed and lapped at her folds until she screamed out in a pained release, before they fell asleep, naked and hot. Hermione fully expected him to wake her after a few hours. She knew he wasn't finished.

When Malfoy stirred again, she sat in the corner of the room, turning a knife over in her hands. She was dressed again and wearing her robes.

He squinted in the darkness, searching for her. "What's this about, sweetheart? You can't possibly think we're done here." He said dangerously while rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He sat against the headboard, glaring at her. His bare chest gleamed in the moonlight from the window.

Hermione huffed a laugh and smiled to herself. "Oh, we're done, *Draco*."

Malfoy laughed as well, eyeing her arrogantly and saying, "What the hell do you think you're doing with that. You do remember that you feel everything I feel, correct?"

"Not anymore." She said with a relieved-looking smile.

"What the *fuck* are you talking about?" He sneered, making to stand.

Hermione flicked her wand, and he fell back against the headboard again.

"You gave me the idea, really. The Isusiurandum potion. You told me it ties the bond to the *magical* bloodline."

"What does that have to do with..." Malfoy's voice stopped abruptly at another flick of Hermione's wand.

"Be patient, I'll tell you." She cooed. "That's where this comes in." She lifted the dark object in her hands and watched as Malfoy's eyes widened in recognition. "I cast another sleeping spell on you, *love*, and stole your magic."

Malfoy shot daggers at her then cast his eyes around, looking for a way to get the upper hand. "I bet you're wondering how I got my hands on this artifact." Hermione continued. "It turns out that being ridiculously wealthy has its advantages. I know, you're shocked." She stood and moved to the edge of the bed near Malfoy's immobilized form.

"This nice man named Bromley Payne was more than happy to hunt this item down for me for the right price. And, since *I'm* not barred from *our* vaults, I had more than enough to pay him. It took him a while, but eventually, he found it hidden at the Manor." She placed her hand on his leg. "So, I sliced open your palm..." Malfoy's eyes darted to his hand where a scar now shined puffy and red. "...transferred your magic to myself, and felt the bond melt away. It was a beautiful thing. I suppose if I ever gave you back your magic, it might reignite. But I don't plan to make that mistake. No, you will spend the rest of your life- what was it you once said to me? Oh yes, *pretending to be a Muggle*."

Malfoy was furious. Fire burned behind his eyes, and his arms twitched with the effort to push against his constraints.

Hermione placed her hand on his thigh, saying, "Twitchy little ferret, aren't you, Malfoy!" as a scream of muffled fury rang from his throat.

"Now, why don't you grab some clothes and follow me downstairs. We have a lot to go over. Imperio!"

Hermione listened to the hustle and bustle of the Paris streets as she let the sunlight wash over her and the fresh winter chill kiss her cheeks. She stood next to the Wallace Fountain and breathed a cleansing sigh of penetrating and searing relief.

She studied Malfoy's Isusiurandum potion extensively after arriving at the Department of Mysteries. She was reasonably sure that her theory was solid regarding how the bond might react to Malfoy losing his magic, but she wasn't certain. However, as soon as she felt the rush of magic leak from Malfoy to herself, she noticed the bond's effects. It bounced around inside her as if there was nowhere for it to go. When she finished with Malfoy, she went straight to France. The French Minister gladly accepted the new magical contract Malfoy signed, releasing her of her weekly visits. He was a spineless piece of shit, but at least he didn't ask questions.

After savoring the moment near the fountain, she strolled through the streets to Phin's flat. She had his address but never arrived there on foot before. In truth, she never visited at all. The French Minister offered the use of his fireplace, but she turned him down. She wanted to walk and feel her new freedom.

She reached his home and double-checked the address. The vast marble steps led to wood and glass-pained doors. She took a deep breath and heard the cars passing and dogs barking in the distance. She wanted to imprint this reunion into her marrow as she ascended the steps and smiled to herself, knocking lightly. It was 9:00 am, and she knew Phin would be awake. Hermione imagined him inside, drinking tea and making breakfast, waiting for Ladon to wake up.

After what felt like an eternity, she saw him enter the hallway and look at her with confusion and anger. He threw open the door with his wand pointed at her behind the wood. His eyes darted to the street. Hermione pushed in and jumped into his arms. She wrapped her hands around his neck and opened her eyes wide, saying, "It's me. See for yourself."

Phin delved into her mind suspiciously, and she heard him moan as he confirmed through her memories that it was her. Suddenly his lips smashed against hers. She felt tension roll off his shoulders and listened to his voice waver as he said into her lips. "How?"

"It's a long story, but I'm free." Her voice broke, and a tear fell down her cheek. "*We're* free. We never have to worry about him again."

Phin looked stunned as he walked her into his home, and they sat at the kitchen table. It turned out that Ladon spent the night at a friend's house and wasn't home. Hermione felt disappointed not to see him right away but recognized that his absence allowed her to tell Phin the story in full detail.

