

His Relinquishment

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His Relinquishment

by [lexiateL](#)

Summary

The Dark Side won. Many were left dead. Their numbers had decreased as the Dark Lord had warned would happen. But when the remaining Pureblood women are found to be infertile, all plans of blood purity must be ceased immediately. Else they would all perish.

Notes

This is just a musing I had. Wanted to post it here so it would be saved online somewhere. Don't expect much of it. I'm still working on my more fluffy Dramione. Read warnings if you are sensitive, or have triggers.

Open to ideas.

Harry Potter belongs to Jk Rowling, I do not make any profit in writing this story what so ever. I am just having some fun.

The Scoreboard

"My Lord...?" His servant shook beneath him. Those two little words were practically begging Lord Voldemort to spare his life, knowing the news that he had just given the Dark Lord had upset Him greatly.

Though, the announcement was not surprising to Him. Not surprising at all. In fact, Lord Voldemort had actually expected this. Had hoped *against* it, but nonetheless, He could not do anything about the predicament now. What's done was done. Many of their kind were no longer breathing. Both sides of the war had lost valuable people. People that He had made plans for when the new World Order would be enforced.

Foolish infidels, He thought bitterly. They had not thought enough of the future. It made Him rage inside. Enough to kill.

And His servant sensed this—expected this.

He had to hold back the twitch to kill though. The servant had magical blood, and He would need him—He would need them *all* to aide in bringing their numbers back up.

Lord Voldemort hastily turned from the quivering man at His feet, breathing in the scent of His servant's sweat. Oh, how He loved the smell of fear. It made His eyes roll back into His head. It was worse than an addiction, He learned, but not damaging to himself, considering His immortal status.

"Check the Mudbloods," He ordered in a hiss, after His thoughts had returned to the ordeal at hand. This had not been what He wanted, but a backup plan was never bad to have, which was why they had been kept alive.

Still, this was a step that He had not wanted to make. They (His loyal followers) would see it as a punishment. Getting them to reason was impossible...He'd just have to force them into it. They all feared Him now. They were weaker. They had no choice but to do as He said. And they knew it.

"The M-Mudbloods, s-sir?" His ignorant servant stuttered, curiosity out-besting his fear.

"Have you suddenly misunderstood what I command of you, servant?!" Though soft, His voice was demanding and frightening, lacking the purr He often used to charm those beneath Him into submission.

"N-Not at a-all, My L-Lord," the servant squeaked, instantly reminded of his inferior position.

"You're dismissed," Lord Voldemort raised His hand up, waving it. He almost tortured the imbecile with a curse, but quickly stopped Himself from doing it. He would have to take heed from harming His servants now. Officially, they were all very delicate at the moment.

His possessions would need to be handled with care. It was unfortunate for Him.

He'd just have to take his anger out on the Muggles instead. He found no harm in that. There were plenty of them to abuse. All *their* numbers were increasing, as they had been oblivious of the cold Dark war that had surrounded them.

Another reason they were lower than dirt.

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"All of them?" He asked to confirm.

"Yes, My Lord," the servant didn't shake this time, not having any reason to— Lord Voldemort hadn't responded viciously to him this time.

In truth, He was mildly relieved, having had been a bit on the edge since He heard the crisis that was plaguing His people.

Mudbloods were His only choice. He dismissed His servant immediately, refrained from sighing until there was a solid stone door between them.

There wasn't much else He could do about it. The Mudbloods would have to be admitted into the program.

Best get on with it then, He thought as ideas swirled into His head of how He was going to go about this.

"The same way as before," He decided in a hissing whisper. He saw no reason not to. Why let this problem change *everything* He had planned?

He pressed His wand to the Dark Mark on His arm, calling out to one of His followers.

The tall man appeared before Him, and instantly fell to his knees with respected grace. "My Lord," he acknowledged slowly, waiting to hear the reasoning of his summoning.

"Ah, Severus," Lord Voldemort purred delightfully. "I have a message for you to relay to the Fighters."

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Draco didn't know why he was still being forced to be in this program. He had killed Dumbledore, gaining his name back in the good gracious of the Dark Lord. He deserved better than this. He had not come to any conclusion that he had pissed off the Dark Lord. The Dark Lord had not issued any specific punishments as of late— besides this constant session of trying to beat him down in a wizard duel.

Maybe this wasn't the Dark Lord's doing... Maybe the Fighters couldn't accept that Draco was better. That he was the *best*. That was probably it. They were angry. They were jealous.

His lips curled up smugly. Yes, he was the best.

Sweat dripped from his glands like a leaky faucet as he dodged the attacks with body dives, zigs, and zags. He was better at blocking than striking, that much he learned. Likely from his Quidditch playing back as a Seeker. Fast reflexes and quick acting.

His attackers hadn't clued in on this yet (not even after three weeks of this), giving him the upper hand. They were out for the kill. Well, *metaphorically* speaking, they were out for the kill. The Avada Kedavra curse had been made illegal to cast on magical blood the day He had won. The other two were still perfectly okay, so long as it didn't lead up to a death.

Muggles were different though. If the Death Eaters so desired to kill, they were given an actual permit to eliminate a certain number of them. Just as if they were animals.

But they are.

Draco spun in a circle, barely dodging Amycus's stinging hex. Wordlessly, and almost wandlessly, Draco blasted a magical beam of fire toward him. Amycus disappeared, his scream of pain ringing throughout the Battle Room.

Draco had no time to celebrate though, because Amycus's sister cried out in a rage and sent a dozen spells to him. They came at him, one after another. He began to pant as he defended himself from the attacks. Growing weak, he blinked rapidly as an effort to keep from collapsing with a faint. Another Fighter appeared to help his opponent. And then another. He was fighting three experienced Fighters now, getting more and more tired by the second, his energy depleting after each spell he was casting.

Blocking their attacks wasn't enough. He knew that. The problem was offensive spells took much more energy to cast. But blocking was getting him nowhere.

He. Had. To. Win. The best *always* won.

He drew up a force that his godfather had taught him how to do. The spells aimed at him were blocked by the invisible wall of the spell, allowing him enough time to think on how to rid these pathetic Fighters.

His eyes glared at them as he coolly stared them down. Who did they think he was? It was because of *him* that the Dark Lord won the war, and if he had been older, he wouldn't even be here. But the program was mandatory. Every person of magical blood under the age of thirty-five (all Death Eaters and servants included) had been ordered into this exclusive battle, to prove their magical strengths and to decide which of them were the best, and which of them were the weakest.

And he *had* proven his success, winning every battle he had been forced into, up against several fighters at once.

So why the *fuck* was he even still here?!

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"He's to not fight anymore," Severus said harshly, pouring a potion down Draco's throat to replenish his energy.

"He must lose a battle in order to be placed," Amycus argued.

"He will die in the Battle Room if this continues. He refuses to lose. He wants to be the best. He *is* the best."

Alecto snorted in doubt. "My daughter is just as good!"

"Last I knew, she was ranked number seven," Severus poked at her dryly. "Even Luna Lovegood outdid her—"

"Nonsense!" the woman screeched.

Severus shifted his eyes meaningfully. "The scoreboard does not lie, Alecto. Unless you wish to tell the Dark Lord that his creation is flawed?"

Alecto's mouth immediately buttoned to a close. She shook her head with a negative.

"Draco Malfoy places first," Severus announced with finality.

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"Is it over?" Draco winced as the sunlight pierced his eyes, bringing a sharp pain to his head. He felt the familiarity of his bed at the Manor, sighing in comfort at the thought of finally being home.

"It is," his godfather answered, pressing a compress to his head.

"I'm at the top, right?" he asked to clarify. It was important that he be at the top. The Dark Lord had said so. He told them all to do their very best, as it would be detrimental to their future.

And Draco had done his best. He wanted to be the best. He was the best.

"You are."

Draco relaxed, smiling happily. It had been three years since he had felt so happy.

If only his parents were here to express this with him. He pursed his lips at the thought of their absence. He was making them proud. That's all that mattered up to this point. He was fulfilling his promise to them. It was the least he could do.

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Blaise stood at the spot he had apparated to, looking out across a deserted field. Tall grass and other wild shrubbery stood up to his waist, some even past his head. His eyes scanned the pasture in slight confusion. An alert had gone off, identified as underage magic of a Mudblood, but there was no structure here.

He walked on, grunting at the plantation that was determined to hinder his tasks of fetching the young child and taking it back to headquarters, where the Dark Lord stored them at. He lifted his wand, clearing a path for him to walk through easier.

There had been orders to not harm the Mudbloods these past two years too, which also brought up questions, but Blaise had long ago stopped questioning why the Dark Lord just didn't have them killed off, coming to the conclusion that He was incredibly insane.

As long as he did what he was told though, Blaise found that he didn't mind the world under the Dark Lord's control. His life hadn't been affected much, so he had no reason to complain.

He inhaled through his nose. Something was off. He was smelling jasmine. It was the wrong time of year for jasmine to release its heavenly fragrance.

With a swish of his wand, he cut the long grass around him and sent it fluttering into the air, watching it closely. Some of the blades halted their fall in the middle of the air, confirming his thoughts.

This will be fun, he thought as he made to discover how large the parameter of the concealing charm was.

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"Can't I have more?" the child asked, eyeing his empty bowl.

Hermione frowned. "I'm sorry, but you know we're on rations until Thursday. That's when the shipment will come in."

The small boy with red tinted curls sniffed, but said nothing otherwise. Her heart sank, understanding the feeling of a near empty belly. She ate just enough to keep her alive, giving the growing boy most of the food she was able to bargain for or grow herself.

"Come on, Samual, I'll read you a book," she said after cleaning up the bowls from their soup.

"I can read it!" he said, slipping out of his seat and skipping to the small living room where they kept the books.

Samual picked out a book, handing it to Hermione. She swiped her fingers longingly over the cover. A tear slipped from her eye, as the memories of her youth (both good and bad) swarmed in her mind.

Merlin, she missed her friends. She missed them so terribly bad.

"Is this a sad book, Hermione?" the boy asked.

He was only six, but had more compassion than most of the people she had met in her life time. If this were three years ago, and he were a wizard of eleven, she would make a great guess that he would be sorted into Hufflepuff.

"No, Samual," she said, sniffing and holding a tissue up to her nose. She then began reading *Hogwarts: A History* to the boy who believed it all to be a fairy tale.

Which is all it felt like to Hermione anymore.

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She smelled smoke. She lifted her head up, slightly dazed from her sleep. Terror suddenly clicked in as she felt the heat of a fire out-breaking from the kitchen. There was a loud crack and the roof in the other room caved in. She hurled Samual into her arms and made way to the door off the living room.

From a safe distance away outside, Hermione turned around to assess the damage, sobbing as she came to a realization that the home would not be repairable.

What was she going to do?

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Concealed behind a hay bale, he watched the home smoke into a fiery fit. When he saw no one emerge from the burning structure, he began to panic. He cursed himself, darting out from his hiding place and sprinting across the lawn.

The homestead had been concealed with a ward that took him hours to break, but finally it was visible, showing a barn with small animals, a garden, a tire swing, the tiny home, and a laundry line full of hanging laundry to dry. There was a child and a woman who lived there, Blaise could tell from what the laundry consisted of.

What he had to decide was if there was a witch in hiding, or had the homestead been warded off to protect them by a passing witch or wizard on the run?

Either way, he had to force them out. Either the child was a Mudblood, or his mother was breaking the law by being here. All magical people had to be registered, so that their whereabouts were always known. All Mudbloods were imprisoned.

So he started the fire. A controlled one, to give them enough time to get out of the building. This would leave them vulnerable for his attack, as he was sure they were sleeping, meaning they would be bare all except for a thin layer of clothing.

Just as he went to approach the porch, the door crashed open, and a body appeared, breathing hard, choking from the smoke. Blaise quickly dashed out of sight, watching the body closely.

The young woman—his age, he guessed—stared in horror at the flaming home. She held the child—a small boy in her arms. It took her several minutes to fully comprehend what had just happened. She turned to the barn, no doubt running the idea of living there as a home.

He took this moment to reveal himself, stepping out into the open, his wand raised.

"Give me the boy, woman," he ordered stoically.

The woman jumped at the sound of him, and turned back his way to look at him. She backed up, hugging the boy close to her. "What's going on?!"

"Give me the boy, Muggle!"

"Mugg—" She looked confused for a moment, but then her eyes narrowed. "What did you just call me?!" she demanded.

"Muggle. You are an inferior to my kind." He twisted his wand, showing off his weapon.

He heard her bark in laughter. "Is that a tiny, little stick?! What do you plan on doing with that?!"

Blaise stepped forward, growing impatient with this Muggle woman. Why did every bloody Muggle say the same thing? When were they actually going to be made to know what a wand was and how dangerous it really was, capable of ending their life in just two words?

"I'm going to kill you with it," he sneered darkly, making her eyes widen. She licked her lips nervously. Blaise found this odd. His threat was venomous, but this wasn't the first Muggle he had threatened in his life. Most never believed what he was capable of doing with a 'tiny, little stick' until he actually inflicted damage with it. By then it was too late.

With another step toward her, she, having earned his curiosity, stepped away from him.

"Stay back! I-I have a gun!" she warned him in desperation, but Blaise knew this to be a lie, else she would have already shown it to him.

When he did not stop his pursuit of her, she took off running toward the barn, shrieking all the way. He shot a spell at her, stunning her movement. Blaise watched as she toppled to the ground, the boy still hugged to her, shielding the child from him.

There was a small cry. It came from the child. The fall must have woken him up and scared him.

"Hermione!" he cried. "Why are we outside?!"

And it struck Blaise like he had been harshly back slapped. Blaise snatched the shoulder of the woman, rolling her over onto her back, casting a lumos into her face. He didn't believe it. He had found her. The one that had gotten away.

The one they were still looking for.

Her glassy brown eyes stared unfocused at him; effects of the spell. The boy was crying out for answers, begging for Granger to release him so he could move, having no idea what was taking place. Blaise put the Mudblood child into a deep sleep, shutting him up.

Blaise smiled. He was going to get rewarded for this. Oh, yes, an immense reward indeed.

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"You've been bumped down," Severus informed Draco.

"I'm no longer number one?" Draco asked, caught off guard by the announcement.

Severus pressed his lips together. "No," he drawled bitterly.

"Who's on top?" Draco rose up from the chair he had been reading in, snapping his book closed, not caring that he had forgotten to bookmark it.

"Take a wild guess."

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Hermione tugged at the magical device that had been locked around her neck. It was a collar. As if she were a dog! They had told her it would be used to track her, should she try to escape.

The skin around her neck that it touched was becoming irritated and inflamed. The itchy, prickling feeling was enough to make her cry out.

Why didn't they just kill her? Why had they made her fight with those Death Eaters? Since she had won, successfully disarming them both and fought against them with their own wands, she would have thought she would have been tortured to death right on the spot.

But Voldemort had said nothing when she declared that she had won. He had watched the entire fight. He could not deny the victory. Both the Carrow siblings were bound and gagged.

He then announced that there was going to be another fight, and again stated, that if she lost, Samual would be brutally dismembered—as she was forced to watch it happen.

It was enough to make her want to cry, and why she bothered with it, she didn't know, because deep down, she didn't believe that Voldemort would not kill the little boy she loved anyway.

But she did fight. That little bit of hope that he would actually go by his word kept her going. If she lost, Samual had no chance. If she won, there was a tiny chance.

"Again," he had announced after she won the second fight.

Real tears streaked down her face. "Why are you doing this?!" she had demanded, but he did not answer her, commanding his Death Eaters to swarm in.

She fought. And fought. And *fought*. She fought, unable to keep tears of frustration and suffering at bay. And then, she saw white. A bright, shining light blinded her, but it was warm. And she felt comfort, something she had not felt in a long while.

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"You have heard?"

"My Lord," Draco addressed pleadingly. "You know I have tried my best. You know it, My Lord."

"I do," the Dark Lord whispered. "And I expect you to continue it."

"Of course, my Lord. I devote my life to you."

"Draco, my boy, would you stand?"

Draco gracefully brought himself up to his feet.

"Remove your mask." Draco complied. "You are going to start a family now, my son."

Draco's face scrunched up in confusion, but he quickly wiped his face from emotion. "My Lord, I do not have a woman in mind. I have had no time to process—" He stopped when the Dark Lord lifted His hand to silence him, and his Master nodded at him.

"It is time, Draco. Time for my plans to go forward. To do that, our people need to bring our population back up. You need to not look for a wife, my dear boy. All those who are not already married will be assigned a mate based on their score on the scoreboard. You Draco, and your family name, will hold the blood of those with the most intellect that the future will bring."

Draco smiled, proud of his accomplishment. He tilted his head. "Thank you, My Lord."

"Your future wife has been chosen. I do expect you to treat her with care and understanding. She will carry your children. She will be fragile, even if you think differently."

"She is to be my partner, My Lord, I shall do no other," he said, thinking about how his parents had handled things. Father, the leader of the family, and Mother, the home, directing the house-elves, and caring for Draco. The memory made his heart clench in pain.

"You'll get the best, Draco. You certainly deserve it."

Resenting You

The one that beat him. She was to be *his* wife. Draco's teeth ground out in pure hate. The fucking Mudblood! How the fuck had *that* happened?!

He was being given the best?! Draco scoffed. He'd settled for the Hufflepuff in twentieth place over *this*. She would taint his blood with her filth!

Merlin, he was so fucking angry! He didn't spend weeks to be the best only to be paired with *her*. All the while, she had stolen his spot—*over night*! It was just like that filthy, bloody Mudblood! She always had to outdo everyone. *Him* especially!

"Shall I go with you?" Severus asked as Draco readied himself to claim his disgusting prize of a wife.

After the Dark Lord told him who he was to marry, it took all his might to not curse his Master out. How *dare* He?! How *dare* He?! After all that he had done for Him?! *This* was his *reward*?! A dirty, fucking *Mudblood*?! And *that* particular one?!

But the Dark Lord explained why this was happening, "There is no better for you, Draco. None of the Pure women are able to carry your heirs. It is devastating news."

Infertility.

Draco just couldn't believe it. The Dark Lord didn't say much more on the subject, but Draco immediately assumed that it was some sort of curse. He didn't have many details about it, maybe because his Master didn't have any information on the subject Himself, but it made the most sense.

A damaging curse set on pureblood women. It would be quite effective, should they not introduce Mudbloods into their blood. The Pureblood female population had already been drastically less than the male one *before* the war, and now *this*? Very damaging indeed.

Still, Draco would rather have a Halfblood than a Mudblood.

"No, I don't need you holding my hand," Draco muttered.

The Dark Lord had ordered him to take a few days off, to clear his head. He probably knew that Draco wanted to kill her on the spot. But now it was time to fetch her. She couldn't stay In Holding forever— as much as he would prefer that as her dying fate.

The marriage ties had already been made, he just had to finalize it. She was *his* responsibility now.

"Perhaps you should give it another day, Draco," Severus advised him. "You do not look ready to see her— not properly."

"There will *never* be a proper time!" Draco snapped, tucking his wand into an inside pocket of his robes. "She was always making my life difficult since the day I met her, and now... and now, I have to *marry* her?! I have to accept her as the *mother* of my heirs. I have to wake up every bloody day with her there, reminding me that she beat me *again*, in just *nine* battles. *Nine*. Do you know how many *I* was put through?!"

"I do," his godfather answered quietly. "127."

"And I won them *all*. She was put through *one* night of hell, and *me*, three fucking weeks, yet *she's* given the title?! She's the best?! *She outranks me?!*" Draco took a deep breath, feeling his pulse race from anger. "No," he said coldly, adjusting the front of his robes into perfection, trying to gather a sense of calmness before he had to leave. "I will *not* accept that. I put more work into the program than *anyone* has. *I am* the best."

He stepped into the floo. "I'll be back in a few hours. Make sure the house-elves have everything ready." Severus looked like he wanted to say something, but Draco didn't give him a chance, he was gone with a flash of light.

He didn't even bother to knock when he came upon the door of her cell, barging right in, and locking them both in the tiny room with a spell. She had been pacing the wall at the back of the room. Practically having to spin in circles since it was so small.

His nose scrunched up at her sight. It was fitting; filthy blood, filthy appearance. She had grime stuck to her exposing skin. Bare from the knees down, and forearms to fingers. Her hair was gnarled and knotted from lack of brushing and care. All she wore was a loose fitting, white cotton nightshirt that was tied around her waist with an old looking drawstring taken from some Muggle sweat pants.

She stood her ground, feet shoulder-width apart. Her head was a little bent down, her hate-filled eyes positioned at the top of her sockets, as if she was daring him to step near her. "You're a murderer!" she growled. Her hands balled up into fists and she leaped at him like she was some animal that had gone mad. Teeth bared and all.

Draco sidestepped from her path and hooked a hand into the collar around her neck, yanking her into his control. She let out a cry.

He smirked to himself. She was not the best. He had the control here, and the Mudblood would finally learn where she belonged: on her hands and fucking knees.

He pushed her down, easily forcing her to the ground, burying her face into the dirt that was caked to the stone from lack of cleaning. She struggled against his hold, but he had the upperhand.

"Be still, Mudblood!" He gave the collar good yank, hearing a loud crack before she let out a yelp of pain. She immediately halted all fighting she had been doing.

"Idiot," he hissed at her, noticing the rash that had developed around her neck. "Never thought to think that this—" he tugged at the collar. "—is cursed to cause you pain should

you try to remove it? Oh, but you're supposed to be a bright witch, huh?!" he gave her another yank. A sob escaped her, he knew she had been fighting back to keep her cries silent.

He scowled at her, angry with her ignorance. Now he'd have to spend resources to get her neck healed, knowing it would spread if not treated. And fast.

He certainly didn't want to look at crusty, disgusting skin all the time. She was hideous enough.

Knowing she was persistent, he'd have to come up with a different device for her. This one was not fit for her. He did like the collar idea though, easily able to gain control of her when he needed—or wanted—it. He'd see about a different kind of collar.

"Just do it already," she growled, somewhat muffled by the dirt. He heard her puff out a breath of air. "Kill me, you murdering bastard!"

He pushed her hard against the flooring, grunting in satisfaction at the sound of her gasp for air. "You'll wish you were dead after I'm done with you!" he snarled, hitting her head against the stone.

"Stop!" she moaned in pain.

Even with as filthy as she was, a whiff of fragrance entered his nose. He recognized it as jasmine. *Figures*. The one scent he truly hated on a woman.

He released her with a shove and took his wand out, pointing it at her. He watched her as she wiped the dirt from her mouth with the shoulder of her hideous night shirt, smearing a streak of mud across her face. She stood, spitting at his feet.

Wordlessly, without even twitching his wand, he sent her doubling over. "Bow to your superior, Mudblood!"

She let out a puff, breathing heavily, trying to fight off his spell.

"That's better. I expect this of you every time you are graced with my presence." With his wand still pointed at her, he stuck his free hand into his pocket, pulling out a small item. He silently ordered her hand to lift from her side and hold itself out to him. He clenched his jaw bitterly, eyeing the ring over.

He really had no choice in the matter. He knew it. This fucking piece of dirt before him was his wife now. There was no escaping it. The Dark Lord had ordered it to be done—and it was. He just had to make it official.

He slid the ring on, careful not to touch any bit of her hand with his own.

He closed his eyes, letting out a breath.

There.

It was done.

There was no going back.

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She was beginning to sweat, uncomfortable from being in such an unusual position for so long, while also biting her bottom lip to keep her whimpers at bay. She would try her best to not show her fear.

Why hadn't he killed her? Did he want to torture her first? He certainly hated her, and had obviously since the day they had met, but there were not many people he liked, that much she knew.

She felt her arm drop back to her side and looked down at the cold ring he had put on her finger. It was a plain looking silver ring: nothing special. What was he playing at?! Why give her a ring? She was curious, yet fury boiled inside her, knowing it wasn't a kind gesture of him.

"To your knees and kiss my shoes," he said above her. She uncontrollably fell to her knees, wincing from the harsh contact of the solid ground. Once again, she found herself being forced beneath him. And to her horror, her hands gracefully lifted the very bottom of his robes, exposing his shiny black shoes. Her head then dipped down to them, touching her lips to each toe of his shoes with a delicate pecking.

"It is nice to know that my slave is so thankful of my gift," he stated with no hint of actual gratitude.

Did he say slave?

She fought against his Imperius curse, but it was too strong. Merlin, she just want to hurt him and get the hell out of this nightmare! She'd find a way. That's for bloody sure.

She felt his hand grasp around the collar again, and she squeezed her eyes shut, preparing herself for another dose of pain, but all that happened was the air being sucked from her lungs.

He was apparating them.

He released her as soon as they landed, conjuring up a potion and rubbing it over his hands. "This is where you will stay," he informed her, watching as she hurled herself to her feet.

She glanced around her, not expecting what she saw. She was in what looked to be a sitting room, fashionably furnished with antique furniture. She would have thought he would have stuck her into a dungeon of some sort.

"You have got a room with a bathroom, off over there—" he pointed to the left at a wood door. "You are not allowed to leave your suite without my permitting. You may try, but you will find it impossible. Break anything, and I will inflict a matching punishment. I expect you to use the bathtub. That is my first command of you."

Her lips pursed. "I am not going to do anything you say, you bast—" She was unable to get another word out as her mouth filled up with cotton, nearly gagging her.

"Next time, it'll be something much less appetizing," he warned her with no amusement in his voice. "I will be here in an hour to ensure you are clean. You best be." He was gone with a crack.

Hermione shuddered in fear, analyzing the mess she was in. She looked around. The suite was better than the home she and Samuel had lived in, but since this was likely a place that Malfoy owned, this was probably the worst he could do—besides a dungeon cell.

Why wasn't she placed in a cell though? Or a cage? Wasn't that where slaves belonged—if that's what he expected her to be? From the rumours she had heard what was being done with Muggleborns and those considered blood traitors, that's exactly what was expected of him.

If only I had my wand, she thought sadly. It had burned down in the fire.

She hoped Samuel was okay. She wouldn't count on it though. Hermione put her hand up to her mouth, releasing a sob. That poor boy.

Her eyes fell down to the ring on her finger. It was obviously another torture device to control her. She wanted to remove it, but was reluctant after the learning about the necklace's abilities. Knowing Malfoy though, if the ring had some inflicting curse, he would have told her about it; in arrogance. Or at the very least, she would have thought he would have hinted around about what would happen if she tried removing it?

Hermione grasped it with her fingers and tried removing it. It wouldn't budge a flick. It felt glued to her skin. She narrowed her eyes for a better look, bringing her hand up closer to her face. She scraped a thumbnail along the edge of it where it touched her skin.

She gasped. It *was* attached to her skin! A simple tug was not going to remove it.

She'd have to find another way.

"There is no way to remove it," a dark voice informed her, making her jump. She spun around, seeing Severus Snape eyeing her over with his glinting, black eyes.

She backed up, putting distance between them, waiting to see what he was going to do next.

"Unless..." he drawled out for effect. "You were to *die*."

She uneasily swallowed, straining her throat, unwilling to show him fear. "What's going on?" she managed to ask without a shaking voice. She hid her trembling hands behind her back.

"You will address me as 'sir', just as you did in school," he said, giving her a look that told her she was to not forget it.

"I'm not in school anymore. I do not follow anyone's orders."

One eyebrow lifted up in surprise of her cheek. "Would you rather I left you with that irritating mess on your neck?"

At the mention of it, she put a hand up to the stinging flesh, feeling hot fluid against her fingers, she looked at her hand in horror. It was pale green.

"That would be puss," Snape explained. "In which, I'm sure you already knew."

Her eyes shifted up from her hand, looking at him. She had just noticed that he had yet to express how 'insufferable' she was, a common insult he had always used on her in her youth.

"If it is not treated soon, it will literally eat you alive from the outside in. A very uncomfortable death, indeed," he added dryly.

"W-What needs to be done to s-stop it?" she asked, twitching at the excessive itching that was prickling the infected area of her body.

"A salve, a Healer of the Dark Arts, and a cooperating patient." He gave a her single pointed nod.

Hermione closed her eyes. "Alright..." she whispered, keeping her eyes shut. She jumped when she heard a cork pop right behind her. Snape had walked so silently that she hadn't heard him approach.

"I'm going to remove the collar— only for the moment— I expect you to keep still," Snape warned. Her neck felt free as he removed it easily in two pieces.

"I have no wand anyway," she told him quietly, wincing as Snape lightly spread a sweet smelling salve onto her rash. She nearly sighed in relief as all her pain instantly went away.

Snape tapped the tip of his wand to her skin and muttered an incantation.

Hermione slumped as he replaced the necklace around her. She almost cried when she heard it snap in place, tightening around her neck.

"No more fiddling with it," he instructed.

"Must I wear this?" she asked him in desperation as he swept from her.

"Until your..." His eyes flickered away from her. "Until Draco decides otherwise."

"What's the ring for?"

"Draco will explain it to you when he is ready. Goodnight..." he paused, inclining his head. "Goodnight." he said more firmly. He was gone, disappearing, and making no sound.

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"She is malnourished," Severus informed Draco. "She can not carry an infant in her current physical state."

Draco stared at the page of the book he had been unable to focus on. He shrugged. "I wasn't entirely excited over the thought of shagging her to begin with. Good to know I have an excuse from infecting myself so soon. She's to not know we're married. You did not tell her, did you?"

Severus shook his head. "She is your wife. I kept the details simple. She's very nosey, though, not unusual for her."

Draco grunted. "I may just have her permanently tongue-tied." He relished over the thought of it. "She's to think that she is my slave— nothing more."

"The Dark Lord gave you a wife, not a slave, Draco," Severus gently reminded him.

Draco nodded. "Which is why I didn't throw her in the dungeon with the rats. She is in a very nice spot. I've provided her better than her Weasley boyfriend would have." He grinned smugly to himself. Dead, blue eyes lingered into his mind.

"You should consult a Meal Planner for her," Severus suggested. "To get her up to proper health."

"I will," Draco promised in annoyance over the subject of her taking his mind off of his success.

"The healthier she is, the healthier your sons will be..." When Draco said nothing, Severus added, "That goes for happiness too."

"Thank you for you help, Severus, would you please leave me alone now," Draco said as calmly as he could, though his words were layered with acid. "I don't feel well right now," he added quickly, which was true. "I just need time to myself."

Severus tipped his head in a goodbye. "Goodnight then, Draco."

When the man was gone, Draco jumped off the sofa in a hurry, and ran to the bathroom, throwing up into it. He scowled at the mess in the sink, cursing his churning gut.

The ring sealed to his finger glistened, catching his attention out of the corner of his eye. His lips pursed out ugly.

This is all her fault.

He vowed revenge. He would punish her for cursing his life. The Mudblood would pay for her mistakes, and he was going to enjoy doing it to her.

The Proper Body Soap

Chapter Notes

If there's typos, I apologize. I'm in a rush this morning. I'll come back and fix them tomorrow.

"I thought I told you to bathe?!"

Hermione lifted her chin up defiantly. "I did. Can't you see my hair is wet? Dripping even?!" She grabbed a handful of her hair, wringing it out to show him. "Not that I did it to follow your command," she added. In truth, she hadn't had a *real* bath in forever, and the tub had looked quite inviting. She had argued with herself, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of her actually doing what he had ordered of her, but the idea of being *clean* for once was much more trumping than the thought of his moment of victory.

Her home that had burnt down had not had any piping in it, so all the water that they needed had to be hauled from the stream down a hill on the land she and Samual had lived on, or collected from the rain in a few pots, pans, and bowls (whatever they could find that would store water). Simple clean up was all they were able to do.

"You still smell disgusting," he snarled after taking a sniff of the air.

"I smell just fine, and you know it. It would just kill you to actually admit it."

"No," he declared. "I don't know where you got that fragrance from, but I detest the scent of jasmine, and I forbid you from wearing it from this day on."

"This is my body," Hermione said stiffly. "And I will wear whatever the hell I wish!"

"You are not a free being, Mudblood. I own your filthy body, and you *will* do *exactly* what I say."

"I'm not some child, Malfoy—"

"You're a *slave*," he corrected her. "The Dark Lord gave you to me. I can do whatever the fuck I want with you."

Hermione snorted. "What a deserving *reward*. A *Mudblood*. He sure values you, doesn't he?" Sarcasm clung to her voice.

She watched Malfoy's eyes narrow darkly. He gave her a dangerous look. "You will not talk about the Dark Lord like that! He is to be respected! Especially by you! You would have been tortured to *death* if it weren't for his decision to let me have you!"

"And what exactly is to happen of me now, Malfoy?" she asked mockingly. "Having to see you everyday is going to be torture enough. I'll be lucky if I survive a week here. You have no control over your emotions, and it's not like I have anyone to care about me anymore."

"Yes, you got all those who cared for you killed. Your own family too. Seems unfair for you to be standing in Malfoy Manor, soaking up in the laps of luxury, huh?"

His comment brought tears to her eyes. How those words stung her right square into the heart. He was right. If they hadn't supported her side of the war, standing up for her 'kind', they would all still be here. And her parents, her aunt and uncle, her little cousins... They were all dead because of her.

And Samual... The tears slipped from her eyes, thinking about him. She had promised his dying father that she would protect him, and raise him to be a good man. She failed that. Death Eaters killed Muggles. She knew it, and witnessed it. They wouldn't keep Samual alive for *her*. She was nothing in their eyes. Nothing but a speck of dirt.

"Did you hear me?!" Malfoy's harsh voice snapped her out of her thoughts.

"I wasn't paying you any attention," she bravely told him, wiping away a tear.

He flicked his wand at her, immobilizing her, then stalked to her, grabbing at the collar placed around her neck, and began walking.

"Let me go!" Hermione shrieked, feeling the now familiar straining pain at her throat.

"Shut it!" Malfoy ordered as she fell to the floor, unable to walk with him. He drug her behind him into the bathroom and heaved her into the tub, no doubt, bruising her entire back in the process, due to the slam against the hard bottom of the tub.

Malfoy sneered in disgust at her and magically removed the bathrobe that she had put on after her bath.

"What do you think you're doing?!" Hermione hissed, feeling defenseless since she was still under his immobile spell. She couldn't even cover herself. She looked away in sudden shame. No man had ever seen her naked before. "Give me back my clothes, Malfoy!" A fear crept up into her. She had heard stories of women getting brutally raped, both during and after the war. Malfoy was a murderer. If he was capable of *that* he could sexually mess with her. But he had found her to be so incredibly disgusting that she had never even *thought* of him doing such an act against her.

Until now. Now that he had disrobed her and was looking at her in disgust.

"Malfoy." Hermione's voice was quiet now, almost pleading him to recollect his thoughts. She wasn't liking his unchanging look that she saw with every glance she made his way when she dared to. Pure hate. Complete loathsomeness. She did not like her current physical placement under his savage eyes.

He hadn't moved an inch, except for his eyes. She didn't know how long he had been looking at her for.

She was starting to shake, unable to hide her fear. "Stop." A high whisper was all that she could manage. She was sure that he was going to do it. Out of pure spite, just to destroy what little dignity she still had managed to possess.

Her throat was closing up. Her breathing became laboured. She started gasping for air. Her vision then got all blotchy, his snarling face disappeared from Hermione's sight soon after.

Everything went black.

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Draco couldn't take his eyes off her. Her naked body was not as filthy as he originally thought it would be. In fact, she didn't look any different than the witches he had shagged in his past. The nipples on her breasts looked no different than any of the Pureblood witches. Her belly button didn't. Neither did the bushy hair at her sex. Granted, she was excessively skinny (he easily saw the point Severus had made to him earlier). Her skin hung off her bones, barely having any muscle, and he saw too many ribs showing. Too much hipbone too. She did have curve though, that was a plus in his book, meaning when she put weight back on, she would look more better. Possibly even enough for him to shag—if he did it quickly.

He shifted his eyes back to her nipples. They were poking out now as goosebumps flushed across her skin. He didn't know if it was from fear or the cold from the solid stone of the tub that he had hurled her into.

He growled in annoyance. If he was going to do anything to her, he'd need to get that jasmine smell off her. It canceled out any potential arousal that could ever possibly occur with him. Not that he found her attractive perse. The thought of burying his cock into her cunt made his gut bubble in sickness.

Draco took in a breath, suppressing the urge to throw up. He saw that her eyes were closed now. Draco didn't believe her to be sleeping, and after a simple diagnostic spell, he learned that she had fainted due to hyperventilation.

Pointing his wand, he sprayed her with an icy stream of water to wake her up. She rose up from the bottom of the tub, shrieking out, gasping for air.

"You will use a different body wash this time, Mudblood," he told her, canceling the water spell, smirking at her shivering body. He'd never seen nipples so hard before. They were blue now, probably stiff enough to cut through glass.

Her teeth began to chatter. She covered her exposed breasts by crossing her arms, doing the same with her legs to hide herself from his piercing stare. He didn't care. He had a long enough study of her body while she was 'out'.

Draco levitated a bottle of body wash to him and set it on the ledge of the tub. "This is what you'll use from now on. Nothing else."

"I'm al-al-already cl-clean," Hermione insisted, stuttering her speech.

He leaned over the tub, gripping her collar, scowling at the smell in her choice of fragrance. "Listen here, and listen good," he growled darkly. "You either do it yourself, the way I want, or I will do it for you." He roughly released her and conjured up three scrub brushes. "I'll just show you for future reference on what to expect if I have to do it. Okay?" With magic, the body wash was generously poured onto each scrub brush before they attacked her, aggressively scrubbing every inch of her. She held back her cries for longer than Draco would ever give her credit for, but once her skin became red from the roughness of the washing, she screamed out in utter pain while the brushes raked against her tender flesh.

When all he could smell was green apples, Draco ceased the spell, grinning at the sight of her. She was glowing as bright as a Halloween jack-o-lantern now. The sobs she was trying to swallow made him even more giddy, simply because she was failing miserably at it.

He doused the Mudblood with another spray of ice, cold water, rinsing her before throwing her a fresh bathrobe, muttering at her to cover her hideous, gross looking body, claiming he'd go blind if he had to see it for another second. The Mudblood instantly responded, trembling from the cold, eager to conceal her body from him.

"You will bathe every day, twice a day, morning and night." He then hauled her out of the tub, dragging her behind him again and into the sitting room.

"Now, you will eat," Draco told her when she was finally released. She had stood up immediately, glaring daggers at him.

"Y-You c-call *me* f-filthy?!" she snapped, shivering. "After wh-what *you* j-just did?! You're th-the d-d-disgusting t-toad t-turd! N-not m-me!"

Draco stalked over to her and attempted to backhand her across the face, but she blocked it with her forearm and instead gave him a slap on his cheek. "Don't t-touch m-me!"

In fury, he snatched a handful of her hair. "You stupid, fucking Mudblood!" he shouted in pure rage. "How *dare* you strike me!" He smacked her so hard, that the wind was blown from her lungs. Draco pressed her back to his body, squeezing her cheeks together, purposely applying pressure to her now tender face.

The Mudblood wailed out and fought against him. "Let me go, you coward!" Her limbs flailed about, connecting to nothing.

Finally he pushed her to the ground and kicked her in the stomach. The Mudblood clutched her arms around her waist, moaning in pain.

Draco stood above her, panting in anger. She made no more move to fight him. He kicked her again for good measure, grunting as a more pathetic cry erupted from her.

"Please," the Mudblood whispered tearfully. "Please stop."

He knelt down, grabbing at her collar. "I'll be forgiving, this just once. You WILL eat, now." He pulled her back up to her feet and led her to a desk, calling out to one of his house-elves to fetch her a tray of prepared food, pushing her into the desk's chair.

"I'm giving you a place to stay, a place to keep clean, and food to fill your gut. The least you will do is show me respect."

She said nothing, staring at the wall that the desk was set up against.

"Did you not hear me, Mudblood?!"

"I heard you perfectly," she answered through a clenched jaw.

"Then thank me for the hospitality I have shown you."

She snorted in derision. "You're hilarious!" The Mudblood shook her head in disbelief, without looking at him.

"I suppose the Cruciatus curse ought to put some sense into that worthless mind of yours!" Draco threatened, taking his wand back out.

She turned her head to eye his wand in wariness. The Mudblood's lip trembled. She was scared of it, but still was too stubborn to show him any respect.

"*Cructio!*" The Mudblood tumbled from the chair, convulsing, flapping like a fish out of water. She screamed, loud and long. "Give up?" he asked, after releasing the spell.

"F-Fuck yourself, M-Malfoy!" she spat hoarsely.

So he sent her screaming again, his curse lasting longer this time, her scream too. This went on two more times until she was actually crying, sputtering up mucus from both her nose and mouth. "No 'ore," she weakly whispered, finally giving up her fight. She lay there on the carpet, unmoving. "P-Please no 'ore. I'll liss... on..."

"Clean your mess up!" he demanded, kicking at her once more.

He then apparated away, knowing that if he spent another second with the bitch, he would kill her with his bare hands.

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The aroma of delicious food penetrated into her nose. She couldn't move to see what it was, stuck on her stomach at the place Malfoy had left her at, too weak and shaky to even lift a single arm, which was good, for she was sure the pain she was still experiencing would increase drastically if she moved.

He is an angry man, Hermione decided. She had no idea what she had done to deserve this, and why Voldemort had even given her to Malfoy. He didn't need slaves, he had handfuls of elves at his beckon call. What the hell did he need her for?

An anger release? If that was it, it certainly wasn't working. He had left her presence more angry than when he had arrived.

And why home her in such a decent place? Why give her great smelling food(even if she was too weak to actually eat it). Did he just want to be *that* controlling of her?

Shit rolls down the hill, a voice in her head said. And she was at the bottom in this scenario.

She needed to come up with a plan to get out of here, but first she would have to get the tracker necklace off her. Even if she did manage an escape, they would just find her again, and if he was willing to torture her over a minor thing like the scent of body soap, who knew what level Malfoy would take after she was captured again.

She tried lifting her head to no avail. Her skin burned, her ribs were, at the very least, bruised, possibly broken. She had an external ache on her head from him yanking at her hair, and her face was swelling by the minute. The smell of food was so desirable for her starving self that it was literally making her nauseous.

Why had Malfoy been so pushy on her eating the food anyway? Wouldn't it be just better to let her starve? She knew she was near it. She'd noticed her weight problem, but there had been nothing she could do about it. Food had been scarce for them.

But now... she was at Malfoy's. He had money. Lots of it. He had food, lots of it. And while he was a prejudice, murdering toad, he *had* been right. For some unknown reason to her, he *was* being hospitable by giving her a clean, decent shelter, running water, and, while she hadn't technically gotten any yet, food.

Or rather... at least as hospitable Malfoy would ever be *capable* of when it came to her.

At this rate, she didn't care if it were stale bread and water. Food was food to her anymore.

Of course it smelled much more divine than just bread and water.

But what was the catch to all this? If he was providing all this for her, what was expected of her? He wouldn't give it to her with no strings attached. He was Malfoy. He was a Slytherin. They never did anything out of the kindness of their heart—and it wasn't like Malfoy had done it so kindly anyway.

Was it a power move? Was he going to let her get comfortable with it all and then snatch it away? Why would he bother doing that though? Malfoy easily shown her that he could make her cry, so why waste resources on her? Why waste resources on the filthy Mudblood?

It made no sense, and her mind wouldn't rest, determined to come up with an explainable reason on why Malfoy would house her, let her use his facilities, and feed her. Slaves weren't treated this way. Not slaves of Death Eaters. He was cruel and abusive, but she knew he could torture her just the same in a leaky, smelly, dirty dungeon cell.

Something was going on, and she was going to find out what it was.

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Severus looked down at the frail woman, curled up at the floor. His nose flared at the foul odor. She obviously could not move, knowing Miss Granger—err... Mrs. Malfoy... she would never sit in her own waste if she could help it.

She was passed out from the events that the previous night had done to her. Her dinner had not even been touched.

"You just left her there," he stated to Draco, finding the man in his study, shuffling through a Potion book. He had been afraid Draco would be like this. He wasn't blaming his godson for his anger, but the Dark Lord would not be pleased if the Malfoy heirs were not created soon, and Mrs. Malfoy would likely die in the pregnancy with her current health. She had very little time to get better before the Dark Lord would become impatient.

Not to mention, if Draco killed the gift that the Dark Lord had given him, that could end badly for Draco too.

"I had an elf check her health. She's fine. Bruises and shaken nerves, nothing that can't be fixed."

"Except that she did not get to eat her meal, which is extremely important for her to have right now. You can not afford her to skip a meal. It's probably best that you treat her less violently too."

"I was just trying to make her more appealing to *me*, so that I could perhaps overlook her Mudblood status. Then she gives me lip! Pissed me off!"

"You like your women bruised, swollen, and unmoving? You plan to bed her like that?" Severus asked with a raise of his brow, pointing out to the young man just what he had done. "No one says you have to like her status," he added when Draco's eyes uncomfortably shifted down to his book, easily answering the question without any words. "But killing her is not the thing to do. The Dark Lord will be insulted if that happens, not to mention, displeased with you for hindering his plan. You know very well that angering him is not the thing to do."

"I can't help it," Draco said, gritting his teeth. "She makes me so bloody *angry*. She looks at me like *I'm* the piece of rubbish. She snaps at me like *I'm* the devil—"

"In her eyes, you are."

"In my eyes, *she* is."

"Then you have a mutual understanding of each other," Severus responded dryly. "Ease into it then, Draco," he suggested to the fuming man. "Take one step at a time with her. You're a Slytherin. Manipulate her. Coerce her. Trick her into believing what you want her to. In the end, you will need her on your side anyway to get the task done."

Draco snorted. "I could force her." He shrugged. "I'm much more powerful than her."

Severus pursed his lips together, keeping his opinion to himself about that. "Just remember, you have one goal at the moment: populate the world. Nothing more. She can not help you

with that if you do not allow her to heal. You will not be able to constantly abuse her. Her physical health is the most important thing right now."

"*Fine*," Draco relented. "I'll *try* to handle her better. I'll see what else I can do about her disobedience."

"Oh, really, Draco," Severus sighed. "What could you possibly want her to do for you that you can't already make the twenty-something house-elves you've got do?"

Draco shrugged. "At the very least, she can worship me. If it weren't for me, she wouldn't have what she does now. Her children will be great—because of *my* blood. I deserve her respect."

Severus didn't know why he bothered to help Draco. It was pointless to get him to reason when it came to his now wife. Draco was able to overlook everything around him just to poke at the once Hermione Granger.

And that was what Severus feared would be the death of him.

Admittance

Hermione winced, pressing her fingers to her blackened cheek, looking at it in the mirror of the bathroom. Her whole right cheek was bruised. She'd like to give Malfoy a matching one on his own face, but she quickly removed the grim look from her face. If she was going to find out what was going on, she'd need to play his cruel game for the time being. Which was going to be hard because she had been always a terrible actor and liar.

But she didn't have to lie. Not really. It wouldn't be a big deal if Malfoy knew she was wanting answers. He'd probably expect it from her anyway. She was naturally curious and it wasn't like he was dumb enough not to notice her interest in knowing anything and everything. Hermione would admit that he was an intelligent man. She had noticed that he was right behind her in school grades. She barely beat him, but two or three points mattered. It mattered to her, and it mattered to him, because it proved to the bastard that his pure blood meant nothing if someone like *her* could out do him.

Hermione understood that that was partially why he was so rotten to her. Most of it was because of her parents lacking any magical properties to them. There was also the fact that he was just an arse to begin with. An arrogant, spoiled, pampered rich kid who had always gotten his way.

She tightened the bathrobe strap around her waist. It was all white, made of some elegant material that she had never felt before in her entire lifetime. It was incredibly soft (the softest material she had ever touched) and very absorbent, soaking up any leftover water droplets that had clung to her body from her bath. The fabric was made of some sort of animal fur, or so she guessed.

So far, Malfoy had given her nothing different to wear. Her previous clothes had yet to have been returned to her, and Hermione doubted she'd ever see them again (the stained clothing probably disgusted him). Was she to just wear a bathrobe for the rest of her time here?

Drying her hair with a towel made of the same material that the robe was made out of, Hermione wrinkled her forehead, thinking about the stain that she had left in the next room over. Malfoy would not be pleased when he'd see that. She wasn't either, but it wasn't like she could have helped herself. And *he* was the one that attacked her, weakened her, momentarily paralyzing her in the process. She had tried cleaning it up, but had made it worse by spreading it, since she couldn't find any proper cleaning supplies.

Somehow, she figured Malfoy would make the incident all her fault though.

Hermione sighed. She'd have to put up with him long enough to find out how to get out of here. And at the same time, Hermione was going to learn how to remove the blasted collar too. She realized (on a simple, close inspection) that it had tiny hairlike quills that circled around the inside of it, irritating the skin and rubbing against it every time she would place her fingers to it. The outside of it was red. Red like blood, easily spotted around her what would be pale neck if she didn't have a skin infection going on at the moment. She cringed at

the coin sized tag hanging off it. Hermione had to lean forward over the counter to be able to read the tiny, fine printing. She about gasped after making out the backwards wording.

MUDBLOOD # 421.

It wasn't a name. It was just a number. Pets were given names. Even *slaves* were given names. All she was was a number.

But why expect anything different in this new ruling? Hermione knew everything had gone to rubbish, and she had only imagined the terrible things that Voldemort had probably done to the world she used to dream about living in. She had never imagined *this* though. She had just assumed that all Muggleborns and blood traitors would be killed on the spot. Tortured to death at the most. And until she saw it for herself, she could not get herself to actually believe that they were all being kept alive as slaves, thinking it was just some insane rumour. It had made no sense to her then, and still didn't. *Why* use them at all? House-elves bred faster, were more obedient, and had better control of their magic. Humans required much more attention and training, taking *years* to perfect it, and some of them were never to accomplish even that.

Hermione rubbed the rash at her neck. It still itched like mad. She hissed out, her touch to it causing a severe stinging pain. Worse than being pricked with sewing needles. It was so hard not to touch it though. She shook her hands and took in a deep breath, forcing herself to take her mind off the mess around her neck and left the bathroom.

"Have a good night?" The voice was quiet, and a bit sarcastic, but she half as much expected him to appear this morning, simply to check on the wound.

Snape had been waiting for her to finish in the bathroom. After her accident at the floor, spending the night in a mess, she had needed a thorough cleaning. She mildly hoped that he hadn't been waiting there for as long as she was freshening herself up. Why she cared, she didn't know. A habit that she had not shaken since her first Potions lesson with him. She only assumed that was the case.

"Not exactly." she admitted, eyeing the urine stain. "I'm sure Malfoy will beat me like an animal when he sees that," Hermione said, pointing at it in disgust. A feeling of shame washed up through her. "I'd clean it... I have no wand though. And there are no cleaning supplies in the bathroom..."

She watched Snape nod, but the man said nothing about it. She had expect him to lecture her over it, and insult her for inability to control her bodily functions, but she gratefully welcomed his lack of comment on it.

Snape rolled his sleeves up meaningfully and looked at her neck. He made no move to step forward to her, standing erect at the main door to the room that closed Hermione off from who knew what. She had been locked up in this room since she had been placed in it. "I'm here to see how your injury is fairing."

Hermione stiffened, preparing herself for his treatment. "Okay," she told him, permitting him to begin. He swept to her without waiting for her to say anything more. This time he stood in front of her. He easily removed the collar with his long, bony fingers.

Her eyes caught sight of his Dark Mark, where they stayed, staring at it. How many more people had that mark now that Voldemort was in power? Were all the 'worthy' blood types now forced to get it? Or was it still a free choice?

Before she knew it, Snape was done and had returned to the spot at the door. His eyes shifted down to the stain she had made during the night. His nose slightly wrinkled, disgusted by the sight of it. "Breakfast will be served shortly," he said without taking his eyes off the spot on the floor. Snape then swished his wand. "Draco will expect you to eat it. I would not want to insult him any further if I were you. You do not have the strength for a repeat of last night."

He left immediately after that, using the door. It was only after she heard a loud lock upon his shutting of the door that Hermione noticed that the urine stain was gone. She let out a small sigh of relief. She wasn't sure why her former professor was being so decent to her (it was another thing she vowed to find out), but she wasn't going to decline his help. It would be one less thing that Malfoy could be pissed at her about. She was hoping he would be a bit less irritated with her today. She wasn't in the mood for abuse, knowing Snape was right. She also wanted answers. And she had to somehow convince Malfoy to give them to her.

A seemingly impossible task, but one that must be done if she wanted to get out of this wretched nightmare. Answers would lead to other answers. Ultimate ones.

The breakfast that was delivered (by a shut-mouthed house-elf) was huge. Hermione's eyes widened at the abundance of food, in disbelief that it was all actually for her. Five large flapjacks (as big as her head!), several pieces of sausage links, an assortment of fruits and cereals, and orange juice and milk. It had been years since she had seen such a large amount of food being served in one meal alone.

"Are you sure this is all for me?" she asked the elf cautiously, somewhat concerned for him that he'd be punished if he had mistaken. The elf didn't respond to her though. He stood there, looking at her expectantly while she hesitated from taking a seat at the desk that the food had been neatly arranged on.

"Um, thanks," Hermione said awkwardly, sitting down to the meal. She had never met a house-elf who was so quiet before.

He gave her a tiny nod of acknowledgment before disappearing away.

Even with as starving as she was, Hermione was only able to eat a couple of bites of a few things before her stomach started feeling sick with heaviness. She felt terrible that all this food had been prepared for her, but she couldn't help that her stomach had shrunk up in the past couple years since the food had been so scarce. She pocketed an apple into her bathrobe, knowing she'd be hungry soon after her stomach settled.

Minutes later, she sadly watched the tray of food magically disappear.

Lunch was the same way for her. There were multiple sandwiches and soups for her to eat, but all she managed was two bites of a turkey sandwich and about a quarter of a cup of soup, feeling absolutely stuffed to the brim.

And then it wasn't even five minutes after deciding that she couldn't possibly eat more before she had to make a mad dash to the bathroom to throw it all up. Hermione about cried when she finished, swallowing the burning feeling down her throat. She was unable to decide which hurt more: an empty stomach or a full one. She needed that food if she was going to survive. She had to eat as much as she could to get her weight back on.

Her body trembled, shaking from weakness. Hermione hugged her arms around her aching stomach in an effort to comfort herself, leaning up against the wall next to the toilet. Malfoy had yet to pay her a visit so far that day. She was content with this. He'd be disgusted with her if he knew he had just wasted his food on her. Not like he wouldn't be disgusted with her already with her mere presence alone.

Hermione curled up into a ball, closing her eyes, too weak and sleepy from having to hurl her guts up. Malfoy would probably curse her to the moon and back if he found her like this, but she really had no energy to do anything else.

Perhaps she would be lucky. Maybe he wouldn't want to see her face today. That was alright with her, she didn't want to see his face either.

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"Damn, she let herself go, didn't she?"

Draco grunted, staring down at the Mudblood next to the toilet where she had collapsed at. "She's practically starved to death," he explained her status, bending down to snag a fistful of her hair, lifting her head up to look at her face. He cringed at the bile sticking to her chin. The greyish muck trailed off her face and hit the floor, creating an additional mess to the one that was already there. She must had up-chucked in her 'sleep'.

"Definitely so," Blaise said behind Draco.

Draco simply let her head fall back to the floor, which created a soft thud. His teeth clenched in annoyance with the mess at his feet. "She ate too fast," he declared. "Thick headed, little bitch."

"Well, you don't hold back the insults with her, do you?"

"I hate her."

"She's your wi—"

"Fucking shut your face, Blaise!" Draco snapped, stepping back from the Mudblood, setting his hands at his hips. He heaved a sigh, having no idea what to do with his current predicament. Hopefully the Meal Planner would arrive soon, and know what to do about the Mudblood's eating problems.

"She's the latest Lady Malfoy—"

"I told you to fucking shut your hole, Blaise!" Draco cut him off sharply. He pointed to the Mudblood. "This Mudblood is *not* and will *never* be called what my mother once was. And

that is the last I will hear of it!" His cloudy eyes threatened a storm if there were any arguments made about the subject.