It took her a while to describe what happened. Phin didn't know anything about her research of the "Malfoy Mix" or her connection to Bromley. As she talked, Phin plied her with food

and then threaded his hand through his hair in amazement.

"Let me get this straight." He said, lowering his voice to a whisper, in awe of everything she revealed. "You stole his magic, severed the bond, and got him to sign a new magical contract releasing you from your weekly visits?"

Hermione nodded at him over a mouthful of toast. "Mm-hmm!"

"Mia, what's the catch? What haven't you told me yet?"

She swallowed her toast and took a swig of tea to wash it down. She wasn't proud of the next part that she had to confess. Hermione tried her best in everything they went through to follow wizarding law and keep herself in the light and out of trouble. She already told him that she used dark means to steal Malfoy's magic, but what she had to say next...

"I..." She took a deep breath. "I Imperiused him to get him to sign the new contract."

There was a long pause, then Phin said, "I figured as much. Mia," He brushed her hair off her face and behind her ear. "You did what you had to do. I did the same back when we escaped in 2002. Desperate times. Don't you dare beat yourself up over that!"

"and...I forced him to make an unbreakable vow stating that he would leave us alone and never come after any of us again."

Phin closed his eyes and heaved a great sigh of relief. "Thank the gods," he whispered. Then he opened his eyes again as he asked, "How? Who was your bonder?"

"Ginny. I told her what I planned to do and then called her to meet us once he was under the spell."

Hermione stood and held her hand out to Phin. He took it and stood, looking cautious, then touched her cheek lightly and bent his head to kiss her. Hermione tasted his wet lips and noticed the honest thrum of real love, not the fabricated kind her body forced her to feel over the past year, but real, devastating love.

"Phin, you said we don't have to pick Lad up until this afternoon." She lifted her hands to undo his shirt buttons.

Phin placed his large hand over hers, stilling her movements. "Shh, Mia, we have time for that. You don't need to ...After everything you've been through..."

We have time. The thought melted over her skin, freeing her of tension and fear. This was everything she hoped for over the past seventeen years. There was no threat. Malfoy was magicless and caged. Suddenly she felt determined. "I know we do. But, please. I need you."

That's all it took. Phin scooped her up and brought her to his bedroom, where they spent the remainder of the morning remembering the feel of their bodies against one another.

Afterward, Hermione rested in his arms, staring out the window and basking in the feeling of their freedom once and for all. They made it. The war was over. They were both alive.

Malfoy was caged and magicless- he was never coming after them again. She did it. She could finally breathe.

Daily Prophet

January 20, 2015

Castle Captive Ginny Weasley Claims Minister Malfoy Promoted Policies of Rape and Violence

Daily Prophet

February 02, 2015

More Castle Captives Come Forward Supporting Weasley's Claims

Daily Prophet

February 20, 2015

Britain In Shock Over Truth of Disgraced, Former Minister's Violent Past

Daily Prophet

March 08, 2015

New Minister Appointed: Neville Longbottom!

Daily Prophet

March 24, 2015

Minister Longbottom and Wizengamot Commit Disgraced Malfoy to Life-Sentence in Azkaban

Chapter End Notes

Song choice for this chapter "Somebody That I Used to Know" Gotye feat. Kimbra

Chapter 34: For as Long as We Both Shall Live

Chapter One

Waves slid over the rocks below and into the oil-black water as Draco stared through the bars. The constant taste of ocean salt on his lips preserved his drive to escape.

He rubbed the smooth stone under his thumb where five years of possessive rage wore a groove. However, one side of his mouth reached toward his icy eyes as a whisper of his magical core fluttered under his ribcage.

Taking in a deep breath, he placed his hand on his chest.

Draco turned from the window at the echo of boots stomping up the wet, slippery steps behind him. He stepped into the center of his cell, dropped his fist on the nearby desk, and bounced his knuckles twice on the rough wood.

"Minister."

The guard pulled a thick wad of jumbled keys out of his pocket while lifting his chin in a greeting. Then he fumbled with the heavy gate and offered a shallow bow.

Draco stuffed his hands in his pockets and waited, nodding his response.

"You've got a visitor, Sir."

He ignored the explanation and stared at the tall man ducking into the cell.

"—need anything, let me know," the young warden said before heading back down the cold stairwell.

The visitor stood near the door, taking in the space. He eyed the single bed with crisp, clean sheets, the window, and the braided rug. He pushed his hair out of his eyes and turned around to inspect the wall of iron bars and the narrow hall beyond with just enough room for a low, stone bench. Finished with his appraisal, he scowled at his surroundings and shoved his hands in his pockets.

Draco hummed his introduction while watching the young man's every move with precise detail.

"Hello, son."

****The story continues in the second installment of the series.**** 

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