Blaise's eyebrows lifted up to his hairline. "You're angry that she placed above you."

"No shit! What gave you that bloody idea?! She went through one night of hell. *One* night!"

His friend shook his head. "Really, mate, if you knew why she won—"

"She cheated," Draco accused firmly. "There's no other explanation."

"I was there, Draco. The Dark Lord was there. Do you honestly think that she fooled Him?"

Draco put a hand up to his lips, rubbing them. They were dry and peeling, chapped from not being cared for as he had been too busy these last few months to give the minor things in his life any attention. Until that moment, he hadn't noticed that they were so damaged. He licked them to wet them, making a mental note to himself to apply a healing balm later.

"She wasn't even armed." Draco's eyes shifted to Blaise, his friend's words mildly grabbing his interest. "Not in the last three battles at least. He wanted her to lose, so she would place low and humiliate herself. He hated her and envied her just as much as you. But she didn't lose. Not even when he had the little nit brought in, hexing the child to deliver him pain, making him scream. It only made her stronger. Or so it appeared. She fought wandlessly, she fought *amazingly*, winning each battle, all the while, under immense stress, both mental and physical. To see her alive astonishes me. I'm thoroughly surprised she made it through that last battle. It was brutal."

Blaise spoke truthfully about the Carrows. When they lost fights, they grew more and more mad every second. Much worse than rabid, wild animals.

"And I'll admit, mate, I am so bloody jealous," Blaise continued when Draco made no comment. "I'm not going to joke with you, she may be Mudblood, she may not be a great looker right now because of her illness, but watching her fight made me so hard. When I heard we'd have to breed with Mudders, I asked Him for her. I begged Him for her. Her children are going to be powerful. *My* children would have been powerful with her as their mother. He wouldn't let me have her though. I am Number Six on the list, mate. *You* got her. And I know why: she's to not be wasted. She's going to be a handful. She's going to need someone who is just as good as she is to keep her in line."

Draco snorted, shaking his head. "She's nothing, Blaise! You've been fooled! She tricked you —"

"She tricked the Dark Lord?" Blaise pressed, giving him a doubtful look.

Draco adjusted his stance, uncomfortable with his friend's accusation. The Dark Lord couldn't be fooled, but he wouldn't allow himself to admit that she beat him.

"You mentioned a kid?" Draco asked, the thought coming into his head after needing a new subject to talk about. "She has a kid?"

Blaise grinned. "Do I sense envy? Are you upset that you didn't get to her first?"

"Course not! She absolutely disgusts me!"

"It's been checked for matching blood. It's not hers. Although, she was very protective of him."

"She must have picked the nit up along the way," Draco summarized. "He still alive?"

Blaise lifted up his chin. "Why would a bitty, little nitty interest you?"

The question was answered with a shrug. "Could use it as leverage one day."

"Last I knew, yes, but who knows what is planned for him."

"Good to know." With a flick of his wand, Draco cast a deodorizer charm in the room, and cleaned up the Mudblood's puke mess.

"You treat your house-elves better than she, and they are your *real* slaves," Blaise told him while Draco pondered what to do with her. He contemplated leaving her where she was, not wanting to touch her.

"They have deserved my kindness. She hasn't."

"She's nearly your equal."

"She will *never* be my equal, nor *nearly* my equal!"

Blaise let out a doubtful hum. He nudged his head toward the Mudblood, indicating to her. "You just gonna leave her here to die then? You want the Dark Lord to Crucio you to death? Maybe he'll dip you in acid grease, that's a good way to go too."

"What in the bloody fuck are you talking about?!"

"Don't kid yourself, Draco," Blaise said seriously. "We both know what's going to happen if she dies."

Draco's lips pursed tightly together. He nibbled on a loose piece of skin. He didn't know why he bothered arguing with himself over the subject. Severus was right. Blaise was right. His own *mind* was right.

The Mudblood was in his care now, and he'd have to ensure that she got better. And since he was a Slytherin, they had severe trust issues. This had been his problem since he had been given her. He didn't trust hardly anyone. Severus was the only one he'd let heal him, which was why he gave his godfather the okay to heal the Mudblood. But her main issue was out of Severus's ability. He treated things that were related to Dark Magic only and starvation was not Dark Magic. Or rather, the way she had gotten in the state of it had not been done by Dark Magic. It had been done naturally. Likely because she had had nothing these past couple years while in hiding.

"Help me get her to the bloody bed," Draco grumbled in defeat. If she was going to get better, it would be he who would have to pull her through it. If he didn't trust anyone with his own life, he couldn't trust anyone else with *hers* either. And unfortunate to him, her life did matter to him now.

"This doesn't mean that I like her," Draco said, noticing the smug look on his friend's face, as they set the Mudblood onto the bed.

"Oh, certainly not!" A grin appeared. "Damn," Blaise breathed, catching sight of her exposed chest. The tie to her bathrobe had fallen off along their walk from the bathroom, exposing the more intimate parts of her body at the seam of it. "She's real skinny, mate." His grin had faltered into a frown of concern.

"I know," Draco said, eyeing her bony ribs. Her skin there was not pale, instead covered with one massive purplish-blue bruise from his loss of control the night before.

"I'd still bang her though, if I were you. A little glamour charm here and there—"

"Fucking shut up, Blaise."

"Getting jealous?" he asked cockily.

"The thought of her disgusts me. How many times must I say it? She's too fucking ugly."

Blaise took his wand out and pointed it at the Mudblood. "You know, if you'd give her a chance, you may find her quite attractive after all." He quickly cast a few spells as his friend watched. Her bushy hair was straightened and set draping over her shoulders. The bruising on her face and ribs faded away. Her weight appeared to have gained some (in looks only), as her ribs disappeared under a layer of a healthy amount of muscle and fat, her hollow cheeks had filled out, and her breasts were full like they had probably once been in her past, when she was healthy and was able to eat often.

Blaise reached over her and hesitantly set a hand to one of her breasts, cupping it. His thumb grazed across her nipple, instantly causing it to harden with his delicate touch. He groaned, removing his hand. Blaise's eyes were closed, likely thinking about doing more than just touching her.

Draco didn't disagree with Blaise, but he also wouldn't admit that his friend's glamour charms were impressive. Only that's all they were. Pretty *wrapping*. Pretty wrapping that hid a disgusting piece of work underneath.

Silently, Draco covered the Mudblood slowly up with a blanket, lingering below her breast line, looking at them far too long than he should had. The nipple that had been recently teased was still peaked, begging for attention. It was the perfect colour too. Rosy pink.

"Don't you just want to take it into your mouth and suck on it?" Blaise's voice wiggled into Draco's mind.

Draco cleared his throat, tucking the blanket around the Mudblood up to her neck so that she was completely covered. "No," Draco answered firmly. "I'm sure I'll have to be Imperiused before I'll be able to fuck her."

"I'll do it," Blaise offered eagerly. "If I can watch it all take place."

"Go home before I bloody curse you to hell and back!"

His friend's laughter echoed throughout the room before he got wise and apparated home to his own wife.

Draco conjured the chair from the Mudblood's sitting room and set it by the wall near her. He sat in it, and leaned back, slouching. He crossed his arms over his chest, watching her has she slept.

He had nothing else to do than wait for the Meal Planner anyway. The Dark Lord had relieved him of all duties except for impregnating the woman lying before him.

With any other woman, Draco would say that it would be a boring amount of upcoming months, but not with this Mudblood. What Blaise said had made sense. Draco *was* probably the only one who could handle her. The problem he was going to have was to find a proper medium. He had a temper problem, and that was something he was going to have to work on. He wouldn't be able to kick her like he had done if she was going to be carrying his heirs.

She would have to learn how to obey him before she started carrying his children.

Draco once again rubbed his chapped lips in thought, while his brain turned around ideas of what he could safely to do her to make her mind him. He was going to find a way.

Thank You For Your Cooperation

Chapter Notes

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

"You're late."

"I apologize, Mr. Mal—"

"Mrs. Henderson, *Lord* Malfoy is what you will call me."

The short, dark haired woman tilted her head forward, acknowledging Draco's statement.
"My mistake, Lord Malfoy."

"Precisely so. Do note that the only reason I'm not kicking you out of my Manor is because you are the best out there, but know this, Mrs. Henderson, one wrong move and you will regret it. I'll have you rotting away in Azkaban before you can even beg me for forgiveness."

Mrs. Henderson trembled before him, knowing he was not lying. She nodded, looking at the floor of her feet.

"Now then, neither of us want you here, so the quicker you work your *magic*, the quicker you'll no longer be needed." Draco patronizingly snapped his fingers from where he sat in the chair near the Mudblood. "You will now begin your examination."

The once sorted Hufflepuff, who was seven years his senior, cautiously approached the sick witch. Just as Draco had said, she was not here willingly, having been forced to come and look over the Mudblood only because she was the best Meal Planner around, able to work miracles with her patients.

She measured every inch of the Mudblood with a magical tape, whispering measurements under her breath. A tiny, pathetic gasp would escape her mouth every so often with the knowledge that the Mudblood was in a severe state of health.

"I'll have to order a few supplies to be shipped—"

Draco didn't let her finish. "Just give me a list of instructions that you feel will need to be done for her and I'll take care of everything."

She promptly conjured up a piece of parchment and tapped her wand to it. A long list of instructions was scribbled out in black ink. Mrs. Henderson then handed it to Draco, saying, "She's in critical condition. Closer to death than alive..."

"This is not surprising to me," he told her grimly, scanning his eyes over the list. Most of the stuff the Mudblood would need he had, some were ingredients to potions that would have to be made into teas. She would need a numerous amount of potions that he would have to make for her, including three different nutrient ones.

"Anything else?" Draco asked to be thorough, still reading over the list. Apparently, the Mudblood was supposed to avoid eating greasy things until her nausea subsided. The breakfast served that morning explained her sickness. The sausages had been dripping with fat. She was to only have lean meals full of protein and vitamins and plenty of clean fluids.

"No, sir," Mrs Henderson answered quietly.

"You'll come here in two days then to re-evaluate her. Same time. Do not be late or I shall inform the Dark Lord of your tardiness."

"I'll not be late again," she promised fearfully.

"No." Draco smirked darkly, delighted that his threat had made a satisfactory impact. "I do not think that you will."

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Hermione blinked awake, groaning from the soreness of her body. She couldn't see a thing because everything was black around her. It must have been after six now for it to be so dark. Maybe it was later than that. She had no way of knowing either way.

It took her a few moments to realize that she was in a bed, having no idea how she had even gotten into it. Last she was aware of, she was hurling her guts up into the fancy toilet of the bathroom in the suite that Malfoy was keeping her prisoner in.

Blindly, she shoved the covers off her and struggled with sitting up. She was sweating, hot, and very hungry. She also had an excruciating headache. The movement of getting up made her dizzy. Hermione gently pressed her hands to her head in an effort to soothe its harsh pounding. All were effects from starvation. Her mouth was extremely dry too. She had to swallow many times in order to wet it.

This is it, she decided. He intends to starve me. He probably put something in the food to poison me.

She stood up on wobbly legs. Her arms flew out to keep her balance. She was too weak to walk and had to use the bathroom. With determination to not piss her pants a second time, Hermione grit her teeth and took a step toward the direction that the bathroom was at (the left of the room).

She didn't get to finish the step before she shrieked out, falling down in a heap at the side of the bed. She whimpered in frustration, knowing her health was declining fast. With a deep breath, mustering up every bit of strength she had, she tried crawling instead, making a mental note not to get lost in the darkness. She closed her eyes, vividly picturing the room she was in, namely, the walking path.

Hermione didn't know how far she had gotten before she had to stop to pant, sucking in deep breaths of air. Her head felt so light now, and she was fearing she'd pass out again before she'd make it to her destination. Her arms gave out beneath her, crashing her body to the

ground. Blinking back tears of hopelessness, she closed her eyes, needing a rest. She would just have to pee when she woke up again and regathered her energy back up.

A bright light invaded her head, piercing the pain in it. Hermione groaned and brought a hand up to cover her eyes.

Footsteps neared her and she heard a person curse under their breath. "Mudblood!" the harsh scolding made her jump.

"Go away," she whispered and cleared her dry throat, wincing at its scratchy pain.

"I leave you for thirty bloody minutes and this is what you've done?!" Hermione clenched her jaw as he gripped a handful of hair at the back her head, forcing her head up. She squinted at the bright light from the overhead chandelier, catching sight of his scowl. "Can't you walk?!"

"I-I t-tried," she told him. "I'm t-too weak."

"Why did you get out of bed in the first fucking place?!" he asked angrily, pulling at her hair, demanding an answer.

"Ouch! S-Stop that!" Hermione pleaded.

"Answer the question," he ordered her, giving her another yank.

"You're s-such a c-coward!" she cried as real tears squeezed out from the corners of her eyes. "I just needed to use the toilet, dammit!"

He released her then, shoving her face into the dark blue carpet. "A simple answer was all that I needed. Hold the name calling or I'll snip your tongue— physically. Your future here does not require the use of it, so it's quite useless to me."

Hermione swallowed hard. After what she heard went on in the war, she figured he was capable of doing it. "Unless you wish me to ruin your pretty carpeting, I suggest you find a way for me to get to the toilet. I can't walk." She kept still, not wanting to anger him further, remembering Snape's warning earlier that morning.

"You could have just said so," he muttered. A moment later, Hermione was being lifted by the back of her bathrobes, brought up into a sitting position. Malfoy was bent over her and holding out a green potion for her. "Drink this."

"What is it?" she asked cautiously. She looked at it but didn't take it from him.

His fingers roughly dug into the back of her neck, and Hermione had to clamp her teeth tightly together so she wouldn't yelp. "If I was going to kill you, you'd already be dead," Malfoy growled darkly into her ear. "Now drink it." He pressed the potion to her hand.

Shakily, she took it, unable to remove her eyes from it. It could be anything. Lots of potions were green. From good to bad. Hermione removed the cork, sniffing it. It smelled sweet— although, one could not be fooled by just the mere smell, sweet smelling potions were often the most deadly.

"Tell me what it is," she bravely requested.

Malfoy growled impatiently. He pushed her onto her back, where she screamed and began kicking at him as he pinned her beneath him, sitting on her stomach. He doused the potion into her open, protesting mouth, making her cough as it trickled down her throat. She continued to fight him. "Stop it now!" he bellowed out, trying to keep his balance on her as she bucked at him to get him off her.

"Get off me!" she wailed hysterically between gasps of air and spouts of coughing.

She went still as he tapped his wand to her forehead. "That's more like it," he sneered. "You will not defy my orders, you stupid bitch!" He raised his fist to punch her but didn't go through with it. His eyes narrowed, staring at it.

"Go ahead!" she spat at him. She closed her eyes, trying to concentrate on releasing his spell so she could fight him off her. "Do it, Malfoy!" She could feel the spell weakening. Her toes were able to wiggle now. "Kill me! My life matters no more!" Her fingers clenched into a fist. Hermione grunted, shutting her eyes tighter. "Certainly not to you!" She felt her arms and legs release all at once and swung her legs up and over his head, looping them around his chest, knocking him off her. He was caught by surprise, and in the process, his wand fell from his hand. She had possession of it before he even realized he had lost control of it. She quickly stood up, not willing to give up this opportunity.

"How *dare* you!" he snarled at her, climbing up to his own feet, but his face lightened some when he saw that she was pointing his own wand at him. "Give it back," he ordered her threateningly. "Give it back now. You are to not touch my wand, you filthy Mudblood!"

"Oh, yeah?" she sneered. "I'm touching it!" She slipped the entire length of it through her hand. "It's so filthy now, you'll probably need a new one." All the while, her mind was spinning, analyzing the piece of wood in her hand. It was a little thicker and longer than she was used to, but she could definitely make it work.

"What are you going to do?" he asked her tauntingly. "You can't really escape. First, you have to get out of this room, and *if* you even manage that, you have to get that collar off you, because, incase you have forgotten, it tracks your *every* location." He was smiling smugly now. "If you give it back to me this moment, I promise your punishment will be minor."

Judging by the twinkle in his eye, he was lying. He was madder than a disturbed hornet, and he was going to make her pay for what she had done.

"You can't stand there all night, Mudblood," he told her when she said nothing, thinking of how she could get out of here without being caught again. He took a step toward her, slowly.

"Stupefy!" His body was lifted from the spot and it flew until it could no more, connecting into a wall. He groaned out in a daze of pain.

Hermione cautiously walked to him, keeping her distance in case he came to and made to lunge out at her. She saw blood trailing from his ear. Casting a spell to see if he was still alive, she learned that he was okay.

She sucked in a breath. He was right, she couldn't go anywhere until the bloody collar was off. Pointing the wand at him, she made his eyes open. A little drool dribbled from his mouth. "How can this collar around my neck be removed? Tell me the exact instructions."

"Only a Death Eater can do it," he automatically replied in a trance. "Takes only a touch of their fingers."

"Then you will remove this piece of crap from me now," she ordered him breathlessly, keeping a tight hold of the wand as he stood up and walked to her. She held her breath as he removed the collar from her, his face lacking any emotion. The hair on her skin stood up as his fingers gently brushed against her during his movement.

"Show me how to get out of this place."

"There is no showing you," he informed her. "It is possible only with my permission."

"Then give it to me. Do whatever you have to do so I can leave this horrid place!"

"You may leave, Mudblood," was all he said. The door in the next room over instantly swung inward upon his words, and she let out a sigh of relief.

"Don't come looking for me," she ordered of him, making him sit on the edge of the bed to watch her exit. "I'll kill you if I see you again. That's a promise."

She hurried to the door, and stopped at it, remembering that Snape had disapparated from the room the day before, which meant that she could too.

She breathed in deeply, after landing on outside ground, smelling the scent of the cold winter night, once again, a free woman. She transfigured her bathrobe into an acceptable set of Muggle wear, and began the process of jumping from one apparition point to another, heading to a new continent all together.

Chapter End Notes

My favourite chapter to this story so far. It was totally fun planning this.

The Search Begins

"She's gone." Severus said, removing the curse off Draco.

It took Draco a few moments to realize what he had said, as the effects of the spell still lingered in his mind. When he was able to think for himself again, he was stunned, in complete disbelief that she had managed to escape, and had *made* him *help* her do it.

It was a horrible thing to do, and he had never expected her to do such a thing. She had been part of the Golden Trio— perfect, law abiding, would-be heroes, where their choice spells were harmless ones like 'expelliarmus' and 'stupefy'. So, when had she switched her beliefs? When had she learned to master that curse, a curse that was once forbidden to be used?

He had tried fighting her off, determined to reclaim his wand and make her beg for her life for using him like some bloody puppet, but no matter how hard he fought against her force, she had complete control over him. Even after she was long gone, and had left him alone to sit on the bed, immobilized for hours until Severus found him and released him from the spell.

When had she decided to fight fire with fire?

Then anger took over him.

She had escaped. Using his wand. Using *him*. He went mad. He went crazy. He *cracked*.

Draco didn't much remember what exactly he had done, but after he was finished turning everything in the suite to rubbish, he took note of his surroundings. His damage— the effects of him losing his temper.

A window was broken. A vase had been tipped over, practically cracked in half. Shards of many sizes from a mirror was shattered, capturing the damaged surroundings in their reflections. The desk was turned on its side, its chair was scattered around in several pieces after it had been repetitively hit against numerous structures.

"Are you finished now?" Severus asked calmly. He had watched the ordeal from the doorway, safely out of harm's way.

Draco stood in the center of the suite. His chest was heaving in and out, full of rage. His fists were balled up so tightly that the nails of his fingers were digging into his palms, piercing the skin, drawing blood. But he didn't notice this. He didn't feel the pain from it, nor did he feel the blood pricking out of the freshly made slits of his flesh.

He was going to kill her. He really was. She had some bloody nerve to attack him and take his wand. To touch it. To *use* it. She imperiused him, forcing him to follow her every command, like some fucking slave.

He was going to find her, and he was going to skin her alive.

Oh, yes, he was fucking pissed. Very much so. Rightfully, so. She was brave for doing it, but terribly stupid, and the Mudblood was going to regret what she had done to him.

"You'll have to tell the Dark Lord."

Draco's head snapped up at his godfather's statement, looking him in the eye. All his anger went away as if a hose had been turned on, spraying his emotions and washing them all away. He swallowed hard. His throat rejected the action, nearly making him choke on absolute nothing.

Merlin, Severus was right... the Dark Lord would need to know. And Draco was going to be in deep shit for letting her get away.

He placed his hand up to his forehead, shaking his head in distress. He may as well be as good as dead. This was serious. The Dark Lord would find this unacceptable.

"The sooner the better," Severus told him, gesturing Draco to come with him.

"I'll find her!" Draco said hastily. "I'll bring her back!"

"He'll still find out she's gone, Draco. He needs to know. He needs to know *now*."

"I didn't ask for this," Draco said, swallowing back sobs. "I did everything! Everything he ordered me to do! I don't deserve this! I've been loyal! I've been faithful!"

Severus said nothing, his face was frozen with a blank look. "You will need to remind him of those things, then," he told him, setting a hand onto Draco's shoulder, apparating them outside of the Dark Lord's lair, located in the dungeons of Hogwarts.

Draco shook violently as his godfather clanked the door knocker twice, the sound echoed eerily, filling the hollow hall path with the dreadful noise. If Draco still had his wand, he probably would have ran.

Severus pushed him into the room when the door opened, allowing them access into it. The Dark Lord stood facing out the window of His massive room. The size of the room was unnecessary since it was mostly bare except for a still portrait of Himself hanging on the wall, a long, oversized desk, and a few armchairs. The window revealed nothing, pitch black from the night, since it was impossible to see underwater without using a spell (in the day, the creatures of the lake could be seen swimming many feet below the surface).

His hands were set behind His back, one holding on to the other's wrist. His wand was lazily placed in His hand.

Both Severus and Draco dropped low to their knees. "M-My Lord..." Draco stammered.

"I've been expecting you, Draco," his Master acknowledged him. "I half expected you to run."

Draco said nothing, waiting for Him to continue. He was not going to confess to Him that the thought had crossed his mind. His heart thrashed into his chest, cramping it. He forced

himself to breathe slow and deep.

"But here you are, awaiting your fate like a good, little boy," He purred. "You please me, Draco. You are such a faithful servant. You may stand. I do not intend to kill you today, my son."

Draco's eyes shut in great relief. He let out breath of air, standing up to his feet. "Thank you, My Lord," he said in pure gratitude.

"Do you believe that your Mudblood wife didn't earn her placement on my scoreboard?" The Dark Lord hadn't turned from His spot. His wand tapped patiently against His backside.

"Your scoreboard doesn't lie, My Lord," Draco stated automatically. "If you feel I am second and she is first, then that is the way it is to be."

"That is not what your vocal tone tells me," the Dark Lord argued gently. "You will find your wife, Draco," he ordered, changing the subject altogether. "You will bring her back, and you will learn her weaknesses. Am I clear?"

Draco understood perfectly well. The Mudblood was not to do this again. There wasn't going to be another chance. This was his first and only one.

"Yes, My Lord," Draco answered in a whisper, unable to find his voice.

"Excellent. Take Blaise with you. He is incredibly exceptional at finding runaways. When she is back into your possession, you will promptly bring her to me."

"Yes, My Lord."

"You're both dismissed," He said, acknowledging Severus's presence for the first time during the visit. "Do not displease me, my servants."

"Thank you, My Lord," Draco and Severus said in unison and exited the room.

"I need a wand," Draco muttered to Severus once the door to the Dark Lord's lair was shut behind them.

Severus nodded in agreement. "I've spares at the Manor."

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I don't even know where she could have gone," Draco informed Blaise impatiently. Blaise was digging through a bag that he had brought over, only half listening.

"I'm surprised you're still alive, mate," he said, taking out a flat, round device that looked much like a tiny clock. There was a knob on it, and he started fiddling with it. "How the fuck did she even get away? Short of imperiusing you, I don't see how—"

"That's exactly how," Draco informed him bitterly.

Blaise looked up from his clock-looking item. "Oh..." He was shocked. "You fucked up bad, didn't you."

"It wasn't *my* fault!"

"She is your responsibility," Blaise reminded him with a shrug. "And I did warn you about her." He grinned. "You underestimated her. Yes, you certainly did."

Draco grunted. "No... I didn't..."

"Come on, Draco," Blaise said coaxingly. "Tell me how your wife outsmarted you. I want to hear it!" His eyes were glowing with anticipation. "I bet she was sexy doing it. Wasn't she?!"

"There's something *severely* wrong with you!"

"Did she hit you? Kick you? Stun you?"

"She turned into this super-hybrid ninja thing," Draco grumbled sarcastically. "What's that anyway?" He motioned to the Blaise's device.

"The best invention ever," Blaise explained, turning his attention back to it, inspecting it with heavy interest. "You'll thank me for this, mate."

"What's it do?"

Blaise rolled his eyes. "What else would it do? It *searches* for things, people included. I created the device—Shh! Just don't tell anyone about it!" he said seriously. "This is what makes me the best Snatcher of them all. This is what makes me great. It's not failed me yet."

"How's it work?" Draco eyed it, watching Blaise mess with it.

"It scans the Earth for a match of whatever I put in here." With that statement, Blaise lifted up the top half of it. It lit up with a golden light and made a small clicking noise. "It's perfect for finding a lot of things— even dragons, and pixies!" He smiled widely, proud of himself. "To find someone, I just need a bit of the person you're looking for. Preferably something that is not messy. Cleaning this thing out is a bitch."

"Oh, yes, as if I keep a jar of her fingernails in my potions lab!" Draco snarled, crossing his arms over his chest with a shake of his head. "Who does that?!"

"Merlin, you're thick today! Stress doesn't do you a lick of good, does it?" Blaise disappeared into the bedroom. "Pack yourself an overnight bag, we'll probably be gone for a few days," he called out.

Draco joined him in the bedroom, finding his friend bent over the bed, looking over it. "What in the hell are you doing now?"

Blaise reached out and plucked something off the pillow, holding it up to the light. "This'll work just fine." He showed Draco a piece of hair. The Mudblood's hair.

"Don't forget to have her things packed too," he told Draco cheerily as he set the strand of hair into the device, snapping the lid closed.

"She isn't going to need a damn thing besides a set of teeth when I find her."

"Temper, temper," Blaise tsk'ed. "See you in ten minutes." With a pop, he was gone.

Draco had one of his house-elves pack a few bags and then he shrank them down so he could store them in his pocket. Blaise arrived just as he was finishing, along with his wife.

"She's coming?" Draco questioned, as Blaise handed off a couple of shrunk bags to the dark haired woman who stuffed them into a bigger one and shouldered it.

"Just because you let your wife run off, loose in the wild, doesn't mean I have to pause *my* duty on baby making." He winked at Draco, pulling the woman to him, giving her a rough kiss on the cheek. She stiffened to his touch.

"Ready?" Blaise asked Draco, taking his wand out.

Draco saw Blaise's wife remove a wand herself, and he pointed his at her. "Blaise," he said in alarm. "Your Mudblood has a wand."

Blaise chuckled. "Well, of course she does! Now stop pointing yours at her. Get a grip, mate."

"You allow her to have one?" Draco asked in disbelief, he didn't lower his wand. Blaise had to grab a hold of it before Draco finally put it down to his side.

"Unlike *your* wife, *mine* is actually obedient. Quite boring, but just the same, she's trustworthy. Aren't you, babe?" The woman said nothing, shifting her eyes to the floor. "See?" Blaise clapped Draco on his shoulder. "She'll be no problem. She knows better, don't you, Bernice? Tell him what will happen if you're a bad wife."

Bernice's shoulders lifted in a shrug. She mumbled something,

"Ah, my meek, little shy bird." Blaise laughed. "Got her entire family locked up in my dungeons," he supplied Draco smugly. "Well, other than—who was it, Bernice, your little sister?"

A small sniff came from her. She gave a nod.

"Does wonders making someone watch while you fillet someone alive. Their screams of agony is likely the most traumatizing." He giggled in amusement. "Shame I had to kill her, she was a good fuck." Bernice let out a sob. "Oh, now, don't cry, little shy bird." Blaise pat her head, petting her hair down. "You don't have to worry about that ever again, do you? Just so long as you be a good wife."

"You really did that?" Draco asked, having a feeling he already knew the answer.

"Course I did, how else would I get her to mind me? I don't want to damage *her*. She's my wife. So I had to do it to someone else. Someone she cared for."

Draco coughed uneasily. "That's pretty sick, Blaise." Though, not unheard of in these days.

"It works though," Blaise assured him, using a soft tone, hugging his crying wife. "Shh, Bernie, you're okay. She's in a better place now. Remember how sorry I am? Oh, but you know I had to do it." He tenderly kissed the side of her head.

"Let's just go," Draco announced uncomfortably. "The sooner I find the Mudblood, the sooner this nightmare is over."

"Follow my lead," Blaise said, separating from Bernice and pushing in the knob to his device. The light went off on it. "Well, she's not anywhere around here," he informed a second later.

"You don't think?! Course she's not going to stick around!"

Blaise laughed. "Be fair, mate. This has a 2,000 mile radius."

Draco nodded. The Mudblood had traveled far.

"Did you pack plenty of energy potions? You'll need them. We have a lot of travel in our near future."

Draco nodded, having already thought of that possibility.

"Then we're off! We'll apparate to Sofia, Bulgaria first. On Vulgar, alright? That's a popular place everyone likes to hide at." Blaise then disappeared without waiting for an answer. His wife went closely after him.

Draco sighed, already tired from the event, and it was just beginning. Unlike Blaise, he didn't like the game of cat-and-mouse. There was a reason he wasn't a Snatcher.

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"Hermione," a soft, grim voice addressed her. Arms wrapped around her and she burst into sobs, clinging onto his shoulders. Squeezing her eyes shut, she buried her face into his chest. "I'm sorry," he whispered. "So sorry..."

The images were stuck into her mind. Bloodied bodies, turned inside out, horror and pain frozen on their faces. Three adults, two children.

"Hermione," Harry started, setting a hand onto her shoulder. "If you want them buried, we best do it now. We've little time..."

Hermione sniffed, clearing her nose. She pulled from Ron, and cast a spell on the dead people, wrapping them up in blankets to preserve what was little left of their bodies.

Her eyes found the red writing on the wall. The smell of blood made her physically sick. She bent over, gagging. Nothing came out. Her friends stood by her side, not knowing what to say to make her feel better. She straightened a moment later, gripping her wand and told Harry and Ron to help her levitate the bodies out of the home and into the yard where they would bury them.

The words on the wall made her tremble in grief.

A pity you weren't here to save them.

Hermione woke up, coughing and choking for air. Hardly was she ever able to get rid of that memory. She shivered. She could still smell the rotting, dead bodies, and vividly see the words written in human blood.

She rose up from the ground to her hands and knees, gagging. Just like in that horrid memory, nothing came up.

Hermione wasn't sure how many times she had apparated, having had lost count after the fifteenth casting. She faintly remembered stumbling to the ground, with just a mere idea of where she was, passing out from exhaustion.

It was morning where she was, warm and windy. How long had she slept here for? She wasn't sure. She sat down, wincing at the ache in her head. The starving pains had returned, now that she was able to focus on them, the adrenaline of her escape had wore off. After she had gone through all she had with Malfoy and the spell castings, she could only assume that the potion Malfoy had given her was some expensive energy replenisher. Hermione wasn't sure how else she had managed it, since she had been too weak to walk before.

She certainly wouldn't mind another one of them.

She almost laughed. Though, not quite in amusement. She just found it ironic. Here she had thought he had been trying to poison her when, in actual fact, he was trying to help her. And help her he did. She got his wand, attacked him with it, and made him set her free.

She didn't know why he had been trying to help her, and didn't care about it anymore. Now all Hermione had to do was make sure she was never found, so she'd never have to see him or any other Death Eater again.

Last she knew, she was in Australia. She may still be there. Warm and wet leaves were beneath her, big bushy trees stood above her, birds tweeted in the tops of them. Frogs croaked.

She was in a rain forest.

Malfoy's wand lay next to her where it had fallen when she had. Hermione snatched it up. "Where am I?" she asked it. A holographic map of the world swirled out of the end of it. A marker blinked.

Queensland, Australia.

She must had slept a while then.

Hermione stood up to her feet. She'd have to prepare herself for a stay here. And quickly. *Before* she got too weak again. She'd need food and water sources. Hermione made to find the food first, knowing it could rain any moment, meaning she could catch water in cups transfigured from rocks.

With a few Point Me spells, she was able to find some edible fruit two hours into her search, and a nearby running water source that was full of fresh, jumping fish. She immediately started casting spells to conceal her whereabouts, choosing this location to reside in.

Hermione made sure to collect a couple meals worth of food before she allowed herself to fall back to sleep. By the time she was through, she was confident that she was safe.

Ahead By Two

Draco tossed and turned, trying out several different positions to find a comfortable one to sleep in. It was impossible for him to sleep. Part of his insomnia was that he couldn't relax. They had been searching for the Mudblood for two days now, without coming across a single trace of her existence. He was beginning to doubt Blaise's device even worked. That was his least concern though.

He was more worried that she may be dead. Her health had been in critical condition, and even if she was the best and strongest witch out there, she'd not survive much longer without proper nutrition.

He punched his pillow in frustration. *If she died...*

Draco shook his head. No, he couldn't allow himself to think what would happen if they found her dead. Or... if they didn't find her at all.

He wouldn't return without her, he wouldn't be *allowed* to return without her, and he certainly wouldn't go back if she *had* died. If he approached the Dark Lord with such news, Draco would not come out of His lair alive.

Merlin, Draco hoped that bloody gadget Blaise had invented would seek her out. He was not interested in living a life on the run.

"I know, I know, little shy bird." Blaise's coaxing voice crept through the wall between them of the tent they had set up. Draco could faintly hear Bernice whimpering. "I've no choice but to do this, it is His orders," Blaise continued softly. "Now hold still, darling. Don't make me tie you down again."

Draco grumpily pounded on the wall that his bed was set up against. "Put on a silencer, will you?! I'm trying to fucking sleep!" This had happened the night before also. Blaise didn't waste any opportunity to shag his wife senseless.

And she was not quite a willing participant in the activity.

"You're just jealous, mate!" Blaise retorted. "I've got my little Mudblood here and you don't." The man refused to do what Draco asked though. Blaise thought the world should know what he was doing, and he was proud that he could tie a crying woman down and fuck her until she was unconscious.

Draco sat up and swung his legs over the side of the bed. He rubbed his eyes, tired as fuck, but had too many thoughts clouding his head. The constant apparition spells were taking a toll on his body. Energy potions could only work so much. Eventually, he would have to get some natural rest.

He stepped outside into the warm night. It was summer here in Africa, unlike back in Britain. He leaned up against the door, resting the back of his head on it, looking up at the storm

clouds off in the distance, which promised a short burst of rain. The air smelled clean. Unique and fresh. He actually quite enjoyed it. It was a wild, outdoorsy scent.

Draco clenched his teeth together, hearing Bernice's muffled protests. He crossed his arms over his chest, pressing them to him, seeking some sort of distraction from what was going on behind him in the tent.

His thoughts turned sour about his own Mudblood. He was angry with her and vowed revenge for her ruining his life, but until he had heard Blaise force himself on his wife, Draco had never given much thought about how he and the Mudblood would perform the act of mating. Obviously, he hadn't been looking forward to it, and she wouldn't either (or she wouldn't when she found out that they would have to do it anyway). It wasn't until this little hide and seek adventure took place did Draco start to seriously think about what would have to be done to successfully impregnate the Mudblood. Like Bernice, she wouldn't be a complying partner, but they'd have no choice. She would have no choice. *He* would have no choice.

As Blaise had said, the Dark Lord had made orders, and they were going to be completed. They either did them 'willingly' or they would be forced to do it. It was much more easier and less damaging to just do what He said.

In truth, when Draco wasn't blind with rage, he didn't much like causing torture. He'd been made to do it in his past and every time it had disgusted him. His cock didn't get hard like Blaise's did over the thought of raping a woman. Blaise had forcibly shagged many woman (Muggles mostly) before he tortured them to death. When Draco had to kill someone, it was usually quick and painless—unless he was ordered to do otherwise. That was why he had worked his arse off to be the best of the best. Those who were highly ranked had choice pick of the available jobs. Draco's had been potion making with Severus. It was peaceful, and required no torturing of people (there were plenty of Death Eaters who chose to torture for a living, so it wasn't like he was needed in that field). They had worked side by side for months in solitude until the whole Scoreboard rubbish had been brought into motion.

Draco had never raped a woman before, and in all seriousness, he didn't want to start now. Even with the Mudblood, who he had grown to hate with a bloody passion. He preferred to fuck those who were willing. Those who would pleasure him, and visa versa.

His mind went a little too far with that thought, picturing the Mudblood's body beneath his, placing soft, sensual kisses to her throat, nipping at her, marking her skin with dark red blotches.

He shuddered in complete disgust. How in the bloody hell was he actually going to be able to follow through with all this?! Draco really was beginning to believe that he *would* have to have someone imperius him to perform the task.

He wasn't a monster. Not quite anyway. Alright, so, *yes*, he *had* found it a delight to kill a couple of his rivals in his past, but he really was just a man who did what he had to do in order to survive in this nasty, cruel, despicable world. And his life was worth a hell of a lot more than theirs were. To himself, to society, and most importantly, to the Dark Lord.

Bernice's screams finally stopped. Either Blaise was finished with her and had put her into a peaceful slumber, or she finally depleted what little energy she had left to fight and had passed out because of it.

Draco didn't care which it was, so long as her screaming had stopped. He went back inside and got into his bed. He may have a chance to sleep now that the tent was quiet.

More than likely not, he thought bitterly as he yawned.

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Hermione found it better to sleep in the day, when it was hot (she couldn't work in the hot temperature) and less eerie. The night noises kept her awake. On the first night of her stay, she had sat with her back to a tree and had lit a fire to keep away the nocturnal animals.

As far as rainforests went though, this was probably one the safest ones. Most animals that roamed here didn't tend to purposely harm humans. She just had to watch out for the crocodiles, that was her biggest threat.

Hermione always made sure the wand she had stolen from Malfoy was with her. In her hand as she rested, or tucked away in a pocket as she worked.

She foraged leisurely in the very early mornings(starting just before dawn), quickly coming up with a routine. It took hours to gather what she needed for the day at the slow pace, but if she did too much too quick, she'd wear herself out. At ten in the morning (she'd know this by casting a quick spell), Hermione would go for a refreshing dip in the water to cool off, and then she would curl up in her makeshift bed (it was currently made of fresh leaves that she had plucked from surrounding young shrubbery), and just sleep.

She'd sleep until the birds stopped singing and the frogs would start their nightly mating croaks. That's when she'd eat what she had earlier collected, cooking the fish over a fire, and snacking on juicy, sweet fruit until the meat was cooked thoroughly.

Five days after her escape, she was starting to feel much better. Less hungry and less weak. She was getting bored with eating fish though, wishing for something different. So, Hermione went looking to see if perhaps the source of water where she got all the fish at would have some fresh water shellfish.

She cut up some raw fish and tossed it into the water little bit by little bit as bait. Shellfish (crayfish especially) could taste the meat in the water. The smaller fish came by quickly, making Hermione frown as they fought over the chunks of floating food. She did see something dark move at the bottom of the water though, getting her hopes up.

And there it was, a nice decent sized crayfish. She licked her lips, anticipating its flavour in her mouth. With a spell, she built a trap and put some bait in it. Hermione then set it in the water and walked a ways up the bank as to not disturb that particular area of the water while she fished for a couple fish for dinner that night (just in case the crayfish didn't take to her bait).

Twenty minutes later, she returned to see that her trapped had worked. Hermione smiled at her success, grateful for all the books she had read, and Muggle survivor programs she used to watch on the telly when she was young.

If it hadn't been for all those books, all that knowledge, she'd have been fucked in this situation. She may had even died the first night that she had been here, not knowing which plants were edible and which were poisonous.

She went to sleep that afternoon with a smile on her face, happy that she was as prepared as she could ever possibly be.

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"We'll try one more location before settling down for the night," Blaise informed the others.

Draco exhaled a breath. The night before, he had gotten a full night of sleep. Blaise had been too tired to even force himself on Bernice, so the tent had been silent the whole night (minus a soft snoring that had come from Blaise's side of the tent). But all this apparating had been taking a lot out of them. Especially Bernice, who Blaise had to side-by-side apparate that whole entire day, as he had been afraid she would end up splinching herself.

"Queensland, next?"

Draco's nerves were on the fritz. His limbs were shaking. "Wait," he told Blaise, taking out an energy potion. "I need a boost first."

Blaise nodded and said nothing as he and Bernice watched Draco down the potion. Draco inhaled a few times to calm his jittery nerves. A flood of calmness eased his shaking. "Alright, let's go." And Draco apparated first this time, with the other two landing gracefully next to him soon after.

"Ho, mate!" Blaise gasped out excitedly. The device in his hands was glowing. It clicked rapidly, sounding much like a sewing machine when it was being used.

Draco's eyes widened. His pulse picked up, the energy potion he had just used was doing him no good now. "We found her?!" he asked, half in relief. He also couldn't believe that she had finally been found.

Blaise didn't answer him right away, and spun around in circles. The clicking adjusted its speed to slow and very fast as he changed direction. "That way." He pointed north, finally answering Draco.

And so they walked. Blaise started talking about wards then, explaining a list of them, insisting that the Mudblood was probably using a few of them. The more complicated ones of course.

"How do you bust through them?" Draco asked when Blaise had mentioned that he'd have to break them down just as he had done before when he had first caught her a week before then.

Blaise smiled smugly. "I've got a device for that too." When the clicking slowed, Blaise explained that she was less than three miles away. He then cast a spell, gathering up debris from the ground and tossing it up into the air in the direction that they had been traveling in. The debris clung to an invisible solid structure.

A ward.

"You two rest." Blaise had Bernice hand him a shrunken bag which he released the spell on, and began digging through it. "It'll take me a while to break through this."

"How can I possibly sleep now?!" Draco demanded. "Knowing we're so close to her!"

Blaise sniffed the air. "She's not close enough for me to smell her, and I have the nose of a bloodhound, but just the same, keep your voice down, these wards don't block off noise."

"Can I help?"

"No, Draco, you'll need all the rest you can get in order to be able to seize control of her."

Draco nodded.

"Bernice, start making us sandwiches. This is going to give me an appetite."

Draco smirked, picturing the shocked look on the Mudblood's face when she would see that he had outsmarted *her* this time. In just a few 'short' hours, he'd have her back again, and when they got back to the manor, he'd have to decide a fitting punishment for her.

She would have to learn that she could never do this again.

Never.

"Let me go in first," Blaise instructed hours later, after he had announced his success with a wide grin. "She'll not recognize me until it's too late. Bernice, you'll stick by Draco until I say otherwise."

"Okay," she mumbled quietly.

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The crayfish had been so good, Hermione was in bliss. She had ate every bit of the it and the fish, swallowing it down with some juice that she had made from a mixture of fruits. She hadn't felt this happy, this content, in so long. And it was all because she had been able to eat a decent few meals.

If she was able to keep this up, she would able to put some weight back on.

Hermione settled herself against a tree, looking out into the night, slowly getting accustomed to the nightly sounds of the forest.

She heard a beastly growl, sending the hair on her skin to stand. That was the first time she ever heard a growl in this forest. She readied Malfoy's wand. Her eyes searched the night, looking for the animal that the growl belonged to. She sat as still as she could, not wanting to spook the wild creature.

It appeared then, strutting out from the trees and into her open space of land that she had made into her own. A timber wolf bared its teeth at her, giving her a warning. She sat in terror, watching it stop at the fire, licking at the bones of the fish she had just finished. It then howled up at the sky, long and loud, and lowered its head at her, looking her in the eye, almost daring her to move.

It was at that moment Hermione came to her senses, realizing that this creature was not native to this part of the world. She raised Malfoy's wand, but before she could cast a spell, the beast leapt at her and tackled her, snapping its jaw and growling at her. It bit at the wand she held, and ripped it from her hand. Hermione yelped in fear, and started trying to kick and push the wolf off her. Her attempts were useless. It touched its nose to hers, growling low. Its hot, foul breath fogged her face, making her cough. She shrieked out as it stuck out its slimy tongue and slid it across her cheek, tasting her.

"Thank you, Blaise. That's quite enough."

Everything happened so fast that it was a blur. The wolf transfigured into a human form.

Blaise Zabini.

He sat atop of her, smirking like a chester cat. "Had you scared for a second there, didn't I, sexy thing? Thought I was going to eat your face off, you did."

Malfoy stood above her, her head between his feet. His face cold as stone.

He found me...

How?

Oh, God. She about whimpered, but wouldn't give herself up to him. Hermione squirmed underneath Zabini, who let out a moan of delight.

"Oh, little lioness, how good that feels. Keep that up, and it won't just be my saliva on your face."

Hermione's eyes widened when she clued in on what he meant. She went still, breathing slow and deep.

"Get off her, Blaise," Malfoy snarled. "She's mine to deal with."

Zabini poked out his bottom lip and backed up onto his feet where he stood. "Well, I suppose our journey is through, then."

"Not until we get back." Malfoy bent down and snatched a handful of Hermione's hair, yanking her up from the ground.

"Malfoy!" she shrieked out in anger and pain. "I told you I'd kill you if I saw you again!" She swung a fist at him, hitting him in the side of his head.

"Fucking Mudblood!" Hermione was knocked to the ground, her lip seared in pain from where he had backhanded her.

"Oi, Draco—"

"Not a word from you, Blaise," Draco warned darkly, pointing his wand at the dark skinned man. "Don't you even think about lecturing me on this subject, not after what you've done to your own Mudblood."

It was at that moment Hermione noticed there was a fourth person there. A tiny woman who stood awkwardly off at the side.

"I've no choice—"

"Well, neither do I!"

Hermione took this moment of Malfoy's outburst to fling a kick at him, bringing him down to his knees in pain. "Fuck!" he gasped, making Zabini burst out laughing.

"Mate, she may have just damaged any potential chance of you siring an heir!"

Draco roared in rage and lunged toward Hermione, but she kicked at his face, connecting it with both feet. Zabini laughed even more. His wand was drawn, but he was in tears, wheezing with laughter. "You're getting your arse kicked by your Mudblood, Draco!"

"Shut it and help me!"

"Bloody hell, it's more fun watching her beat the snot out of you!"

"The Dark Lord, you idiot!" Malfoy hissed, and attempted to attack Hermione again. She blocked his own kick, shoving his foot from her. He raised his wand, panting, but he didn't do anything. Hermione sensed something was wrong with him.

Besides the blood that was dripping from his nose, that is.

Zabini's face went to complete seriousness at Malfoy's reminding. "Back to work then." He flicked his wand and Hermione's arms flew to the sides of her body and she was pushed to the ground on her back. She noticed right away that his spell was not as strong as Malfoy's had been the last time she had been attacked with this very spell.

Malfoy held onto his nose and positioned himself above her, straddling her. "You'll pay for making me bleed," he told her calmly, touching his wand to her forehead.

She knew it was true. Seeing Malfoy calm and angry at the same time was not a good thing. She closed her eyes, tuning out Malfoy and Zabini's plans on what to do for that night, as, apparently, neither of them were in any shape to apparate anywhere.

Hermione quickly worked at breaking Zabini's spell off, and when she did, she stayed put, having a plan of her own. The wand that she had stolen from Malfoy lay unnoticed near her, completely forgotten by the wizards.

"Alright." Malfoy sighed regretfully. "We've really no choice, I guess. Let's set up the bloody tent." He shifted off Hermione, his hand snagging a handful of her hair, pulling her up with him. He wasn't paying her any attention, too arrogant in thinking he had control.

She took that moment to grab the wand from the ground as she was being brought to her feet. She quickly blasted Malfoy twenty feet from her, and hastily did the same with Zabini, not even giving him a chance to react.

"You have two seconds to decide if you want to come with me or not!" Hermione offered to the woman who had been magically assisting the wizards with the tent.

She pointed her wand at Hermione. "I can't let you go."

Hermione needed to hear no more. She apparated away. Far away.

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"*FUCK!*" bellowed Draco when Bernice released he and Blaise from the Mudblood's charms. He stomped at the ground in frustration. "This can't be happening!"

"I'm sorry, Blaise—I tried, but she—"

"It's okay, shy bird," Blaise murmured, pulling Bernice into a hug. "You did more than I thought you would ever be capable of up against her."

Draco shook his head. "*Un-fucking-believable!*" He began laughing. It wasn't funny, but he just couldn't stop himself from doing it.

She promised she would kill him if she saw him again, and it was beginning to look like she would be the cause of his death. Only it wouldn't come from *her* magic.

"Least there's no doubt that she's alive now," Blaise commented. "Stronger than ever though."

Draco pulled at his hair. He had been *so* fucking close!

"We'll have to do better next time," Blaise advised simply, resuming in putting up the tent. They were not in the condition to apparate anytime soon. Blaise laughed. "She's ahead by two, Draco. Three if you count that bloody nose!"

"Fucking shut your hole, or I will!"

Draco was *not* in the mood for his friend's jokes. His life was at stake here!

When Negotiations Are Made

Hermione woke up, lightly rubbing at the ache at the back of her head. It took her a moment to remember why it hurt so much.

Malfoy, she thought bitterly, gritting her teeth at the memory of his atrocious behavior to her. He had yanked at her hair, making that particular area (and one other) of her head remarkably sore with pain. It was a wonder that she wasn't bald in those places, with as rough as he had been.

She immediately forgot about him though, hearing voices. The ones (in which she had just now came into realization) that had awoken her from her slumber. The voices were hushed, muffled by a wall. She sat up and looked confusingly around.

Hermione was in a bed, tightly covered with several mismatched, worn out looking blankets. The room she was in was a tiny one. A closet was more of a fitting description of it. She didn't think a second bed would fit into the room, no matter how much one tried.

At the foot of the bed was a telly stand with a telly on it. Beneath it was a VCR. Above the telly was a shelf of VHSs that were stacked up all the way up to the ceiling.

Off to the immediate right of her was a tall dresser. Hermione's eyes went straight to a photo that was propped up on it, needing to get a sense of the people she was likely about to come face to face with. It was a picture of a shirtless, bulky man with a large tattoo of a dragon on his left shoulder. The dark hair on his head was standing up in every which direction, looking much like black flames of fire. He had thick eyebrows, a scruffy, thin beard, and a matching mustache. He wasn't smiling, but his shining, friendly deep-chocolate eyes gave away that he was amused at the time that the photo had been taken. He was an awfully good looking man, appearing just a bit older than Hermione by possibly five or six years.

On the other side of the bed was a night table with a short lamp and a box of tissues. The room was bare and tidy besides that.

She flipped the blankets off her and got off the bed, curious about the voices, but slightly wary of where she was and who these people were. After her recent past, she wasn't sure what was going on. The last she remembered was using every ounce of energy to put a body of water between her and Malfoy. It had drained her completely. She couldn't even remember the terrain she had landed on.

She must have fainted as soon as the spell dropped her.

Hermione felt her body for any sign of splinching, but besides her cut lip, from where Malfoy had smacked her, and the two sores on her head, she was otherwise fine.

She stood by the door, gathering up her nerve to open it, hand hovering just above the handle. Were they Muggles or Wizards?

Wait...

Where was Malfoy's wand? By her previous body patting, she knew it wasn't on her. She swallowed hard. They had taken the wand from her.

But looking back at the photo on the dresser, she couldn't believe the man in it was an unfriendly one. He just didn't have that look to him. She had come across very evil people since the war had started. Hermione had learned many things from the war. One of them was she had this incredible talent of reading people at just the slightest glance of them, knowing if they could be trusted or not. It was that, or it was possible that terrible people had a certain look to them. Either way, the man in the photo didn't have that sort of look to him. She had never met him before, but those kind, beautiful eyes were not of a man who would purposely hurt a person just for their amusement and/or gain.

But was that the picture of one of the people in this same structure that she was also in? Or was it of a family member? A friend?

She took a deep breath.

There was only one way to find out. Who ever they were, they couldn't be worse than the monsters back at the place she used to call her homeland.

The door creaked open, making her wince and pause to listen. Her pulse picked up as the voices instantly stopped talking. Hermione didn't step out of the room, waiting to see what was going to happen next. She had nowhere to go, stationed at the dead end of a hallway that had two other doors before it opened out into a living room. The bedroom she was in had no window, so all she would be able to do was barricade herself in the room should anyone pose a threat.

And a defensive front only ever lasted so long. Another thing the war had taught her.

She was a sitting duck, but her mind argued with her that if they had intended any harm on her, it was most likely that they would have done it already.

Malfoy hadn't even waited a minute before he had harmed her back at the Ministry—but of course, Hermione reasoned with herself, she *had* attacked him first. He was a murderer though. He murdered Dumbledore. And many others. The list of people who had fallen victim to him was a long one. And she refused to be placed on it.

Why had he gone after her anyway? She wasn't worth anything to him. Not in his eyes. So why would he even bother with a Mudblood 'slave'? One that he honestly had no use for. One that he absolutely hated with a passion.

Well, she hated him too, so fair was fair. The man was an evil, power seeking, psycho, and so were all his friends.

"Heya!"

Hermione jumped a mile. Her mind had been so absorbed in her thoughts that she failed to notice the large body at the opposite end of the hall way. She exhaled in relief. The same man who was in the photo had greeted her. And he was much more good looking in real life. His skinned wasn't so sun kissed (because of the winter weather, Hermione guessed), but the overly wide smile stretched across the lower half of his face nearly made her knees give out.

"Hi," she responded quietly, giving him her own smile.

"Bout time you woke up..." His eyes fell down to her left hand, making Hermione's eyes follow his.

The ring...!

Was *that* how Malfoy had found her?!

"My name's Kota," the handsome man continued. His voice sounded far away though. Hermione barely heard him. Her breathing had picked up. Panic struck her hard. If that was how Malfoy had found her, she really couldn't get away! She pulled at the ring, knowing that she couldn't take it off, but she just had to. She *had* to! He'd come back! What then?! What did he want with her?! Why did he care that she was gone?! He vowed revenge, and if he managed to capture her, he'd definitely get it!

"Hey, hey, hey!" Kota's voice suddenly was saying. He was near her now, patting her shoulder. Mucus had filled her nose, draining into her mouth. She choked on it, sobbing uncontrollably. Her face felt hot with tears. She sucked the nasty, thick nasal fluid down her throat. She needed to breathe slow, she couldn't lose it completely. Not in front of this man.

"Settle down. It's alright," he said coaxingly. "You're safe. He'll never hurt you again."

She looked up at him, studying him. "How do you—"

"The fat lip..." he cut her off, explaining his knowing. "Is it stuck?" Kota pointed to the ring. "Let me see if I can help get it off." He leaned away from her for a split second, digging into one of the many pockets of the pants he was wearing. He brought up a wand.

So he was a wizard!

"You can't," Hermione regrettably informed him as he attempted to remove the ring with a spell that only made her finger feel like it had been dipped in warm liquid cooking oil. Her eyes unfocused as her mind went into deep thought. The simple, silver ring lingered in her blurry vision.

There was really no escape, was there? Malfoy had broken through her protective wards back in Australia, obviously able to somehow know she had been there.

But Zabini had too. That night of the fire. How had Zabini found her to begin with?

Zabini had been with Malfoy the last time she had seen him... Maybe it wasn't Malfoy who had broken through her wards. Perhaps it was Zabini. He may have been some sort of ward buster.

If that was the case, she really had no chance... She'd be world hopping for the rest of her life, always looking over her shoulder, wondering if Malfoy was right behind her or not.

"Is it spelled on?" Kota was asking. He looked at her, his face telling her that he didn't like where this topic was going. "We Americans don't perform such marriage bonds—"

"*MARRIAGE?!*" Hermione shrieked. "This is not a *wedding* ring!" *Good God!* Her face flushed with embarrassment at the mere subject of it. Then she laughed. "Married to Malfoy?! Ha! No," she said the last word firmly, regaining her posture. "I don't really know what this ring is, but it's *not* a wedding ring—for *sure*!"

Kota's face lightened some. He smiled. "Good. You are still Miss Granger then?"

"You know my name?" She gaped at him. If it wasn't for his accent, she'd think she was still in Britain. How far had her infamy traveled?

"Yeah, you were all over the WizardNet a couple years ago. The most wanted witch of Britain."

"WizardNet?"

Kota grinned and turned around, looking back. "Come on!" He waved for her to follow him. "I'll tell ya all about it while we eat. Louella has cooked us up all a pile of biscuits and gravy!"

Louella, as it turned out, was Kota's lifelong friend. Both were Muggleborns, and had grew up in the same neighborhood, and even gone to the same school together. She was a tiny woman with thick glasses. She had dark blue eyes, and very long, loose brunette hair.

Apparently, there were many more Muggleborns they were friends with, as Kota had formed a group in school called "United Muggleborns Club", after learning about the blood type segregation of his wizardry school when he had first started attending it. It was not too different than what had gone on at Hogwarts, except there were no houses in their school that separated them. Only blood types. Their prejudice had not lead to a war though. Unlike what had happened in Britain.

The American wizards were all bitter toward any other blood besides their own type. Even when Hermione explained that she had met some very nice Purebloods. She quickly changed the subject when they started in on how well 'her' people got along, ending up in the war. The Muggleborns losing.

Hermione wanted to know how they knew of her. So, she asked them about that.

Louella gave her an adoring smile. She had told Hermione earlier that she was a big fan of hers, commenting on her bravery and smarts in evading Lord Voldemort—the Americans did not seem to fear saying his name. They took it an act of defiance, and Hermione guessed that they said it as often as they could.

Harry had been the same way.

Hermione blinked back tears, taking a sip of the horrid tasting tea that had been given to her, after Louella mentioned that she knew how much the British loved their tea. It tasted like dirt, and was gritty, but she politely drank it anyway. It was better than nothing. After all, she had had the misfortune to know this single-handedly.

She listened, only half interested as Louella and Kota explained what the WizardsNet was: a website on the Muggle Internet for reporting news of the magical world.

"It started in '96," Kota explained. "Was just a one page media source at the time. It was founded by a No-Maj mother—that's what we call Muggles here—of a half-blood son that had been a transfer student at Durmstrang. She wanted everyone to know what was going on there, warning what was possibly to come here—what was to come everywhere. Naturally, we geared up and began practicing more advanced spells, preparing to battle, keeping close track of the news. Some even relocated there, acting as reporters. The website grew very popular shortly."

Hermione hadn't owned a Muggle computer to had known any of this, having been too busy doing exactly what most of the wizards in America had been doing: preparing for war.

"War never came here though," Kota told Hermione. "Our President set up some sort of negotiation with your new leader as soon as it was declared that he had won. I'm not all too sure what it was, it was never said, but President Mizzdole has our best interest at heart. I trust him completely. He did the right thing. Lord Voldemort is a merciless bastard."

Hermione pressed her lips together, agreeing with him, but not saying so.

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"My Lord, you've an owl from Mizzdole," His servant informed him. Lord Voldemort never really much liked owls, but that was perfectly alright. He had a servant who managed an owlery, and He made good use of it.

He wondered what the American President of Magical People of the United States of America would want. It better be important. Lord Voldemort wasn't one to like chitchat, and so far, Mizzdole had taken His threat seriously. If the man buggered up, he'd take over that country too.

Coward bastard, that Mizzdole wizard was. More concerned with how his people would view him than anything else.

Unlike the American Muggles, the American Wizards did not get excited over participating in a war. They would rather not get involved. They knew they would lose though. Their president also knew they would lose.

And if Lord Voldemort had known ahead of time about the issue He would have with His Pureblood witches, He would have negotiated for a few American ones. Maybe He could still do that and breed them with some half-bloods.

That thought left his mind as he read the letter. A grin split his face in half. Often enough, His Muggleborns had tried escaping to America, part of the deal Lord Voldemort had made with Mizzdole was to be notified *immediately* when this was brought to the American Wizard Government.

That's how He had a lot of them in custody, thanks to that American coward. His people would flip their lids if they had known such a thing.

Lord Voldemort traced His Dark Mark on his forearm. The air sucked from his lungs, and he felt like He was being squished into a tiny box. The pain didn't phase him a bit. He landed near three bodies, all of them instantly started quivering in His presence.

He gave him no warning. He was quite upset to have been interrupted, to have been alerted by Mizzdole where Draco's Mudblood wife was, and frankly, He was angry that His servant had not thoroughly listened to Him, knowing that the man's arrogance was the reason that Mudblood had even escaped in the first place.

He didn't allow His son to scream for too long, unwilling to damage him. He was precious. He was His. His best mating male. His best Pureblood. But little, haughty Draco still needed to learn things. Most importantly, how to handle his wife. She was special. She had opened His eyes. That tiny, fragile, magnificent Mudblood had mildly changed his views on one simple thing.

Love.

It wasn't as useless as He had first thought. Perhaps useless for *Him*, but maybe not so much for His servants. He had seen love work a few times over, but never like she had shown Him.

With what He witnessed that she could do for a Mudblood boy that she was not even connected by blood with, He wondered what powers she could possess when it came to her own children. Her own blood.

He hated that a Mudblood had so much magical power. But He couldn't deny it. He also knew that it was only because of love. For whatever foolish reason she had, that Mudblood loved that useless, little nit.

Her children would be greatly protected. *His* future children would be protected for as long as she was around.

Lord Voldemort didn't have to like it, but she was important, and little Draco needed to understand this. He just knew that *telling* him was pointless. The pompous arse would have to learn it on his own.

There's nothing wrong with a little nudge though, He thought, sending the feeling of spikes being nailed into the blond wizard's flesh a second time. Draco screamed highly, sounding much like a woman. Lord Voldemort almost smiled. He did like a good torture session.

He needed to be careful with His most faithful servant of breeding age though. His children were going to be incredible.

And while Draco did very much hate His gift to him, Lord Voldemort knew he would do whatever it took to get the Mudblood back. In time, Draco would learn to appreciate his wife, because her children, Draco's heirs, will be the most grand of them all. And He couldn't wait. They would help Him. They would *all* help Him.

Eventually, He was going to rule the entire world. And now that He was immortal, He had all the time in the world to make it happen.

"Your wife is in America," Lord Voldemort supplied the panting Draco. The wizard lay there at the ground of His feet, with his eyes shut. He had no doubt that His servant did this so He would not have to see the cold glare of him for what He had done to him. "State of Kansas. Wamego. Apparition Point US KS21546. I want you both back at my lair no later than three days from now. I best not have to meet either of you before then."

He left them then, but not before giving Blaise's wife a sinister smile. He had just a mere feeling that the Zabini heir was growing inside her at this very moment.

It was all falling into place, but what Lord Voldemort really was anxious for was the Malfoy heir. *That* child would greatly secure the future.

Not that He was going to fail. No, with or without a Malfoy heir, He would succeed. But just one Malfoy heir would quicken His take over. And anymore than that, would be a bonus.

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Draco shook violently, his nerves were still all wonky from the Dark Lord's crucio. Blaise had given him some potions to help, but they were useless. It usually took nearly two days to recover from The Dark Lord's torture spells.

And he didn't have that kind of time. Draco had no choice though. He would have to dig deeper for any sort of energy in him.

If he wanted to live, that was.

He was almost reconsidering how much his life was worth living. His parents were gone, and he was married to an insufferable, Mudblood bitch. Really, was he *doomed* to have a shitty life? It certainly looked that way.

They made the apparition, Draco threw up upon landing. His head was pounding. He felt dirty. His body trembled in weakness. He kept going though. He had no choice.

She would pay, his mind repeated. It was the only thing that kept him going. He'd make her scream, he'd make her beg, and in the end, she was going to worship him.

If he was stuck with her, she would be stuck with *him*. He would teach her. And she was going to be made to *enjoy* it.

"Mr. Malfoy, right?" A wizard greeted him at the building they had arrived just outside of. He stood straight, and spoke with importance, as if he was Mizzdole's main body guard—which

he wasn't. The man only *wished* was. "President Mizzdole has said to expect you. You are here to fetch your fugitive?"

"Yes, where is she?!" Draco demanded, gripping his wand. His anger fueled him. If he hadn't been so livid, he probably would not have been able to apparate several thousands miles across the ocean.

"We are sending someone to retrieve her now—"

"No, you tell me where she is! I demand of you!" Draco raised his wand, pointing it to the man's neck. Blaise followed his lead, and gestured for Bernice to do the same.

The man cleared his throat uneasily. "Alright, I will, just lower your wand, please, sir!"

"Not until you show me where my Mudblood is," Draco growled threateningly.

It's Not Because I Want You

Louella and Kota had encouraged Hermione to officially join their Muggleborn club. She didn't believe in blood separation though.

"Well, all Muggleborns are members automatically," Kota explained. "We were just hoping that you would stick around and show your face a little. The other official members would love to meet you."

Hermione nodded. "If the opportunity arises, fine." She looked down at the ring on her finger, fiddling with it. She bit her lip. Maybe she shouldn't be here. It would bring danger to these kind people.

"Listen..." she spoke up after dinner. "I'm very thankful for your hospitality, I've not met such friendly people in ages. But if I stay here, I'll be putting you in danger. The man that's after me, he's not a very nice one, and I think he's finding me through this—" Hermione held up her hand, showing them the ring.

"Hermione," Louella said slowly, meeting Kota's eyes seriously. "That ring doesn't have a tracker in it."

"It... doesn't...?" Hermione stared at it. "How can you be so sure?"

Louella took a sip from her cup of coffee. "I've been studying magical jewelry since eighth grade. That ring there is protecting something."

Protecting...

What could it possibly be protecting...? *Malfoy* put it on her. He wouldn't protect her... Would he...?

She shook her head in disbelief. "No, the bastard that put this on me would *not* concern himself with me! He told me that I was his slave after putting it on. Now that I think about it, I wouldn't doubt that this is some binding object, sealing me to him. He found me after I had escaped—he and his friend—and broke through my wards. If this isn't some sort of tracking device, *how* could they have found me? I was concealed by magic!"

Kota shrugged. "I've learned that there is always a way to crack through a spell, to cancel it, to stop it. *Every* charm, hex, and curse has a counter to it."

"And what about the killing curse?! It's unblockable, you do know that, right?"

Louella shifted in her seat. The two friends were seemingly having a conversation with their eyes alone.

"Not necessarily..." Kota finally answered.

"No, don't give me that." Hermione shook her head. "The killing curse can not be blocked."

"Well, I've seen it done," Louella told her. "With my own eyes."

"Me too," Kota added. "In a couple different ways actually. Surely, you can't forget Harry Potter—"

"That *wasn't* a block!" Hermione insisted. Tears stung her eyes. She pressed her fingers to them, not allowing herself to cry. "He was actually hit with the curse."

"In all the dueling you've been in, you've never seen someone block a killing curse?"

"I wasn't much paying attention, I was very much concerned in keeping alive!" Hermione's snapping remark made the two Americans sit back in their seats, silent, afraid to say anything more that would offend her. "I was taught," she began softly. "That it was impossible to block it. No shield could, and no spell of protection."

"There has been new discoveries made," Kota gently explained. "New techniques. And new studies. One very special one was started *because* of your friend. A theory had been made when it first happened. It has been recently proved true."

"And..." Louella pointed at Hermione's ring. "I think what you're wearing is a piece of that discovery."

"Are you telling me that *this* here will protect me from the killing curse?!"

"I think so," Louella answered seriously. "I can't quite tell, but it is protecting you from some sort of high amount of offensive curse."

No. Hermione wouldn't believe it. Why would Malfoy put such a thing on her? Why wouldn't he want her dead? Why would he *protect* her?

This news was too much. She stood up, fanning her face with a hand. The threat to faint was upon her. Her vision disappeared. Her mind clouded with millions of questions, and none of them had any answers.

It just couldn't be...! He wouldn't...! Malfoy would *never* do such a thing!

Then all at once, she was calm again. Kota and Louella stood at each of her sides, holding her up.

"You alright, Hermione?" Kota asked in worry. "Do you need another sip, girl?" He held up a purple potion with black speckles swirling around it.

"I'm fine," she whispered dismissively, still thinking about the news of the ring.

Is Malfoy actually protecting me from something? she asked herself. From what? Could it be the killing curse? Did he really not want her dead and had made proper precautions to prevent him from doing it, should he lose his temper?

And if he didn't want her dead, *what* did he want her for? To torture her?

She needed answers. She dearly needed answers. Her sensible mind tried telling her that it really didn't matter, but her curiosity always over powered her sense of mind.

"I have to go," she said abruptly. "Where's the wand that I came with?"

"Under the pillow in charmed room— why do you got to go?! You just got here!" Kota followed her to the room she had woken up in, with Louella close behind him.

"I can't be around you. Malfoy will find me, and he'll hurt you—"

"We know how to fight," Louella assured her.

"Yeah, he won't take you from us! Muggleborns unite!" Kota thrust his wand up toward the ceiling meaningfully.

"No, he'll *kill* you, okay?! That's what Death Eaters do! Especially with those who are close to me. He'll not hesitate. And... and..." Her voice went stale, sending Louella a look. "His friend is with him," she managed to whisper. "He's a Snatcher, and a rapist. He'll kill you too..." Hermione looked away uncomfortably, finding the wand under the pillow where Kota had said it would be.

"You are one of us, Hermione," Kota said firmly.

Louella nodded. "We're not going to allow some Pureblood piece of shit take you back there."

"You deserve a better life."

Hermione shook her head. "I'm not staying. I'm—"

She was interrupted by a knock at the door. "This is the WLE, Mr. Lambert," a voice of a male echoed throughout the home. "Open this door, or I'll be forced to break it down!"

"Wizard Law Enforcement," Kota noted grimly. "Dewberry is a fucking jackass. Let me get rid of him."

"Wonder what he wants," Louella spoke softly, following a stalking Kota out of the room.

"Who knows with that lump of goblin turd!"

Hermione stopped at the end of the wall in time to see Kota throw the door open, growling, "What do you want, Dewberry?"

The man he addressed angrily was short. Shorter than even Hermione. His dark blond hair was combed back, looking wet and slick— likely some sort of glamour spell. He wore yellow and white fancy official looking clothes, and had his wand drawn out, pointing it directly at Kota.

"Harbouring a fugitive, huh, Lambert?" He was giddy. "Oh, that'll give you a month in prison. Hands up, you worthless sack of—"

He was stopped suddenly, gasping on his last word, flying forward, and tumbling to the ground.

"Get out of the way, you thick yank!"

Hermione's heart leapt into her throat. Just as she foresaw, Malfoy had found her again. He hadn't seen her yet, too busy kicking the WLE member out of the way of the door. She ducked behind the wall.

"Mr. Malfoy, that is a National offense—"

"Just shut your face, you whining, little, ninny," another voice warned darkly.

Zabini's.

"Where's the Mudblood?!" Malfoy demanded to no one in particular.

Kota laughed. "Who the fuck are you to enter my home? Some limey bastard, that's for sure." He blocked Malfoy's spell, sending a hex back at him. "To the room, quickly," he told Louella and they took off.

"Blaise!"

Thudding following them as Hermione ran, leading the way to the room they were in just before this all took place. They piled in, breathing hard, and Kota slammed the door just as Zabini reached it.

"We've only come for you, Mudblood," Zabini said gently, as if he they weren't enemies. "We'll spare these Americans if you freely come. Promise."

"Let me out," Hermione stepped up to Kota. He refused to move. "They'll *kill* you," she told him.

He shook his head, smirking. "This is a special room. Come on!" He then flipped the bed up easily, crashing it up against the night stand. There was a trapdoor under it. "I always wondered if we'd ever need this." He pulled the trapdoor up, revealing a case of stairs. Below was brightly lit with a yellow, welcoming glow.

"And I had hoped we wouldn't!" Louella cried.

"It'll be alright," Kota held out his hand for her to begin descending the stairs.

Hermione jumped at the harsh pounding that was now starting at the door. Malfoy was bellowing and making horrid threats to her.

"You think that's really going to get her to come out?!" Zabini demanded.

"Just fucking break through it already, Blaise!"

"I'm trying, but you're not helping by making all that ruckus!"

"He's going to bust through that," Hermione warned Kota. "And when he does, they'll kill you. Go without me!"

"Do you think they'll *really* spare us anyway?" Kota asked wisely. "As soon as you open that door, we're exposed to them. We'll protect you, Hermione. We're your friends now. You're our family. You can only trust us now. Forget them. You know they are bastards. Don't believe them. Hermione, don't...!"

At the last minute, she hurled down the stairs. "Hurry!" she screamed up at him.

"I'm coming!" Kota cast a few spells, setting the bed back down where it had been. The trap door was concealed.

"They can't get us here, only Muggleborns can see the door." Kota assured Hermione through heavy breathing. He set a hand onto her shoulder. "Muggleborns unite." He gave her a smile.

Hermione hoped he was right, but after all that she had been through so far, she couldn't believe him.

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Draco plowed past Blaise once the charm on the door had been released. The room was empty of people. His pulse slowed in terror. His breathing stopped. It couldn't be... How had she done it again? His hope was shattered, and he nearly felt like crying.

He may as well just be dead, because he was as good as dead. When the Dark Lord would hear about this fail, he'd be killed.

He pressed a hand up to his neck, his pulse was slow, but harsh. Draco didn't want to die. He didn't...

He was a failure. If his father were alive right now, he'd be disappointed. His mother would be shaking her head, unbelieving that he could not do this one *simple* job.

Killing Dumbledore had been *much* easier than this! That was just crazy to think about!

"Blaise...?"

"Not now, my sweet Bernie, we're thinking..." Blaise softly scolded. "I still smell her, mate." He stuck his nose in the air, licking his lips. "Her sweet sweat is near."

Draco grunted. "Maybe it's just a leftover scent."

"I know the difference— Bernice, what are you doing?!" The woman was trying to lift the bed up.

"There's a door under the bed," she informed, panting.

Both wizards flew to her side. In unison they flipped the bed onto its side. The floor was bare besides a small layer of... dust... Draco looked closer at it. The dust had been disturbed.

Shoe prints...

"There's nothing here but dust," Blaise told Bernice who was pointing to a spot on the floor.

"No, there is door! Can't you see it?!"

Blaise cupped his wife's cheek. "I know this must all be so hard for you, darling, and I know you're so tired, and would just like to go home. I'm sorry I had to bring you along for this, but there is no door."

Bernice pushed his hand away and got down on her hands and knees, making Blaise sigh.

"Get up, Bernie," he ordered. "You're delusional right now. You lack sleep."

"It's here!" she exclaimed. "I see it!" She was feeling her hands around the floor until she pulled at something that Draco couldn't see, and a door came into view as she lifted it up.

"She's down there!" Draco said in excitement, arming himself. He could almost kiss Bernice!

Draco set a hand to Blaise's chest, stopping him from going down. "Let me go first. She's mine." His friend nodded and gestured for his wife to step out of the way.

Draco's heart was anxiously pounding with each step he took. They were trapped now. *She* was trapped. He had her. The American officers had blocked anyone from being able to apparate. The Mudblood had literally no bloody escape.

He had won. *Finally.*

There was a door at the bottom of the staircase. Draco charmed the sound of the other side of the door to repeat everything that was said so he could hear what was going on, analyzing his best moment to attack.

I must be patient and strategic about this. She cannot get away this time. I will not allow her to. I cannot allow it to happen. We must return if we're going to survive this mess.

Two people were talking, but neither was the Mudblood. He almost thought she *had* somehow gotten away until the male American asked, "Hermione, do you want some tea? It'll help you relax."

Draco smirked, hearing her quiet, quivering voice. She was frightened. Good. She *should* be afraid of what was going to happen when she was caught. Fucking bitch caused him so much trouble!

"I told you, Hermione, they can't find us here. Stop worrying."

"He's not going to stop looking for me, Kota..."

Draco narrowed his eyes. How would she even know *that*!?

Maybe it was because he had spent nearly a week searching for her. She was probably wondering why. Likely having kittens trying to figure out why he would even waste his time on her.

Because if you die, so do I, you little bitch.

And there was also the fact that the Dark Lord had commanded that they breed, like they were mere house-elves, paired for genetics only—not that Draco already hadn't been raised as such, but he had expected to mate with a Pureblood woman who would literally consider him as her master, for gracing her with such a wonderful life. Never had he planned to marry some filthy woman who didn't deserve what he had to offer. Especially one who wouldn't *want* anything to do with him.

Before the scoreboard, before the war had officially started, he had pictured a few worthy women to be his wife. All would have accepted his hand willingly and gladly. Draco knew it was solely because of his status and wealth, but he had grown up knowing nothing else. His parents' marriage had been arranged, securing both their families fortunes, and they had became good friends, eventually growing into something more as that friendship strengthened. By the time they had breathed their final breath, they had loved each other so much, that they would have each sold their soul for the other to live.

It was something Draco could only wish for. He was not going to ever have that with the Mudblood he had been paired with. Some marriages were better than others, and his was going to be one of the worse ones.

He was tired of waiting. It was time to claim his control of her again. Draco tapped his wand to the door. "We found you, Mudblood. Your friend's *brilliant* plan didn't work. I must ask, how do you always manage to make friends with people who are so bloody thick with stupidity?!" Silence followed his announcement. He didn't even hear whispering. "What are you going to do now?" he asked her tauntingly. "We both know you can't escape."

"What do you want me for, Malfoy?" She was just on the other side of the door, and if it were open, he could have easily snatched her neck and pulled her to him. "What is it that you really want?"

Freedom.

But that would never come. The next thing on the list would be a life of no torture. And if he did exactly what he was told, never failing, he'd be safe from it, tucked away deep in the dungeons of his Manor, making potions all day.

He didn't verbally answer her question. "I thought Gryffindors were supposed to be brave. All you've done is hide and run." He waited for her to reply. But it didn't come.

Slowly, the door cracked open and the Americans began griping at the Mudblood who had done it. All Draco saw was an eye as she peeked out. "I have a wand," she warned him. "I could kill you."

"It'll serve you no use— unless you plan to kill us all: Blaise, his wife, and me. That's a lot of killing, Mudblood. Are you up for that? You still have a promise to fulfill to me, but you would have done that already if you could have, huh? You're no *killer*, are you... Granger?" He had purposely used her former surname. Maybe if he handled her a little gentler, she'd not fight him so much. He was tired, and needed rest. He had little energy, and didn't want to waste it on fighting her. Especially if it would give her the chance of escaping again.

"What do you want?" she repeated. She sounded depleted. Draco didn't doubt that she was as worn out from this all as he was, wanting it to finally end. "Why have you bothered yourself, risked death, to get me?" This lack of knowledge was poking at her. He had been right earlier to assume that she worried herself over unanswered questions.

"We both will die if we are not in Britain by Friday," he told her the truth of it.

"But why? *Why* me?"

"Hermione, move out of the way, and I'll take care of the Pureblood scum for you!"

Draco stepped closer to the door, his toes touched it. His face was less than an inch from the little bit of hers that was shown through the crack. "Do you want them dead?" he asked her darkly. His lips twitched smugly at the furrow of her brow.

"I don't want anyone dead."

He scoffed. "Typical bloody Gryffindor. It's why your side lost. You peace loving idiots."

"Your side lost many people too..." she quietly pointed out.

"Look, you're coming with me either way. Give yourself up, without a fucking fight, and I'll let their pathetic government servants handle them. But if I have to get dirty, I swear to you, the blood of your new friends will be on you, and you alone." He then lowered his voice for an eerie effect. "What do you think Blaise is going to do to the female one? I hear he likes it doggy style."

The little amount of face Draco could see of the Mudblood's had paled. She shifted her weight, thinking. "I want answers," she told him firmly. "I want to know why you put this ring on me."

"You're in no position to bargain, Granger. Surrender now, or your friends die. It's just that simple."

The Mudblood stiffened. "We'll fight you then."

Draco laughed. "Don't be ridiculous. Why risk their innocent lives? Are *you* worth *theirs*? Are you worth *two* of them? Maybe you want to hear them scream. Perhaps you want to

watch their rape and torture? Blaise! Your assistance is needed! It's time for some Death Eater fun!"

The Mudblood swung the door open and he was faced with three armed people. But the numbers were evened once Blaise and his wife joined him. Spells went flying. Blocks, dodges, and lunges were made. There were a few grunts of pain. Someone shrieked.

Draco's main target was the Mudblood, who seemed to think the same with him. They hurled spells one after another, neither getting a proper, decent hit in. She was a tough opponent, he'd admit. Like no other.

The scream of the American woman caught her off guard though as she turned in distraction, momentarily forgetting to shield herself from Draco's attack. She fell to the ground screaming as his crucio curse hit her. He hastily summoned his actual wand from where she dropped it and with it, he focused on the burning pain he had sent to her mind, making her feel his excruciating flames of fire.

Blaise and Bernice were dueling the American male. The female one was unconscious. "You're losing, yank," Blaise teased with a cocky grin. "How shall I kill you? Should I let you live long enough to watch me bury my cock deep into your woman's cunt?"

"You're a sick freak!" the American shouted, taking high offense by the threat.

Draco released the spell from his Mudblood. She was trying not to cry, but Draco honestly wouldn't blame her if she did. His spell made grown men cry and beg for death. He then flung the same spell to the American who didn't see the curse coming in time. The man screamed.

"Please," the Mudblood pleaded of him, getting up to her feet . "Stop this...!"

"You wanted a fight," he told her, masking his face with a blank look, knowing full well it was a scary thing to have. It would frighten her more if she thought he didn't care about the torture he was doing to the man in the same room.

He did though— just a little. It made him sick to his bloody stomach. But it would be rewarding in the end. The Dark Lord will be pleased when he found this out, and it also helped with *her*. She was begging him. And that was nearly music to his ears.

"I don't want to anymore!" She touched his arm, shaking him. "You'll kill him! *Stop!*" The Mudblood was panicking now. Her words spoke true. "I'll go back with you! Okay?! That's what you want, right?!"

He turned his head, looking at her. "I explained this already to you, Mudblood," he told her coldly. He reached out his arm quickly, gripping her neck. "You didn't listen though." He squeezed her hard, making her wince. "Did you?"

"No...!" she whimpered.

"You had your chance to surrender. I thought I was being quite fair."

"I'll go quietly!" she said in a rush. "I'll not fight! Spare them, Malfoy! Please!"

Draco flicked his wand ending his curse. He nudged his head toward Blaise, giving him the permission to continue his attack.

"Malfoy?!" The Mudblood had her hands wrapped around his wrist, trying to pry it from her neck.

"You won't fight me?" he asked after a thorough thought. "You'll travel back with us quietly, you won't kick me, hit me, punch me, or any sort of attack?"

Hope shined in her eyes before they closed, and she took a massive breath. "I will not, but only if Kota and Louella are allowed to live. You can't kill them, and you can't have someone else do it either."

He almost smiled at how clear she was about her demands. He must not have been the first snake she had negotiated with.

"Well..." He reined her around him, pushing her toward the door, poking his wand into her back. "Let's get going then— Blaise, we're leaving!"

"Already?!" the Italian man asked in disappointment. He wiped the back of his arm across his bleeding face where a slash was.

"We've got what we came for."

The Punishment

AN: Um, this chapter is... very, *very* dark. *pokes the warnings*

My grandma's moving in. Updates will very much likely slow down. This chapter is extra long though so... um... enjoy (if you can, given its contents).

"We should use the rest of this day to sleep," Zabini advised after Malfoy had landed next to him. He thumbed up at an ancient looking brick building they stood nearby. "Darlene's Bread and Breakfast. I've been here before, it's nothing like home, but it's decent enough."

Malfoy simply glanced up at it and gave a nod. His grip on Hermione's upper arm tightened and he pulled her along, following Zabini and the woman accompanying them (who Hermione faintly remembered as his wife) into the building.

They rented two rooms next to one another with a door between them to allow them access to the other's room.

"You sure you don't want me to watch over your wand?" Zabini asked as they stood outside the doors to their rooms. He sent Hermione a look that said he didn't trust her.

"She'll not do anything stupid." Malfoy tilted his head at her, sending her a sneer. "Will you?"

Hermione stiffened and pulled loose from his hand. "Not if you stop treating me like some bloody dog."

His eyes narrowed but he said nothing and opened the door to their room. He pointed his wand into it, gesturing her inside. "In." His tone was low, and not of one to argue with.

With her head held up, she looked straight ahead into the room, purposely avoiding his eyes. She squeezed past him, making sure their bodies didn't touch and walked into the room, stopping in the center of it.

It was a really nice room, elegantly decorated with gold and purple. It had body sized mirrors, an equipped kitchenette, complete with real dishes, and stuff to make coffee and tea with. There was even an ice box, and Hermione assumed, with as nice as this place was, it may have even been stocked with food.

It had only one bed, big enough for two people, but Hermione would sleep on the floor before she slept side by side to Malfoy. She shuddered at the thought. Not that he would think differently about her. *Or* even offer her the bed. He'd make her sleep on the floor, she'd bet.

The room instantly heated right after her shuddering. Hermione could tell by the energy it put off that it had been done by a spell. She looked at Malfoy, knowing he had turned the heat up.

He was unloading a bag of his, his wand firmly held in his hand as he did so. He would occasionally send her a scowl or a glare, and every minute or so, he muttered something under his breath.

"Sit down, Granger," Malfoy ordered grumpily, sorting things on a polished, pine, round table. It was crowded with all sorts of things: food, drinks, toiletries, clothing, towels, potions, and other things he had packed for his travel. "I'd prefer you not to stand."

"Does it make you nervous when I stand?" she jeered.

He flicked his wand lazily at her without pausing his task. He hadn't even looked at her while doing it. Her mouth clamped shut and she felt the tip of her tongue roll back into the deep of her throat. She gagged, struggling to breathe.

"Sit down," he drawled with a bored tone. "Or you will pass out from lack of air."

There were tears in her eyes as the need to breathe overwhelmed her. She could see stars form in her vision. Her lungs burned. She closed her eyes, concentrating on breaking the spell, but the gagging was much too distracting. She couldn't think straight.

"You are actually willing to put yourself under such stress than just to sit in a bloody chair?" he asked a moment later.

Her face scrunched up and her knees gave out. Hermione stuck her fingers up at the seam of her mouth, trying to pry it open with her fingers. It was no use. Everything was fading around her. She could no longer see, and she couldn't hear either. All feeling left.

"Wake up!"

Hermione's hand flew up to her face to comfort the sudden sting at her cheek. Malfoy stood above her, scowling down at her. She made to get up from the large arm chair that she was in, but her bottom was stuck to it. He must had put her here.

She let out a shriek when he snatched a handful of her hair at the top of her head. "You'll do as I say, do you understand me?!" he growled threateningly.

Hermione squirmed from his hold. Her hands found his face, and pushed at it. "Let me go!" she cried.

Malfoy tilted her head up to look at him. "You gave me your word," he snarled slowly. "Do not make me waste my time to go back and kill them, because I will do it. You know I will."

That got her attention. "I never said I'd do whatever you said though!" she argued.

"Your compliance is already a given, considering your position as my slave." He tugged at her hair. *Hard*. She gasped out in agony, biting her lip, suppressing a cry. "You will either obey what I command of you on your own accord, or I will force you to, and trust me when I say this, Mudblood, I am in a *terrible* mood right now. You sincerely do not want me to lose my temper. As it is, I've had to take a few bloody potions to stop myself from literally slitting your useless, disgusting throat."

Hermione froze up on his threat. His eyes told her that he was dead serious.

"I've your attention then?" he spoke calmly. "Good. Now remove your hands from me or I shall break them, one bone at a time."

Hermione dropped them to her lap, hooking them together. Her eyes didn't leave his stormy, cold ones.

His lip curled, not even smug with himself that she had followed an actual direct order of his. He shoved her head into the back of the chair and freed her bit of hair that he had been clutching a hold of. Malfoy straightened up from where he had bent over her and looked back at the table of stuff. He flicked his wand and many of the items separated off into different directions to be put away in appropriate areas of the room. Clothing in a dresser, potions on a shelf across the room, toiletries in the bathroom, and so on. With another flick, food started preparing itself in the little kitchenette.

"We'll eat in a few moments."

"You can cook?"

His head snapped at her, giving her a dark look. "Do not speak unless I ask you a question," he seethed. "Or I shall cut your fucking tongue out and feed it to you."

She swallowed hard. Her stomach burbled sickly at the thought of being forced to eat her tongue—and he'd make her do it too! She didn't doubt that a bit.

Once the food was cooked, he shoved a plateful of it into her lap, demanding that she eat it. As with the fact that he could cook, she was also surprised with how decent it looked. And it didn't taste half bad either. The roasted chicken had a tasty rosemary herbal flavour, and the side of potatoes were delectably creamy. There was also a mixture of steamed vegetables.

Malfoy ate quietly at the table, spending most of the time staring at the top of it. He did not pause to savour the taste as she had (besides the dinner at Louella and Kota's, Hermione had been eating relatively bland food for nearly week. This was a delightful change, and even if she was a captive, Hermione had enjoyed the meal).

Malfoy appeared to be lost in his thoughts.

When he had finished, he got up and rinsed his plate at the sink. He dried his hands with a towel and turned to find her watching him. "Are you still hungry?" he asked evenly.

While he showed no concern or care for her, Malfoy's question did puzzle her. Why would he consider her discomfort at all?

"No," she simply answered when his eyes had narrowed after she took too long in responding.

"Give me your plate." She held it out for him to take and he walked to her, roughly taking it from her so he could rinse that one off too.

"I'm not helpless," she informed him. "I can do that myself—" Her mouth closed tightly, she silently whimpered as her teeth bit into the edge of her tongue.

"I told you, I don't want you to speak," Malfoy explained his spell casting. "You will stay there while I shower. When I come out, you best still be there." He disappeared into the bathroom then.

Malfoy confused her. What he was doing made no sense. Why treat her like absolute hippogriff dung one moment, and in the next, wait on her, as if he was some server at a restaurant? Hermione would have thought he would have made her do that all. He did consider her his slave, after all.

She used Malfoy's shower time to attempt to remove his sticking charm, but all it did was wear her out. She wasn't trying to escape anyhow, but didn't like being confined into one place. She anxiously tapped her fingers to the arms of the chair, wondering if Malfoy would release her from the spell when he came out.

Probably not. But she could hope.

Malfoy came out of the bathroom a bit later. Steam and male body fragrance emerged with him, permeating the air. He paid her little attention, stalking to the shelf where the potions had been put, and grabbing himself quite a few. Some she recognized. Energy replenishers, anti-anxiety, anti-nausea, and one to aid in sleep. There were three she didn't know what they were though.

When he had taken his many potions, Hermione felt his spell lift. She wiggled around, trying to bring circulation back to her bum after being in one position for far too long.

"Go bathe," he ordered, busying himself with a local wizard newspaper. "Scrub hard. You must be presentable for the Dark Lord tomorrow."

Hermione's eyes widened in terror. She didn't want to see *him* again. Horrors of what he had done to Samual plagued her mind.

Tears filled her eyes and she swallowed a sob.

"I didn't stutter, Granger!" Malfoy barked from his chair at the table. His nostrils were flared. "Move it, now!" He rose out of the chair, balling up his hands into fist. "Unless, you want me to clean you myself?! Do you remember last time?!"

Hermione sprinted into the bathroom and slammed the door shut. She panted in fear, concerned about what was going to happen when Malfoy brought her to Voldemort. She cupped a hand over her mouth, squeezing tears out her eyes. Her heart felt like it was trying to bash its way out. The thudding of her pulse was so loud, that that was all her ears could hear.

She ran the bath water as millions of questions swirled inside her head. What did they even want with her? The war was over, she wasn't needed for information on Harry anymore. She just couldn't understand why they would waste their time on her.

She should be dead like the rest of them. Why was *she* so bloody special?!

She dressed in an old fashioned night dress that Malfoy had left for her to wear for that night. She had a feeling that if she refused to wear it, he'd blow up at her.

After she was through with the bath, Malfoy checked her over and seemed content with her appearance (as content as Malfoy would ever be, at least). He gave her several potions to drink, many of them were the same ones he had taken himself. She didn't argue as he thrust them one by one into her hand, watching her closely to ensure she took everyone last one. He then announced that she would sleep in the armchair, while he claimed the bed. She had expected he'd get the bed, but was shocked that he hadn't made her sleep in the corner of the room on the floor.

And she was relieved by it.

He tossed her a blanket and told her to close her eyes and get some sleep. "We'll need it," he said as he buried himself under a pile of blankets.

And just as soon as she shut her eyes, she felt the tug of sleep pull her mind into a dreamless, unconscious daze.

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"Get on the broom, Granger!" Malfoy demanded, pulling her to him.

Hermione shook. She hated heights, and after learning that they would make a 5,000 mile travel on a high speed broom, she freaked. "No, I can't!" It would be a long, cold, and frightening ride, all the while, with Malfoy behind her, steering the broom, and cursing her out, no doubt.

He raised his wand to her and she pleaded for him to reason, but he didn't listen. Instead, he magically forced her to straddle the broom handle and lean back into his chest. He only released her from the imperius curse once they were hundreds of feet up in the sky where the air was thick and cold.

Hermione screamed and shut her eyes, wrapping her legs tightly around each other to secure her to the broom.

"I'm insulted, Mudblood," Malfoy shouted at her to be heard over the whistle of the wind as he and Zabini raced through the grey, wintery sky. "You don't trust my flying!"

"I don't trust *anyone's* flying!" she shrieked truthfully. She let out another scream as he purposely took a nosedive to the ground beneath them. He snickered in her ear and she unthinkingly squirmed closer to him.

"You're a riot, I give you that." Hermione heard Malfoy say.

She nearly threw up as her stomach flip flopped from how verticle they were with the Earth now. The ground couldn't have been even thirty feet below. If Malfoy didn't change direction, they'd crash!

"Don't Malfoy!" she pleaded. "Pull up!"

He whipped a hard right. Then upward, and spun them around in circles extremely fast. So fast that Hermione hiccupped and choked on a bit of vomit. Malfoy hooted as if he was a young boy, having the time of his life. An arm looped around her as her loud, high scream pierced the air. He held her tight, tucking his face into her back, blocking the freezing wind chill from his face.

"You're alright, Mudblood," he announced dryly when he was done messing around. She shivered from fright and cold, her teeth chattering. She swallowed down a threatening ball of bile.

"Are you cold?" he asked. His voice hung with mild concern, and she shivered more as she felt heat radiate off his body into her back. "You'll feel better in a few minutes."

"Why are you doing this?" She had turned her head to ask him, hoping to get a glimpse of his face from out of the corner of her eye, but to no avail.

His fingers dug painfully into her ribs. Hermione winced. Her answer never came.

It puzzled her how one moment he could be almost human, and the next he was an angry beast, craving to cause her harm. Only he didn't fatally harm her. He said he wanted to, said he would be delighted to physically kill her. But he didn't.

Malfoy didn't want her, but Hermione was beginning to wonder if he even had a choice in the matter. He had told her that they would both die if they didn't return back to Britain. He had searched for her without stopping a moment. He had even brought a friend along to help. Could it be that her escape had gotten him in trouble with Voldemort? But why would Voldemort care about what happened to her? He had given her to Malfoy. Wouldn't that mean Malfoy could do whatever he wanted with her?

They traveled for many hours on the broom. For so many that her bum was numb from lack of circulation, and her knees were sore from her legs dangling.

Finally, they landed, and Zabini gathered the brooms to take them to a broom rental shop. Hermione took this time to stretch her body. Malfoy stuck close to her, his wand was always out, and he kept a close eye on her, as if afraid she'd slip out of sight any chance she got.

Well, she probably would have, but the threat of him torturing her lastest friends to death still lingered. And she had promised him she would come willingly and quietly. All without a fight. He had kept his word. Breaking hers would only make things worse. And things were bad enough as it was.

Zabini brought them back cups of soups to warm up with. They stood around, sipping their lunch.

Malfoy then informed them that they would apparate the rest of the way home. He confirmed this with Zabini, seemingly asking him with a look if this was okay to do. The dark man nodded and looped an arm around his wife.

"We're apparating, Mudblood," Malfoy announced, and before Hermione realized it, he had grabbed her wrist and sucked the air right out of her lungs from the spell he cast.

She was a little dizzy when they landed, but the feeling quickly faded. Her heart hammered when she realized where Malfoy had taken her.

She knew this area well. They were at Hogwarts. In the dungeons.

She swallowed hard.

This is where Voldemort lived now.

Maybe I'll get answers today, the curious and optimistic side of her mind thought encouragingly.

Or perhaps she'd be crucio'ed to death.

Malfoy was also nervous with this visit (or was it a meeting?). He paced back and forth, taking three or four steps before turning back around and repeating the process. He cleared his throat countless of times and rubbed at the throat of his neck. He then stopped, catching her watching him. His eyes were serious. Hermione could see fear in them. He lunged at her, making her yelp.

"Quiet!" he snapped, grabbing her upper arms. "Listen to me!" He shook her violently. "You hear me?! Listen!" Hermione nodded slowly, acknowledging his words. "You've seen nothing yet on what the Dark Lord is capable of. I don't exactly know what's going to happen today, but you need to know that this *is* all your fucking fault. If we even make it out of here alive, you *must* understand that there cannot be a next time. You will learn today why he is feared by many of us. And I promise you, Mudblood, I will be punishing you for getting my arse so deep into hot water with my Master, that you will consider yourself *lucky* if you ever see the sun rise again!"

He shoved her away from him. The back of her head smacked loudly against the door behind her and she let out a cry as the contact with the thick, wooden door brought a dull pain. She rubbed it and threw Malfoy a dirty look. She could already feel a lump forming.

The door behind her swung open and she nearly lost her balance, tipping backward.

"Ah," his quiet voice purred, sending Hermione's hair to raise at the back of her neck. "It is nice to see you again, Mudblood."

Hermione turned around, bravely addressing the monster who called himself the new leader of this part of the world. His red eyes pierced hers, instantly probing her mind. She moaned in immense weakness. It took all she could to keep standing. His mind intrusion sent a sharp pain to her head and she screamed.

"Have a seat," he offered softly, releasing her from his spell. He threw his arm up and she flew across the room, landing into a stiff, hard chair. "There's a few things you two need to address— isn't there, Draco?"

The said person had lowered himself to the stone flooring, bowing at the sick monster who he considered his master. "As it appears, My Lord," he stoically answered.

"Join your wife then, son."

"Your *WHAT*!?" Hermione's eyes fell down to her hand. She could faintly see the silver ring with the dim lighting in the room. She heard a soft chuckle coming from the other side of the desk. Voldemort stood, smiling amusingly down at her, watching her absorb his news.

"No, Mudblood, you are not his slave. You are in fact his wife." His eyes flickered darkly to Malfoy who had taken a seat in a chair of his own. Malfoy made no eye contact with Voldemort. He avoided Hermione's look too. "You will not blame her, Draco," Voldemort scolded him. "The fault is yours, not your wife's."

Hermione wrinkled her brow in confusion. "I don't... *what*...?!" She shook her head, trying to make sense of this. "Why?! I thought you supported blood purity?!"

Voldemort snickered. "Sometimes..." he paused for effect. "You just have to relent. Isn't that right, my servant?"

Malfoy finally looked at his master. His face lacked any emotion. Hermione couldn't read what he was thinking. He tipped his head forward ever so slightly that she barely seen it move. "You are always right, My Lord." His voice sounded as hollow as his face looked.

"I am," Voldemort agreed arrogantly. "Now, there's a matter to address, my children—" Hermione cringed when he implied that she was his child. "—and that is the consummation of your marriage."

"My Lord," Malfoy instantly said. "We are not ready—"

"If you had not chased her off, you would be! Physically, you are both just fine to perform the act. You will do it here, and you will do it now."

"Now?!" Malfoy squeaked.

Hermione remained silent, watching the exchange with wide eyes. She should have known this all along. The ring, the lack of being locked up in an actual cell or cage. Malfoy choosing of what she was to smell like, and what she was to wear. The healthy meals. The warm bed. The protection charm on the ring. His wishes to harm her, but never acting on it.

She was going to be made to carry his children. But *why*? Why not some perfect *Pureblood* witch instead?

"You do not need a bed, Draco. Don't peg me as a fool! Do it now!"

Hermione gulped at the cold tone Voldemort addressed Malfoy with. And she hurled herself out of the chair when Malfoy stood up and looked at her. There was no denying that he was going to do what had been commanded of him.

He was a loyal Death Eater after all.

Hermione looked at Malfoy, shaking. "Don't do this." She watched his adam's apple bob a couple times, before it stilled. His lips pressed together and he pointed his wand at her. It shook to his own trembling stance.

He did not want to do this.

"Don't make him do this," she pleaded Voldemort. She didn't remove her eyes from Malfoy. Neither moved from their spot, both thinking on what was about happen. "He doesn't want to! Can't you see?!"

"Every man wants to have sex," Voldemort murmured. "Especially with his wife. He needs to mark you now. And you, him, Mudblood."

"This is rape though—"

"Is it?" Voldemort made his way around the desk and swept quickly to her, backing her up against a wall. "Is it rape if you let your husband fuck you?" he gently hissed. He grinned. "You don't even know what rape feels like..." He pressed his wand to Hermione's face, searing her with the tip of it, making her yelp. Voldemort pressed his face to her cheek, and inhaled deeply. "You are a pretty smelling, little witch, aren't you?" The stench of his hot, moist breath made her cough on a gag. He traced a dirty, long fingernail along her chin, cutting a slit into her smooth skin. She whimpered. "I can give you an example of what rape is, my little Mudblood. Is that what you would prefer?" He set his hand to one of her breasts, roughly squeezing it.

"No!" she shrieked out in protest.

Voldemort growled. "Then you will please your husband!" He gripped her shoulder and threw her with a great force into the arms of Malfoy. She sunk to the ground, feeling all control leave her body, hearing Voldemort's hissing voice in her mind, ordering her to get on her knees and unbuckle Malfoy's belt.

She fought to gain back possession of her body, but the more she did, the louder his voice got. He was much more powerful than her, and she couldn't stop herself from taking Malfoy's soft, flimsy cock into her mouth. She gagged as his cock expanded in her mouth, filling the gap at the back of it. Her teeth sank into his sensitive flesh, raking against the length of his shaft, making him scream out in excruciating pain. Hermione's tongue grazed over the skin where her teeth had cut him, sucking on him, draining the blood from the scrapes, and swallowing it. It came back up as she choked on the horrid, bitter flavour.

'*Swallow it, Lady Malfoy,*' Voldemort's voice demanded in her head. She did so, with her eyes shut tightly, tears poking out from the corners of them.

Malfoy was panting. In pain, Hermione guessed. Maybe it was in pleasure. She wasn't sure. But his cock was getting bigger and harder with each few seconds she worked him. He was hissing though, but that could be a sign of pleasure too.

His cum fill her mouth, and she couldn't swallow it fast enough. She choked again. The semen erupted from her mouth and dribbed down her chin.

"Now make this Mudblood yours, Draco." Voldemort left her head and she could control herself again. Malfoy pulled her up by the arm. There was something inhuman about the stare he gave her. Hermione realized it was because Voldemort was controlling him now.

Hermione didn't even bother trying to plea him not to do it. Malfoy couldn't stop the monster from controlling his body no more than she had been able, but when he pushed her toward a wall, she tried fighting him. He was much too powerful though. He rose his wand at her, slamming her to the wall with a spell. She fought him as his hands ripped off her clothing, stripping it as if it were made of paper.

His fingers dug into her thigh and he gripped it, painfully propping her leg up to grant access to her core. The tip of him was at her entry now. She closed her eyes, praying for him to stop what he was doing, but she knew it was hopeless.

He slammed into her with no mercy, ripping her apart, shoving himself into her as deep as the length of him. The both of them screamed in agony, their spilled blood mixing together. Hermione tried pulling from him to get away, but Voldemort made Malfoy press her harder to the wall. "Be still, wife!" he hissed savagely, pounding into her roughly. His eyes were red now, no doubt from the curse he was under.

"I think you can finish on your own, Draco," Voldemort said from behind Malfoy.

Hermione winced and let out a moan as his movement stopped all together. Malfoy was panting. His jaw was clenched. His eyes were narrowed. He glared at the wall behind Hermione.

"Draco? Do I need to help you finish?"

"I will finish," the blond wizard stated through his clenched teeth.

Hermione sucked in a breath as he shifted his weight. His cock was no longer solid, she realized, but she was so tender in that area now, it didn't matter. It still hurt. A lot.

"Look at me, Granger," Malfoy snarled, cupping her face into his hands. She had no choice but to. He was performing wandless magic, forcing her to meet his glare.

Suddenly, upon looking into the depths of his cold, angry eyes, Hermione felt dizzy and lightheaded. All pain left her, just as if someone had healed her. She felt wonderful. Better than she had in years. It took her a moment to realize that Malfoy had proceeded with his thrusting. She heard him grunt under his breath. His face was buried into her neck, his breathing was fogging up her skin. His breath, she noticed, was a lot more pleasant than Voldemort's had been, smelling like... spearmint...!

Her eyes slid into the back of her head, relishing over the smell.

Malfoy pushed into her one last time before he paused deep into her, and exploded with a loud, audible moan. He was sweating with exhaustion, and breathing so hard, his chest was crashing against hers, constricting her own breathing. Then swiftly, he pulled out, making her wail at the stinging, sore pain of the hasty movement.

He stumbled away from her and doubled over, hurling his guts up noisily. A sob escaped his mouth.

Hermione slid down the wall and wept into her hands, traumatized by what just happened. The agony of her raw, torn flesh was almost too much. She smelled blood and other... *things*. Her hands were covered in it all. Her face was sticky from it all. Her legs were dripping with all kinds of bodily fluids.

She couldn't take it anymore. She fell forward in a heap, fainting.

Not Your Wife

AN: In the three weeks that I have been caring for my Grandma, I have turned her health around more than those who have medical degrees and experience. She still needs work, but she's eating, gaining weight, and so much happier than before. For a while there, I was worried, I was having to get up every hour to help her with something. I wasn't getting any sleep. She's sleeping relatively well through the night now. We're much happier!

So now that I bored you with my life update, I'm pleased to present the newest chapter of *His Relinquishment!* Enjoy, and thank you for reading!

Hermione gagged and spit up a thick blob of blood. She shuddered knowing it wasn't her own. She had no toothbrush nor paste to properly clean her teeth, but there was soap to wash her hands with and so she used it (and her nails) to clean her mouth out, trying to remove bits of Malfoy's skin out from her teeth. She spent nearly an hour doing it until she tasted the bitter soap more than anything. It was better than the metallic taste of blood.

Hermione went back to the bed she had previously woken up in, crawling into it, and swallowing down a sob. She ached all over, bruised and torn from being abused both inside and out.

But the nightmare wasn't over. It was just starting.

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"How bad is it?" Draco asked. His eyes were shut tightly and his teeth were clamped together. He hissed in pain as Severus closely inspected him. "It's bad, isn't it?! Merlin, I'm cursed, aren't I?! My dick's forever going to be—"

The loud snap of examination gloves being removed from Severus's hands ceased Draco's frantic talking. He waited with bated breath for an answer. Severus gave him a stern look and tossed the waste into a rubbish bin. "It's not cursed." Draco let out a whoosh of air in immense relief. "But it *has* been harshly mutilated, though not to the point of uselessness. I'd expect some scarring, but your... *dick*, as you put it, won't forever look so... *choppy*."

Draco carefully pulled his pants back up to his hips and latched his belt together. "And what can I do about the pain? It pretty much hurts to do *anything* right now."

"Maybe it's supposed to feel that way at the moment; as part of your punishment..."

"Something has to be done about it though. He expects the Mudblood and I to... *mingle* everyday until she's been bred— his words exactly..."

Severus's lips thinned. "Then I suggest that's what you do. I'll ask about some potions and see if He will allow the use of them to make your task a little easier to handle."

"Specifically for the Mudblood, right?"

A dark eyebrow lifted up in curiosity. "Unless you think you can manage her without any assistance?"

Draco nodded after a thought. "Best to be safe and prepared."

"Precisely my thought."

Draco returned to her room that night, finding the Mudblood balled up in the bed. At first, he thought she was sleeping, but a loud wet sniff was heard from her soon after he entered, followed by a sob.

He didn't pity her. It was her own bloody fault that her rape had happened the way it did. Draco didn't doubt it still would have been a rape if she hadn't escaped (she would never agree to do such a thing with him, just as he wouldn't when it came to her), but it surely wouldn't have been as horrid and painful if she hadn't had ran off.

In truth, if she had stayed put, Draco would have probably just drugged her to get the job done.

But The Dark Lord wanted to toy with them. He wanted to show *her* the position she was in — good for nothing besides incubating the children of the future. What he had done to Draco was mostly done as a punishment for 'letting' the Mudblood escape. Maybe it was also brutally done to establish a fear of Draco from the Mudblood.

Draco was about to find out if that was true or not. Having her fear him would make things a little easier on him. He wasn't sexually attracted to that, but there were always potions to help him get hard enough to fuck her— should he need them.

He wasn't sure how The Dark Lord had made him hard enough to fuck the Mudblood, because Draco hadn't enjoyed doing it for a second— not until his Master had released him from the curse, allowing him to take over. It had taken Draco a moment to regather his thoughts, but he had been able to send his mind elsewhere. He cast an enchantment on the Mudblood, forcing her to relax, and sending her into an euphoria. Her calmness, her dazed look, permitted him to focus on an explicit thought to make him hard. It surprised him when it was her naked body that had popped into his mind. A bit of imagination was involved though, as the body he had pictured of her was in decent shape. Not starved, or sagging, but full and plump. Her cheeks were flushed bright red, her nipples were pink and erupt with life, and he had imagined sucking on them, nipping at them, making her gasp in arousal.

Arousal.

It was not something Draco had expected to experience. It was not something he had wanted to happen. But it was enough to finish what The Dark Lord had started. It was enough to make him hard, and it momentarily took his pain away.

He just couldn't believe that it was *her* that he had fantasized about that had made him cum. Perhaps it was her smell though. He had buried his nose deep into her neck, after smelling the scent of fresh, green sour apples radiate off her skin; he had wanted more of it. It amazed him on how much a scent could sexually affect him.

Then it was all over, and the pain had returned just as soon as he had finished filling her with his seed. It hurt enough to make his gut reject what the little food he had eaten earlier that day. Dizziness swarmed him, bringing on a headache.

"Well done, son. You've tired your wife out. That's quite an achievement." It was The Dark Lord's comment that made Draco notice his Mudblood had passed out. He envied her. Her mind was currently in a better place. Better than his was at the moment.

"You will mingle with your wife everyday until she has been bred. I trust you not to miss a single night, Draco. I'm sure you would hate to find out what will happen if that should to occur. Yes?"

"Yes, My Lord," he managed to choke out between his heaving.

"You are dismissed then. You may use my floo to return home." The Dark Lord gestured to the fireplace across the way. "Take your wife with you and get some decent rest."

"Dinner is on its way," Draco broke the silence in the Mudblood's room.

She jumped, having not noticed his presence yet. She turned onto her back to look at him, her eyes were narrowed. "I'm not hungry."

"I didn't ask if you were."

"Don't have the house-elves waste their time on me— I'm not going to eat anything."

Draco closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, trying to keep his cool. He crossed his arms, pressing them tightly to his chest. Leaning against the closed door, he said, "I'd rather not have to shove food down your bloody throat, but if you refuse to eat, that's exactly what I'll do."

The Mudblood's lips pressed together before she flipped back over onto her side, turning away from him.

"Besides the upcoming meal, I came in to inform you that we're going to sex every day until you're pregnant." He stopped to see if she would respond to the news, but she didn't. Not a sound came from her. He expected her to cry out in an outrage. To lash out at him. To tell him that she wasn't going to do a damn thing he said.

Her silence disturbed him. She should be upset. Why wasn't she reacting...?

"If we don't, He'll do what He did to us today all over again. He may even make it worse next time. Might involve Himself in on it. I've... witnessed what He can do when He's feeding his sexual appetite. It's not pleasant, Granger, I can assure you that... Lots of blood and... lots of... torture..."

And lots of puke on Draco's part. But he didn't add that.

"I don't understand," she whispered. "Why didn't he pair you with a Pureblood? Why does it have to be me?"

Draco rolled his eyes. Typical Granger. He just told her that he was being forced to impregnate her and all she wanted was to know *why*.

"Because The Dark Lord gets a fiendish delight in torturing me," he muttered sarcastically.

Draco swore he heard her snort softly, but he couldn't tell. It had been such a quiet sound, it may have even been a grunt.

"I'm not going to be your sex slave, Malfoy." Her voice was muffled by a pillow.

"I don't find you even remotely attractive for you to be such a thing, but you *will* obey my orders of you."

Her head adjusted from the pillow, but she still faced away from him. "And if I don't? I know that you can't kill me now. Or physically harm me... at least to the point where I'm damaged from carrying your... *babies*."

"They say you have brains. It'd be wise to use them and not purposely infuriate me."

"Why should it matter? My existence alone does that. I've done nothing to you, yet you continue to show how little I have to do to annoy you."

Draco laughed. "Have you forgotten this past week?!" He pushed himself off the door as a house-elf cracked in with the Mudblood's food. He pointed to the desk where she would be eating at, instructing Voax (the elf's name) to set it there.

His house-elves had repaired the damages he had done a week ago to the room. It didn't even look like he had gone crazy. Perfect like it had always looked.

"Shall Voax deliver Master his foods too, sir?"

"I'll eat later," Draco simply answered.

Voax then popped away, leaving the couple alone.

"Alright, Mudblood, up you get." He yanked the covers off of her so she couldn't hide under them any longer. "Time to eat."

"I told you I wasn't hungry."

"Do you honestly want to test my patience?!"

"I'm just tired..." She balled herself tightly into a ball and whimpered.

"You can sleep after you eat." He grabbed her arm and pulled her out of bed.

"Don't touch me!" she shrieked, yanking against him. All Draco did was squeeze her tighter and throw her into the desk chair.

"Stay," he ordered coldly. "Else I'll stick you there. Perhaps even make you stay the night in it."

The Mudblood glared at him. "You're an arsehole."

Draco bent down to where his face was just above hers. "Yes, I am. So you may just want to hold your fucking tongue when it comes to speaking to me." He took a hold of her ear and gave it a rough tug. "Understand?"

The Mudblood swung her arm up to his face, elbowing him in the eye. Draco stepped back, cursing her out.

"Don't fucking touch me, Malfoy!" she spat. "*Understand?!*"

"Mudblood..." He rubbed his eye, wincing at the sharp, sore pain. That damn bloody bitch! With the damaged eye closed he lunged at her, snatching her throat with his hands. He shook her violently as she struggled to breathe. "You're one stubborn bitch!" he snarled. He took a hand and forced her head backward by pulling on some of her hair.

"You just wait, Malfoy," she hissed through clenched teeth. "I got away once, I'll do again!"

Draco backhanded her. Hard enough to make her cry out. Blood trickled from her nose a second later. "I won't die because of you," he warned her. "But you'll not fool me twice. I know what you're capable of now. You will forever stay here. You'll serve me and do everything I expect of you, else there will be consequences. I am your fucking husband, and you *will* respect me!"

"I am *not* your wife!"

"Yes, you are!"

"I did not sign a damn thing! I have agreed to no such thing!"

Draco grasped her wrist and brought her hand up for her to see. "This," he started, speaking about the ring. "Is all that is needed. Your blood and mine are infused into the metal of this—" Her eyes widened, making him grunt, amused that she just now realized how serious their marriage was.

"That's Dark Magic!" she gasped.

"And you expected anything different when there's a Dark wizard ruling the world?! Where *are* your brains?!"

She didn't reply. Her eyes had shifted away from him, staring at the wall. He watched a tiny tear slide down her cheek. Draco released his hold on her and demanded that she eat.

"What's the point?" she asked hollowly. "Even if you do manage to get me pregnant, once your heir is born, I'll be useless to you and then I'll be killed."

"Well, then maybe your death won't be as painful as it should be," Draco growled. "But you're going to bear my heir whether you consent to it or not." He shrugged. "It matters not to me. I have a job to do, and I shall not be punished because you're too thick to realize that it's easier just to get it over and done with!"

"You didn't seem to like the idea of raping me a few hours ago..." She shoved the food around on her plate, having yet to take a bite of it.

"I don't get excited when it comes to one-sided sex sessions. I've had to see too much of it. It's not quite my style. Be that as it may, I have my ways around that—even if you refuse. You see, it's the whimpering, the screaming, and the crying that gets to me." He leaned down to speak into her ear. "There are methods that will make you attracted to me, and me to you. It's not something I'd be too comfortable with doing—I'd not be so proud with having to admit that I grew hard at just the thought of you, spell or no spell, but it's better than the Dark Lord forcing you to grate my cock with your teeth, isn't it?"

The Mudblood cocked her head, blocking his breath from reaching her neck. She didn't answer him, but his words had sunk in, if just a little. She looked completely disturbed and disgusted with the reminder of what had just happened only hours ago. She stiffened. "I still don't agree with any of this."

"I never expected you to. I only expect you to do what I command of you."

The Mudblood snorted. "You should have married a Pureblood witch then!"

Draco gathered a handful of her hair into his fist and watched her prepare for him to bring her pain. "Are you saying that you will not do what I tell you?" he asked her in a low, cool voice.

"I wasn't raised to do as a man says," she told him bravely. "So, no, I am not your slave, I don't consider myself your wife, and I would rather be tortured to death than to throw away all the morals I have built up in my lifetime!"

Draco's lip curled up. He could not *believe* the nerve she had! "I've been nice enough to treat you like my wife—"

"Nice?!" The Mudblood laughed. "You're hilarious!" She shrieked when he tugged at her hair.

"I was talking, Mudblood," he growled. "Do *not* interrupt me while I'm speaking!"

She punched him in the ribs, and he hissed. "I will do what I want!" she shrieked, wiggling from his grasp and standing up from the chair. "I am not your anything!"

"*Fine,*" he seethed. "I'm done being nice. You don't want to accept that you're my wife?!! That's fine by me!" He dug out his wand and cast a spell so she couldn't move, then he began dragging her out of the room by the mane of her hair. She'd be incredibly sore for a few days, but at this point, he didn't even care.

She didn't want to be treated as his wife, so instead he was going to treat her as his prisoner.

Hours later, he stared at her still, sleeping form. He had imperiused her to eat and when she was through with the dinner, he had forced her into a slumber, laying her onto a bed of straw. He had taken her down to the dungeons. These cells were once used to store misbehaving house-elves when his father was still alive. Draco didn't have such high expectations with the house-elves unlike his father had though, so they had been empty since the day that Lucius Malfoy had died.

Until now.

He decided the Mudblood would stay down here for a while and get a taste of what her life could be like, if she wasn't married to him. He'd take care of her, as she would be the mother of any of his children, but she needed a dose of reality. He wasn't sure she understood how lucky she really was.

Marrying Goyle would have been worse. Or Flint... Flint was awful, like Blaise, he really enjoyed a sick and twitched kind of foreplay.

Draco shuddered and tried to get such horrid memories from his mind. There was something wrong with those men.

He stared at the Mudblood, sitting in a chair above her. She slept on her back and the robe she was dressed in was open enough to show the whole of one of her breasts. He found himself looking at it every so often. It moved as her chest slowly rose and lowered with her breathing. His hands twitched. He rubbed them against his knees.

He actually wanted to touch it. He just could not wrap his head around it; all of a sudden, he wanted to caress her silky looking mound. And the more time he spent there, the worse the thought got. To the point where he licked his lips, craving to set the lone nipple that he could see between his teeth and toy with it with the tip of his tongue.

The member between his legs was rock hard and he groaned at the pain from the scrapes that were surrounding it. How was it possible to have the urge to fuck someone all the while knowing that you're dick's so tender, that it would likely bleed if it was put to use.

He got down on his knees and undid his belt with one hand, hissing in pain as he gently grabbed his cock and stroked it with a building need. Draco approached the Mudblood slowly and carefully separated the seam of her robes with his free hand to expose both her breasts to him.

What was wrong with him...? A week ago, he would have cursed himself for doing such a thing, but now... he wanted to jerk off while staring at her boobs?

It pained him to do, but by focusing his thoughts more on her body, the pain could be blocked out of his mind, and before he knew it, he was cumming. Some of it shot out onto the Mudblood's belly. He used a bit of her robe to mop it up, then he tucked his dick back into his pants and sat back in his chair, watching her sleep.

He wondered if he would like it better if he fucked her while she slept, or if he would prefer her to be spelled into willingness with some sort of drug. He'd probably soon have the chance to learn either way.

She wasn't going to do it on her own accord, that's for sure.

Not Your Typical Kiss

AN: Wrote a lot today while Grandma was sleeping. The weather's bothering her joints, she so hardly slept last night. She's funny, she's gained six pounds in three weeks, and now she's decided to watch what she eats. *rolls eyes*

Anyway, here is another chapter. Hope ya likes.

Footsteps approached, stopping outside the door. A key slid into the heavy old fashioned lock; metal clanked against metal. Hermione waited for him to enter, tightening her arms around her knees, bracing herself for yet another one of his scheduled visits.

For the past four days, Malfoy came by once in the morning and once in the evening. Each visit usually went the same way, and it surprised her none when he stepped in, and pocketed the key in his trousers. As with every time he entered her cell, he folded his arms across his chest, looking at her as if she was a child who had done some silly, stupid thing, such as getting caught taking money from her mother's purse.

He nodded his head toward her. "And what role do you wish to be today?" he asked, just as he did every other time.

The first time he had asked her this, she simply spat at him, earning herself a slap across the face. The second time, she didn't even answer him, and Malfoy had yanked her up from her straw 'bed' to bellow in her face, spraying his spit on her during his fit. She had thought his eyes were going to pop out from anger. That was also the time she laughed at him. He looked like such a fool. He did have a serious anger issue that he really needed to address.

She was taught not to laugh at him after that. He had tossed Hermione onto the 'bed' and kicked her repeatedly until she couldn't hold back her cries.

Malfoy sent a house-elf in soon after to tend to her broken ribs. He sure had those elves trained well. Hermione seen three different ones so far since she set foot into the Manor, and not a one said anything to her besides what Malfoy permitted them to.

She felt lonely. She was bored, and tired of trying to come up with ways to escape this wretched life. Hermione was exhausted from fighting. She hardly slept anymore, and when she did, it wasn't for long. She usually woke up screaming, as her mind would not allow her to forget what had recently happened to her.

She was physically and emotionally scarred from that day. She had been a virgin, saving that special moment for the man she would end up loving. And that dream, that *fantasy*, had been shattered in only ten minutes.

Malfoy didn't seem to care what had happened, but then again, why should he? He wasn't raised to respect women, and he had admitted to her that the only reason he hadn't wanted to

rape her in the first place was just because he didn't want her to protest with the activity. Had Hermione been *willing*, he would have been okay with it.

So now he was trying to get her to submit to him and this new lifestyle of being his 'wife'. Hermione may be married to him (she knew how serious a marriage done by magic was, especially one done with Dark magic. *That* part was inevitable; there was no way out), but she just couldn't *accept* it. It had been done without her consent. Without her *knowing*. It was done to *Malfoy*, the *one* man she could never see herself with.

Now she just wanted to know *how* dark the magic was that was used to force her and Malfoy together. And she wouldn't find out here, locked away in an 8 by 8 prison cell.

Of course she wasn't going to surrender either. Being Malfoy's wife wasn't something she could swallow. *Especially* the sex part. She was embarrassed. Ashamed. And even if she found a man she could love, she'd never be able to be naked in front of him. Not comfortably. Not anymore.

She was damaged. She was dirty. Raped by a cold-blooded man who had been possessed by an actual monster.

Would she ever be able to get over that awful memory? Who would...? Who *could*...?

Malfoy hadn't made a move to rape her since he locked her up. In fact, he hadn't mentioned it all since the night they returned. According to Malfoy, Voldemort had ordered them to have sex every night until she got pregnant. This bothered her. Malfoy didn't seem to be one to defy orders from Voldemort. He wasn't a brave man. He was a coward.

"Aren't you going to get into trouble when... your *master* finds out you haven't been following his orders in procreating?"

Malfoy's eyebrows raised up, caught off guard by the question. That probably was because she didn't usually speak so seriously to him. He cleared his throat and conjured up a chair to sit in then. "So, you *have* changed your mind then? If you're asking such a... personal question..."

Hermione scoffed. "I'll never choose to be your wife, Malfoy."

"But my slave is okay? You prefer that I own you, treat you like rubbish, and make commands of you?"

"Sounds very much like how you intended to treat me as your wife anyway—I'm not *choosing* to be a damn thing to you. You're only going to treat me the way you were taught to treat me. Be it wife or whatever you want to call me. You've only placed me in here because I won't agree to actually *being* your wife. You're angry. Your life absolutely reeks, and you hate me, so you blame all your troubles on me, but I'm not going to feel sorry for you, Malfoy. You dug yourself into this disgusting mess on your own. It's not my fault and it's neither my problem."

He scowled at her and stood up, pointing a finger at her. "You best have changed your mind by my next visit!" he warned her.

She mockingly saluted him. "Can't wait for your next visit then!" Hermione leered.

Malfoy shook his head, disgusted by her attitude and snarled an ugly curse. He hurled himself out of the room and yelled out an elf's name to lock the cell door back up behind, too angry to do it himself.

Hermione was surprised he hadn't used his foot or fist to 'tenderize' her face. She supposed she could consider herself lucky for that.

She laughed at his crazy demand though. He actually thought she was going to change her mind in just eight hours.

But her moment of amusement quickly faded. She balled herself up into the bed of straw and burst out into tears. She was sure what he had planned for punishment wasn't going to be light.

And there was definitely going to be a punishment.

Maybe she had spoken too soon when she had said that she'd rather be tortured to death before she'd accept to being his wife. She was beginning to believe she wouldn't make it that far. It would be easier if she'd just gave up. Less painful, and less traumatic.

But she was stubborn, and didn't want him to get his way.

She also wouldn't allow herself to be a coward. That's not what her parents would have wanted her to do. That's not what *she* wanted her to do.

Somehow, she had this feeling death was not in her immediate future. Not until she gave birth to the Malfoy Heir: Third Generation Death Eater.

She'd have to keep that from happening.

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God, she was so infuriating! *Why* did she have to be so bloody stubborn?! Life would be so much easier for them both if she'd just accept her new role. Instead, she was just purposely pissing him off. And Draco didn't doubt that she was doing it in hopes that he would just end it all for her. It was *so* hard for him to not hit her for her snarky remarks toward him.

And most of the time, he couldn't even manage that.

Draco was tired of fighting with her. He didn't expect her to welcome the situation with open arms, but she was being quite immature about it. And ignorant. Did she not realize how much this marriage thing has changed her lifestyle? He was rich! And not just rich-rich, but *filthy* rich! Rich enough that any woman would jealous of her. He had *millions* of Galleons. Their children's' *great, great grandchildren* would not have to work, and that was *before* interest

earnings and investments factoring in. In interest alone, the Malfoy account turned twice more than what was ever spent.

And the power he had. He was the favourite of his age group. The Dark Lord went easy on him because of his position. He was faithful. He was trusted.

If she would just give him a bloody *chance*, and stop pressing his damn buttons, she would learn that her life wouldn't be all that bad. He didn't abuse his house-elves. But they understood him, and respected him. They knew their role and that was to serve him. She was his wife, and the Mudblood would just have to learn what that meant.

She'd have to provide him an heir— that was a given. This she already knew. She'd raise him, with Draco's help though, because he was sure she would flood his son's head with garbage. But the Mudblood could do the motherly things for his son, like nurture him, and love him. Just like Draco's own mother had loved him.

It wouldn't be so bad, as long as she could hold her tongue and do as he said.

Like his mother did for his father.

But Draco already knew he wouldn't have that sort of relationship with *her*. He had dreamt about having the same thing his parents had, and it almost saddened him to think he really had no chance for it. He should have known though. That sort of love was rare, especially in arranged marriages.

If his father was here, he would tell him to suck it up and grow the fuck up. His mother would tell him to make the best of it. So, Draco was trying. He was trying to do *both*. He owed it to them.

He had decided to aim for a mutual understanding, but he had such temper issues when it came to her. The Mudblood was the *only* person in the freaking world that got under his skin enough to make him so angry that he'd literally black out. Most of his brutal beatings to her he hadn't even realized he was doing until he'd hear her cry. Not wail. But actually cry with tears and everything. Like a little, hurt child would.

He didn't feel horrid though. By now, she knew what he was capable of. So at this point, she was doing what she did on purpose.

He upped the strength of his anger management potion last night, so he was able to walk out this morning without harming a hair on her body.

But that didn't mean Draco didn't want to shake her until she turned blue.

Currently, he stood at the bottom of the stone steps that lead up from the dungeons. He was propped up against a wall with an arm supporting him. His head was bent low, and he glared at his shiny black shoes, breathing slow and deep to calm himself.

He tried thinking up a nice thought to keep his mind of her behavior, only to picture her in her sleeping form. He found it peaceful, watching her sleep. She tended to sleep well, but

only if he put her under (which he had to do in order to fuck her).

Yes, Draco had chosen to do the 'deed' while she slept, knowing she'd never just *let* him do it. Potions were still brewing before he could actually make her a willing participant. He couldn't wait for that. He anticipated a little reciprocation on her part. It had been far too long since a woman had pleased him, and as his wife, that was one of her duties: to please him.

The first time he had fucked her while she slept was extremely awkward for him. He had such trouble. But if he didn't do it, and if the Dark Lord found out, he'd be in *deep* shite. So like any other time, he did what he had to do.

Draco did it right there on the straw bed. He had gotten a rash on his arms and hands from it the next day. And his dick burned with fire, still having issues because of the wounds, but he concentrated on the heat of her pussy, the flopping of her breasts as he quickly moved in and out. He wanted it to end as quickly as he could.

In the middle of the task, he heard her moan, and had stopped his movement immediately, frowning at her scrunched up face. His dick deflated as if it were a balloon. He cursed himself under his breath, panting. If he was Blaise, he'd be cumming by now, with that stupid, twisted, disturbed face she wore, but he was different.

He slowly moved to get out of her but hastily stopped when she moaned again. A warm, liquid, then coated his dick. He knew what it was, and he stared at her in complete awe.

She had cummed. *On* him. *While* he was fucking her. Had he been bumping her clit all the while without knowing it?

Her cunt was real slick now, and she felt *so* fucking sweet inside. Her muscles were working wonders on him, and Draco heard another moan erupt from her mouth. His dick expanded inside her. The pain of it was gone now and he moaned himself, burying his face into the cleavage of her breasts, thrusting his hips greedily against the Mudblood.

If fucking the Mudblood was like this all the time, he could get used to it. Easily.

And he did. For three days straight. Now he looked forward to fucking her each night. It was the one thing going right with this whole marriage sham. He made it a game— how fast and how often could he make her wet. He wanted her wet because, for some unknown reason, her pussy juices eased the wound pains of his cock.

Besides, it just made fucking her much more pleasurable for him. And this way, she wasn't crying. She was enjoying herself. Even if he was doing it while she slept.

That was okay. She didn't even know he was doing it. Which meant she was not being traumatized by it. It was one less thing she could be upset with him about.

But he was *so* desperate for more. He wanted a blow job. A *real* one that didn't involve raking teeth. And it seemed that every time he fucked her, that want grew into a need.

He also wanted her out of that bloody cell. He wanted to take her to his room, to his bed, and finally just... make her his wife. He wanted to dominate her. To show her who really was in control. His opinions about her seemed to change by the actual day, and it seemed that he was growing fond of her. He wanted to hold her to him, and never let her go. He didn't love her, but there was *something* there... Draco couldn't quite place it. Yes, she made him angry to the point where he'd hurt her for it, but he didn't *want* to do it. The fucking Mudblood just refused to play nice, and it made him upset.

"I think... I might need your help..."

Dark eyebrows lifted up in surprised. "You're really asking me for help?"

Draco sighed deeply, unsure if he really wanted the man's help or not. "I don't know what to do anymore... I... need to show her that being my wife is not going to be as bad as what she currently is."

"Ah, so you've finally changed your mind about her? You've fucked her, didn't you? You fucked her for real?"

Draco rolled his eyes. "I've no choice, you know that."

Blaise grinned. "But obviously you haven't kissed her."

"No." Draco shook his head. "I only do what I have to."

"Oh, you just *must* kiss her!"

"I am not going to kiss her."

Blaise shrugged. "You just don't know what you're missing, mate."

"Is there anyway to get her to listen— *besides* mutilating a person she loves, which she doesn't even *have*."

"Oh, contraire, my little, worried friend..." Blaise's eyes lit up. "You're forgetting about the nit."

"The nit..." Draco thought it over. "Yes, he could work, couldn't he?"

Blaise set a hand on Draco's shoulder, nodding slowly. "Oh, yes, he can. And I got a swell idea too."

"I don't want any blood," Draco said firmly.

"Course not."

"Or screaming."

Blaise scoffed. "Now you're just ruining my fun."

/

Hermione tried not thinking much about what was going to happen when Malfoy returned. It had her worried, and she bit her nails from the stress of it. She thought about giving up. She craved a decent bath— Malfoy had purposely been withholding them from her. He must have known she enjoyed them.

She missed the good food too. All she was being served the last few days was soups, bland oatmeal, and sandwiches. She wanted something more, and knew he was treating her like this on purpose.

Oh, but she just couldn't give up! She was a Gryffindor, and she was strong. She was Hermione Granger, the Brightest Witch of the Era! She couldn't let a *slimy*, good for nothing *Death Eater* get to her.

The wait was over several hours later as she heard the footsteps come forth again. By the sound of it, there were multiple people coming. She took deep breaths to keep from hyperventilating.

Zabini walked in first, a smile on his face. "'Ello, sexy, little lioness," he greeted.

She didn't answer him, looking at a stain on the wall.

"We have a special visitor for you, Mudblood," Malfoy announced, causing her to shift her eyes. They widened as she saw the tiny body.

"Samual?!" she gasped before bursting into tears. She couldn't believe it! He was alive, and he was okay! They didn't kill him! He was dressed in an old set of stained robes, but he looked healthy and clean besides that. Not starved or abused!

"Hermione!" the six-year-old cheered.

Hermione hauled herself up to feet to hug him, but Zabini caught a hold of her arm and harshly pulled her snug to his body. "Not so fast, Mudblood," he said into her ear. "I hear you'd rather be my best mate's slave than his wife. Well, I have something to tell you," he whispered darkly. She squeaked as his fingers trailed her along the length of her neck, barely touching her, but it was enough to make her skin break out into a series of goose pimples. "I've just bought the right to your body for an hour, isn't that great?" Hermione felt his hot tongue dip into her ear, making her shriek out a protest. His hand clamped tightly around her throat. He tripped her, pushing her down to the ground, pinning her beneath him. Zabini's hand found the seam of her robes, and he began groping her.

"No!" She tried throwing him off to no avail.

"That just excites me more, little lioness," he murmured into her ear, giving it another lick.

"Stop hurting her!" Samual cried.

Hermione's eyes found Samual's. Tears filled the little ones. He struggled against Zabini's wife, who had her arms wrapped around him to keep him in place.

"You hear that, Mudblood?" Zabini said into her ear. "The child cries for you. It would be a shame for him to witness such a *mature* thing, wouldn't it?"

"Don't make him watch...!" Hermione pleaded. The situation was bad enough without traumatizing Samual.

"Maybe he'll learn something." Zabini sat up and brought her hands up above her head, holding them in place with one of his own.

"Malfoy!" She found him leaning up against the doorway, watching the scene with narrow eyes. "You can't possibly find this acceptable?!" Hermione gasped as Zabini encased her nipple into his mouth. "*STOP IT!*" She shut her eyes tightly, clenching her fists, and kicking her knees up, kneeing him in the back

"It's actually very acceptable," she heard Malfoy say. "For a slave. Not so much for a wife, but you refuse to be my wife, so I thought I'd make good use of you this way. Zabini paid a very hefty amount for you."

"Yes, but that's because I want to fuck your every orifice."

Hermione's eyes flew open to see Zabini cockily grinning at her.

"Yes, your arsehole is not going to be a virgin anymore, lioness."

"Malfoy...!" She looked at him in desperation. "Don't let him...!"

Malfoy tossed his hands up. "There's nothing I can do about it. Unless you were to... *accept* the role as my *wife*. Fucking a *married* woman is a crime these days."

This had been planned... She now doubted Zabini was even going to rape her— well maybe he would, if she said no. She certainly didn't want to find out if he would or not!

Zabini's thumb was taunting her nipple, making it stiff. She sucked in a breath and clamped her teeth. "Alright," she hissed. "Get this dirty fucker off me, Malfoy."

"Tell me who you are to me, first," he said flatly.

Hermione scrunched her face up and groaned in annoyance. Zabini was now rolling her nipple between his fingers, whispering things to her. Things that made her stomach sick.

"Sexy, little slut you are... Mmm... I can't help in a way but want for you to say no to him... What do you say, Mudblood? How about you let me play with you a little, I've surely been dreaming about it enough."

"I'm your *wife*, Malfoy! Alright?! Are you *happy* now?! Now please! Make him *stop!* Please...!" Hermione sent him a pitiful look, hoping he'd have some sort of softness in that black heart of his. She blinked back tears, and pulled at her hands to break free, but Zabini had such a tight hold on her. His teeth sank into her flesh, biting her nipple, making her yelp.

"Alright, you can stop groping my wife now, Blaise."

Hermione had never been so happy to hear Malfoy say anything.

"Such a shame," Zabini growled seductively, releasing her. "Just think about this though: anytime you refuse to do what Draco says, I will have that little nit—" he pointed to Samual. "Do to me what you won't for Draco. Including *intimate* things. Are we clear?"

Hermione's mouth fell open. "No, you can't!"

"Yes. Oh, yes, I can. You see, Mudblood, he was just *given* to me today. And I can do *whatever* I want with him." He leaned down to where their noses were almost touching. "Which could include a *fatal, gruesome, slaughter*."

Her hand flew up and smacked his cheek. Then another. And another, until Zabini caught her wrists, and laughed. "Go kiss your husband, *Mrs. Malfoy*. He definitely deserves it!" He stood up to his feet, bringing her up with him and then pushed her toward Malfoy who caught her. "Kiss her, Draco. The Dark Lord will surely love to know you've done it. Married people kiss, don't they, Bernice?"

The woman looked away, blushing.

"You won't regret it, mate." Zabini winked at his friend.

"Just shut up about it," Malfoy grumbled.

"You know I won't until you do."

Malfoy eyed Hermione over before stopping his eyes on her lips.

"Don't," Hermione said, making an attempt to get out of his grasping hands, sensing he was going to really do it.

"Oh, *do*," Zabini urged him on, excitement filling his eyes. "You know you want to, Draco. You know you've been thinking about it *all day long!*"

Malfoy's hold on her got tighter as he felt her pull away. He pulled her to him and crashed his lips to hers, muffling her groaning protesting. She fought him, flailing her arms against his body, but he only deepened the kiss, slipping his tongue into her mouth.

She paused her fighting, caught by surprise with the intrusion. Her pulse raced. She heard Zabini's encouraging words as he 'helped' his friend through the process.

"Isn't she lovely, mate? Doesn't she taste fabulous?"

Malfoy moaned in answer. He actually moaned! His hand snatched a hold of the back of her head to keep it still. His tongue was exploring every inch of her mouth. It puzzled Hermione, because she actually found it... *enjoying*.

Oh, but she just *had* to be insane, right?! She didn't ask for this kiss! He didn't ask *her* if he could kiss her! He *forced* his lips on her!

And yet, it felt so good. He tasted... so wonderful; sweet and minty. His tongue was soft, but bold, darting this way and that, tangling with hers. Her knees buckled. Her breath was gone; he had taken it from her. Stolen it. Along with her sense of mind. All sense of control was *gone*.

"Congratulations are in order," she faintly heard Zabini giggle.

Hermione didn't even care about him anymore.

Seeking Advice

By far, it was the best kiss Draco had ever had in his life. And it was with *her*. The Mudblood. He should have been upset, angry with her for stirring up such feelings inside him.

But he wasn't.

Because it was fantastic. It was perfect. Beyond any imaginable dream he could ever fantasize about. Her lips were plump and tender. Her flicking tongue launched the pit of his stomach into some delightful fire that he did not want to put out. She tasted so nice. Juicy and sweet.

Whether the Mudblood knew it or not, Draco was aware that she was grasping his hips firmly, as if using him for balance.

He cupped her face, holding her mouth to his. He forbid her from ending this. Judging by the way she returned the kissing, he didn't think she wanted it to end either.

Pleasure jolted through him as she pressed her pelvis to his, grinding against him. He moaned into her mouth, and stroked a thumb along her cheek, permitting her the knowledge that he was pleased by this motion of hers. The Mudblood whimpered. Not because she was in distress, or in pain—not *that* type of pain anyway. She continued to ride his hardening bulge, fixing her building need at her cunt. Her breathing picked as she grew excited.

Draco reluctantly broke off the kiss, panting from both arousal and lack of air. He tucked his hands into the Mudblood's parted bathrobes to grip her ass, pressing his bulge to the spot she so wanted friction at.

She cried out, arching her back. She was near. Draco wasn't inexperienced to not know when a woman was peaking her climax. Her muscles were tightening up, her forehead was clammy. He had to hold her to him since she was growing weak, her orgasm just seconds from occurring.

Draco backed her up two steps to the wall behind her and encased her between he and it. He gathered her legs into his hands at the back of her knees and wrapped them around his waist. He rolled his cock against her, giving her what she so desperately wanted. She moaned, finally releasing herself.

He had never found a woman's moan to be so fucking hot.

The Mudblood went limp against him, still moaning every so second. He was not going to stop her here. From experience, he knew she was just getting started. In her sleep, he could get her to cum at least five times, one after another. Her pussy would be so slippery by the time he was finished with her.

With his face buried deep into her neck, he toyed with her, using his aching member to torture her, yet delivering that ultimate satisfaction she so desired.

It was good that he was well disciplined. He would have came himself. But his cock wasn't even exposed yet. Only when it was exposed was it allowed to lose control.

She spoke no words. Only made sounds. Heavy breathing. Mewing. She even screamed once. These sounds Draco didn't mind a bit. They were filled with lust. Nothing more. And he loved every minute of it.

He noticed that the Mudblood wouldn't look him in the eye. Draco wasn't sure if she did that on purpose, afraid to admit that she was enjoying what he was doing to her (they hated each other, after all), ashamed by her sluttiness, or if she just hadn't thought about looking at him; she was still very new to this. He supposed she would look him in the eye in the future. After they did this a few times over. After getting used to it.

All anyone ever needed to adjust to anything was time.

Her juices soaked through his trousers. He groaned under his breath, the scent of her overwhelming him. Draco crashed his lips to hers, and this time she welcomed his kiss with her tongue, entering his mouth with it.

He lay her onto the straw underneath him and began unbuckling his belt to let his throbbing cock out. It was so hard, so tight. It sprung out, lightly touching her thigh in the process. He stroked it some, spreading the precum that had formed at the tip to the length of him.

Draco caught her hands with his, pinning them to either side of her head. Threading their fingers together, he pushed his dick deep into her drenching, hot hole.

She gasped, arching her back, pressing her tits to his shirt. With a swift, skillful move, he grabbed the back of his shirt and pulled it over his head, removing it. Her hard nipples against his bare chest only fed his fire.

He worked fast, grunting, pounding into her cunt, making her cry out. Her seeping juices tickled his balls, and he loved it. Her tits flew about to every hard thrust he made until he felt the beginning of his own orgasm, and he then slowed his movement to create a gap between their bodies, wanting to finger her clit.

"Cum to my touch," he growled into her ear. He nipped the skin at her jaw, rewarding the Mudblood for spreading her legs out for him after he had said that. "That's it," he purred. "Spread them nice and wide." His fingers moved quickly in circles and a moan escaped past the Mudblood's lips. Her hands touched his bare shoulders where she dug her fingers into his flesh, making him hiss out. Draco was sure she dug deep enough to make him bleed.

But he found it exciting. Worthwhile.

Granger went still, wailing out long and loud. The trickle of her hot fluids coated his dick, inviting him to proceed with his fucking. She dropped her hands to her sides, sighing in

complete exhaustion. Her chest was heaving up and down. Her body occasionally jerked; effects of her latest orgasm.

Draco finished himself, needing only a few more thrusts before he was spilling his seed into her. He didn't remove himself right away, reminiscing over what had just happened. He assumed there was some sort of spell on her. Well, on both of them really, but her especially. Until the kiss, the Mudblood had made no sign that she was even remotely attracted to him.

But that kiss... It was too good to be true.

It was most likely a spell. One that had to do with their marriage. Given all that Blaise had said earlier, it was the only logical explanation that had made the Mudblood so slutty.

So, did it make their wives a willing and horny participant? Or was it something completely different? Draco had a hard time believing that the Dark Lord would even think about such a thing, as He got hard over brutally raping people.

Of course the Dark Lord had also expressed how 'fragile' the Mudblood was. Perhaps the Dark Lord didn't want His followers doing much damage to their wives, if any at all. It was emphasized that the Mudblood was Draco's wife not his slave, but it was hard to believe that the Dark Lord would think about such a spell that would make the wives willing. Much less go so far as wasting His time to add the effect to the marriage bond.

Draco looked down at Granger. She was staring at the ceiling above them, still trying to catch her breath. She made no move to do anything, not even to yell at him for what he had done to her.

Draco brushed a hand through her hair. He really needed to find something that would tame it. It was an ungodly mess. The simplest moment would cause a knot or tangle.

"I'd say you have earned your way out of this dungeon."

She blinked. Shame flushed across her face, as if his words had just made her realize what she had just done. He stood up and put his cock away, not wanting to scare her with it. As far as he knew, she hadn't even seen it—

Except for that *one* time...

He pursed his lips. He did not want to think about that terrifying event. That was in the past. And hopefully, it would *stay* in the past.

"I need a bath," she announced in a hoarse whisper. She cleared her throat, gathering up her courage and actually looking at him. Her face lacked emotion.

She didn't want him know how she felt. But Draco already knew, since her face had shown what she had been feeling only moments before. With time, she won't feel ashamed of herself. With time, maybe she'll enjoy it without the influence of a spell, like Draco had learned to do.

Least now Draco wouldn't have to force a potion down her bloody throat. Getting her to let him near her again to kiss her was going to be a difficult task though.

Course, there is always the Imperius Curse.

/

Hermione scrubbed her body, shivering in disgust. She cleaned the areas that Malfoy had touched with extra soap and extra scrubbing. Those places of her body ended up being bright red from the amount of pressure and friction she applied.

Even down *there*.

She knew it had been a spell. A charm more specifically. She couldn't say it was a curse per se, but it wasn't something she wanted to do again.

Even if it felt really, *really* good.

Hermione shuddered at her body's betrayal. At her *mind's* betrayal. The kiss had brought it on, making her act like some wild cat in heat.

She *humped* him...! She bloody rode him like a stripper! She kissed him! She... She... let him touch her in her most private of areas, and she *enjoyed* it! Every bit of it! She absolutely *loved* it!

And she wanted more...

But Hermione wasn't going to give in to it. It had been a spell. That's all. It wasn't *truly* how she felt, and even if it was, she couldn't allow herself to enjoy Malfoy's touch. He was a murderer, and he tortured people for fame and glory.

He was evil.

He had been so tender with her. So nice to her. Who would have thought that someone with such sweet lips could be so evil? She would have never thought Malfoy had such a side to him. It wasn't exactly sensitive, but he hadn't been cruel to her either.

Maybe if this was a different world, with a different beginning and ending, she could allow herself to give in to his passion. But she couldn't with the given circumstances.

Hermione was afraid of what she would become if she permitted herself to lust for him. Besides, she *hated* him, and *he* hated *her*. He may treat her decently in bed, but he treated her like dirt any other time.

Which made her think that Malfoy must had been charmed too, in order to look past her Mudblood status to be able to have sex with her.

In his own words, he found her too revolting and hideous to do such a thing with her.

/

He watched her as she slept, an activity he was beginning to do most every night. The Mudblood's soft snoring sent a slight smile spreading across his lips. It was kind of cute. Not annoying at all.

She did tend to toss and turn quite a bit, groaning in discomfort. When she would start this, Draco put her into a deep sleep. He didn't want her to wake up and get upset that he was watching her. She would probably think he was a bit creepy for doing that.

Maybe he was, but Draco didn't care. She was his wife, and he could watch her while she slept if he wanted.

The Mudblood was already accepting her new life in tiny steps. She had bathed as soon as he had brought her back up to her room. He could now smell the green apple fragrance on her. Cresty the house-elf had let him know that she had eaten her dinner of roast beef and potatoes with no arguments, thanking the house-elf for the meal.

"I told hers that it was you who supplies her with foods, sir," Cresty had quickly added.

"Yes, I know, Cresty. I trust you enough to correct her."

"She says nothing when I tells her that, Master."

"No snarky remark?" Draco had been surprised to hear that.

The house-elf shook her head in an answer and smiled. He then dismissed her. Cresty bowed before she departed.

Draco crawled into bed next to the Mudblood, staring at her sleeping face. Her mouth was slightly open, breathing through it. Little puffs of air blew into his face. He closed his eyes, humming quietly.

He wanted to kiss her.

It seemed anytime he saw her anymore he was liking her more and more. He still hated that she was who she was, but he was caring less and less about it everyday.

He didn't care that it was a spell doing this to him. Why should he fight it? He had no choice in the matter either way. If it was part of the marriage bond, if this was what the Dark Lord wanted him to feel, there was nothing he could do. And since he was forced to marry the Mudblood, he figured it was better to accept it than fight it. Easier and safer at the very least.

It wasn't like she wouldn't make a good wife. Obviously, she was a good fuck. She'd make a good mother to his heirs (she was caring to little children, and valued manners—when it didn't concern people she hated). She was decent entertainment too; it didn't take much effort to annoy her, which amused him.

He just needed her to get used to the idea of her being married to him, and being the new Mrs. Malfoy.

It would be so simple—if it were any other bloody woman besides Hermione-fucking-Granger.

/

Hermione could smell him. It had woken her up the next morning. He wasn't in her room but, for some reason, his scent was there. It was a clean one. Citrus and musky. She pressed her lips together, annoyed with herself for finding it lovely. She refrained from inhaling deeply to relish in the smell.

She rolled out of the bed and sprinted to the bathroom where she was relieved to learn that it was not infected with the scent.

He must have just left the room. What had he been doing in there? Why would he even want to be near her?

Unless he, too, wanted a repeat of what happened the night before?

Hermione shook her head. No. She wouldn't. She couldn't. She *shouldn't*.

And why not? the other half of her mind argued. *I'm going to be made to do it until I'm pregnant anyway, I may as well enjoy it.*

It was so wrong though, and it was not really how she felt. So she was going to fight those feelings. They were not real.

Hermione could tell that it was going to be a challenge though, because the thought of last night's kiss lingered around her mind.

Involuntarily, she set her fingers up to her lips. They tingled to the touch. She closed her eyes, picturing Malfoy kissing her. Her hand fisted in frustration, and she let out a growl.

What kind of spell was this?!

She just *had* to get to a library before she lost all sense and control.

/

"You're a woman, Tori. Help me!"

Astoria snorted. "Thanks for noticing that, Draco!"

Draco tossed his hands up. "That's not what I meant, and you know it! I don't know who else to go to! My mentor has *never* had a personal relationship, he's clueless when it comes to women, and Blaise... well... he doesn't exactly... *woo*... if you know what I mean..."

Astoria nodded. A baby lay in her arms. She rocked it and adjusted the blanket to tuck a loose arm under it. "Don't I know about *him*. He's a *complete* pig—"

"I know—"

"You're not really much better. Different, but no better. At least when it comes to girls you want to... *mix* with."

"Which is why I came to you," Draco said quietly. His eyes fell down to the small yellow bundle in her arms. "Whose child was that anyway?"

Astoria shrugged. "Could have belonged to a set of Muggleborns for all I know. The Dark Lord is taking no chances though. She's magical, and impure..."

Draco sighed and sat down in one of the Greengrass's elaborate chairs. "I'm sorry..."

"Don't be," Astoria returned quickly. "I knew we could never be. You wanted to mate for—" She gave him a pointed look. "Your parents loved each other. You wanted that, and you didn't love me. That's okay, Draco. I do understand, which is why at one time I was interested in you."

Draco grunted and rested an ankle on his knee. "Not like any of that matters anymore!"

The baby in Astoria's arms was starting to stir awake and she shushed it. "It obviously does, Draco. That's why you're here."

"I half expected you to curse me out. I thought you would be angry after hearing about who I had to marry."

She shrugged, bringing the infant up to her chest to pat its back. "After I was rendered useless to breed—which was the term the bastard used for me—"

"The Dark Lord?"

"No, the Tester. He literally broke the news to me in that matter: '*It seems you are as useless as your sister, Astoria.*' That *bugger* didn't even have the respect to address me properly!"

Draco shot up from the chair. "Who said that?!" he demanded. "I'll teach him to respect you!"

Astoria rolled her eyes. "Honestly, Draco! I can handle myself! Don't you forget Goyle's bloody nose in fourth year!"

"Yes, but—"

"But nothing. What is it exactly that you need help with?" She changed the subject. By the stern tone she used, he was not to go further with the previous topic.

"She hates me," Draco informed in exasperation.

"And don't you hate her?"

"Well, yes... I mean... *maybe*..." He sighed, completely undecided on what he really felt about the Mudblood. "I used to hate her a lot. But I'm finding it harder to do each time I look at her. I can't help but to feel... *different* about her. To the point where it's beginning to drive me a little nutty."

"But you don't love her?"

"No," he said firmly. "I've seen love. What I am feeling is definitely not love."

"You're attracted to her then?"

Draco shut his eyes and rolled his neck around in circles. The image of her naked body appeared in his mind. The crotch of his pants immediately tightened. "Oh, yes," he answered huskily, quickly sitting back down to hide his sudden growth from his friend. The smirk on her face let him know that he hadn't been at all successful in hiding his feelings from her. "I'm afraid I am."

"I take it that you kissed her then?"

"Yes— *Wait!* You know about that?! How?!"

"Mmm, Longbottom and I have been talking—"

"Longbottom?!"

"Give me a break, Draco, I've been talking with him since the end of fifth year."

"*Why?!*"

"Because he's very sweet. Anyway, the girl he ended up with was more than willing. It surprised him—"

"I would have thought he would put up a fight with this whole marriage thing..."

Astoria frowned in disturbance. "No... He submitted when his grandmother's life was threatened..."

"Right. Well, that's what love gets you. Leverage for your enemies."

"I suppose so..." Astoria trailed off in a murmur. "He told me about the kissing charm," she said a moment later with a bit of longing in her voice. "It sounds rather lovely."

"It wasn't terrible," Draco admitted. "She even kissed me *back*."

"So you actually don't need help with wooing her. The kiss sounds like it's doing all the work for you."

"Tori, she's not going to let me near her now. She's embarrassed. She liked it just as much as I did, and I'd wager she's a little afraid."

"If I were in her shoes, I'd be afraid too. To end up liking a kiss from the man who you hate? Who hates you back? That's quite disturbing, Draco."

"Yes, it is... I just... I *want* her to trust me," he told Astoria. "How can I earn a woman's trust? How did I earn *your* trust, Tori?"

"Oh, now you know all that already. Don't be thick." The baby started fussing loudly then, taking her attention from Draco. "It's okay, baby girl. Mama has you, you're alright." She hugged the baby, pressing her cheek to it.

"You're really going to raise a Mudblood's baby?"

"He asked for volunteers to raise the small children. I've no other use, and I was lonely. Lyra fills a hole in my life."

"But all by yourself?"

"I've nothing better to do, I had no plans. My parents didn't raise me to do anything but—"

"Stay at home..." he duly finished for her. All these years he hadn't given it much thought until now. He knew the majority of the Pureblood women had no careers in their future, taught at a very young age the duties of being a wife and a mother. It depressed Draco a little, as Astoria had a lot of talent that she could put to use. She was a wonderful tutor, and could even teach students a subject in school.

"You're free to do what you want now. Maybe you could go to school and become a professor? Or a Healer?"

Astoria smiled at him, her eyes watered a little. "This is the side that you so deeply hide from a lot of people. You're kind, and you have the ability to respect people around you, not just your authority. Show your wife *this* side of Draco, and you may just win her heart, and if not that, at least you'll earn *her* respect."

"What about you?" he asked in concern. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to be the best mother that I can be to Lyra here."

"With no help? All alone? Tori, you should have some help...! A husband at the very least!"

Astoria shrugged. She looked away, blinking back a tear. "I'm... too damaged..."

"No, you're not!" He got out of the chair and set a hand onto her shoulder.

"No one wants me!" She made a loud stiff sniff before brushing his hand off her. "I'll be fine, Draco. Go home." She leaned forward, pecking his cheek ever so softly and turned away.

"Tori...!" He reached out, grabbing her forearm to stop her.

She looked back at him with swollen eyes, giving him a gentle smile. "Do for her what you would do for me if I were your wife. Her feelings for you will eventually change. Maybe even into the one thing you have wanted since you were old enough to make sense of it."

Unable To Focus

Hermione made a decision. She was going to search the library. Malfoy's library specifically. She was sure he had one, anyone with as much wealth as he had would have one, and the Malfoys were not known for being dumb. They'd need a place to store their expensive literature.

The problem was she didn't know where it was, and it wasn't like he was going to grant her permission to go there. Hermione also wasn't willing to ask, because even if he allowed her access to the library, he'd want something out of it in return, though, she wasn't quite sure what he would actually want from her, besides maybe making her do something to simply humiliate her, which Malfoy was likely to end up enforcing on her eventually anyway.

So she created a plan: She'd wait for him to come in and then she'd attack him, and immobilize him, so she could run off to find the mountain of books he owned. He'd be angry with her, but that wouldn't be different than any other time spent with him.

This was going to be worth the punishment.

But Hermione couldn't do that now. She had to learn a few things first. Malfoy was a creature of habit, or so she learned from those few days in his disgusting dungeon. He had a schedule and he stuck to it, and she needed to study it. He 'visited' her twice a day. Once in the morning, and once in the evening. All visits were done to prod her, poke at her, and remind her of her place, but he also had potions he forced her to take too. The same potions he had given her when he had met up with her in America. Hermione could only guess that they were nutrition potions—they smelled extremely herby. One was likely a fertility enhancer.

Hermione shuddered at the thought of having Malfoy's baby. It was still confusing as to why she was supposed to be doing this at all. Why would Voldemort do such a thing, after starting the war against Muggles and Muggleborns? Something must have happened between then and now. Maybe there wasn't hardly any Pureblood women anymore, though, if that was the case, Malfoy would still have his pick of the remaining, wouldn't he? His 'prestige' bloodline went further back than anyones.

Whatever was the reason, it didn't necessarily matter. Hermione had 'agreed' to be his wife to protect Samual, if she crossed a line with Malfoy, he would definitely tell his friend to torture her little boy. That couldn't happen.

But she'd find a way to get both of them out of this horrible lifestyle. She was just going to have to be sneaky about it. She could fool him easily.

At 6:15 pm, Hermione made a mental note as a house elf arrived. The house elves at Malfoy Manor all wore the same style looking pillow case (white with a patch of the family's crest on the left side of the chest), and most of them were similar in appearances. Two of them Hermione could only tell the difference between their voices and their voices alone. One was female, speaking more soft, and the other was male (his voice was quite a bit higher than the elf that looked like him). Maybe they were identical twins, Hermione never knew which was

which until they spoke, as they even acted like the other. Their left big toe twitched every so few seconds, and their heads would tilt right before they asked you a question.

The one that came on this night held a package that was at least the size of he/she. It was messily wrapped with brown paper. A large red ribbon secured it together tightly.

"The Master has presented the Mistress with a gift!" It was the girl one. Bobby was her name. Bobby smiled widely. "Come see, Mistress! You will likes it!"

Curiosity burned through Hermione's veins as she watched the elf trot to the bedroom part of the suite. Malfoy was giving her something? Something nice? That was a bit too far-fetched to believe.

The gift was set on the bed and Bobby looked at Hermione, anticipation set in those big, round eyes. The elf acted like she was the one who had given her the gift. "Go on and opens it, Mistress!" she urged, rocking on the balls of her feet.

The gift couldn't be horrible, if a house elf was going to get excited over Hermione unwrapping it. Hermione didn't take any of the elves here at the Manor to be sinister—which was hard to grasp, giving Malfoy's personality.

Hermione wasn't sure what to think. So many questions flooded her mind and none of them she had any answers to. She wanted to open it, just to see what it was, but didn't want to accept the gift either—she couldn't be bought! But it wasn't like Malfoy was trying to buy her anyway. He wanted nothing to do with her, so once again, she found herself asking why he would give her something, and what in the world could that something *be*.

She eyed it over, several feet away. If she had to guess, it was some sort of cloth material, such as a piece of clothing or a blanket.

What in the world could it be?

Curiosity won. She couldn't help herself. She had never considered Malfoy to be a gifter, but then she had never had the chance to think of it before now.

Slowly, she pulled at the ribbon, untying it from the package. She set it on the bed beside the gift and proceeded further. Bobby stood near her, making audible noises as she watched Hermione excitedly.

The wrapping was removed, revealing what it had been hiding, Hermione stared down at a piece of yellow fabric. She didn't know what it was just yet as it was folded neatly without a wrinkle in sight, but by the looks of it alone, it was beautiful.

Hermione touched it. It was the softest material she had ever felt in her entire life. She found that it was hard to pull her hand away from it. She took it from where it lay on the bed and unfolded it, discovering that it was a dress.

She was speechless. A dress. Malfoy had given her a dress. A dress that must have cost a fortune too. It had shimmering clear crystals embedded into it, making the entire dress

shimmer when the light hit it, reminding Hermione more of fairy dust than anything. The sleeves were sheer, and went all the way down to the wrist. She simply adored the neckline, since it was high up, allowing the wearer some decency, unlike most dresses these days that showed all but the woman's nipples of her breasts.

"It's nice dress, right, Mistress?" Bobby asked, waiting for a verbal response.

Hermione swallowed hard. It was a very nice dress. She absolutely loved it, and deeply wanted to slip it on to see if it fit to her body, but she didn't believe it didn't come with strings attached, and she had no idea what Malfoy was playing at.

She did know one thing though, and that was that she wasn't going to play this game. Not one single turn of it. With her eyes closed, Hermione reluctantly balled it up in her hands and tossed it back on the bed.

"I cannot accept this, Bobby," she announced grimly. She went back into the sitting room of the suite, knowing that she'd have second thoughts if she laid her eyes on that beautiful piece of work.

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"What kind of woman refuses *that*!?" Draco demanded out in disbelief.

"Oh, but Master," Bobby squeaked. "She did like it! I promise you that, sir! I can tell by her face!"

For a split moment, Draco found himself smirking. He trusted Bobby to notice things, she was his most compassionate elf he owned, and she read expressions better than he could. And that meant that he had been right in picking that specific dress for Granger. He had chosen the colour yellow for something bright and less dingy in her little world, where she was surrounded by emotional darkness. The crystal gems gave the garment a mystical feel, something Draco thought Granger would appreciate. And then there was the whole modesty of the dress. Granger respected her body (obviously, since she had still been a virgin at the age of twenty-one, which was rare in a woman who was not Pureblood these days). He had been so sure that she'd like that the dress revealed nothing except the delicious curves of her body.

His smirk faded quickly though, bitterness suppressing the naughty thoughts of her sexy body.

She had refused his gift. He wasn't surprised by it. The Mudblood was a heinous bitch who didn't have a clue when someone was trying to be decent to her. Really, he didn't even know why he tried. He knew she would react this way, but he had hoped that... that maybe...

He shook his head. He was crazy to think she'd even bother forgiving him. She'd see nothing but evil in him, and it wasn't like he could blame her. In her eyes, he was the devil.

He could not help how he had been brought up. He did what he had to to survive. Nothing more.

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Dinner came and went. Malfoy had yet to come by, which was strange, as Bobby had gravely warned Hermione that he would be very angry with her for rejecting his gift. She had shrugged the warning off as Malfoy didn't show any other emotion toward her than anger anyway.

Unless he was under that kissing spell.

Hermione dug her nails into her thighs and cursed herself under her breath for letting her thoughts wander in that direction. She grunted in annoyance, focusing her mind elsewhere.

It worked for maybe two minutes at the most, but it also didn't help that Malfoy had chosen that time to finally make an appearance. Her eyes immediately flew to the door as it clicked open and he cautiously stepped in with his wand out, as if expecting her to attack him.

Finding her seated at the desk, he stuffed his wand up the sleeve of his shirt and shut the door behind him. It made another loud click, locking with a spell.

Hermione's lips twitched. He was incredibly good looking, even if all he dressed in was black and dark grey suits. It made his pale skin seem more pale than it was, and his near white hair stick out like a sore thumb, but it also brought out his stormy eyes and pink lips.

He wore an unreadable blank expression, which slightly confused her, since she had expected him to arrive angry, but she didn't care either way, finding him sexy, standing there as he looked at her.

When Malfoy's eyebrows raised high up to his hairline Hermione couldn't look at him any longer. Had he expected her to say something? Or was she...

No, she wasn't drooling. Not *physically* anyway. But Merlin she was in trouble, and she had to break that bloody spell before she did something stupid.

"I asked you a question, Granger," he said evenly. "I would like an answer."

She had missed what he had asked. Hopefully, that was why he had looked at her the way he had and not because he had noticed that she had been goggling at him.

"I wasn't listening," Hermione told him stiffly. She wouldn't look at him. She wasn't sure how long she could stay sane with him just a mere ten feet from her. She clenched her hands at her knees, gripping the fabric of her bathrobes into her fists.

Malfoy's footsteps approached her, and she set her jaw, waiting for him to smack her or pull at her hair, but he didn't touch her. He bent down to her level behind her, breathing against the side of her neck, making her swallow hard. She could smell him now. The scent of him sent shivers down her body.

He spoke, but once again, she had not heard him, or rather she could not pay his words any attention. She shut her eyes tightly in an effort to concentrate on what he was saying instead of the naughty things she wanted to do with him.

"You aren't listening to me, are you?"

"Huh?" she managed to slip out something. Unfortunately, it sounded more like a moan than anything.

Hermione felt him stand up straight. She instantly took a deep breath, and bolted from the chair, putting distance between them. She put a hand to her face, covering her eyes, heavily embarrassed with herself.

Hermione looked up, when she heard Malfoy sigh. "I would have thought you would want out of those bathrobes." He was looking at the seam of her bathrobes.

Hermione huffed, pulling the sides together, covering up her exposed body. "I know it's likely very hard for you to do since you're so utterly barbaric, but I'd have expected you to have more manners than to stare at me as if you've never seen a naked woman before!"

Malfoy's eyes met hers, and she would have sworn she saw him smile, but if he had, it was so quick, that she could second guess it.

"Well, my wife, it's time for our nightly one-on-one. I'm going to let you pick how we do it tonight; do you wish to submit to me willingly, or would you rather be drugged? I do say, the kiss is a lovely way to get things started, but your absolute submission would be a great change in pace."

Hermione shook her head and crossed her arms. "I'm not going to do anything with you willing, Malfoy, especially *that*!"

He sighed again. "Very well." He pulled his wand back out of his shirt and pointed it at her. "I guess I'll have to let Blaise know that you've refused to bed me willingly—the nit's going to love what he has in store for him."

"Wait...!" Hermione gasped, holding at her hands, trying to stop him from casting whatever was on his mind.

"Yes?" Malfoy prompted. His lips spread out into a tiny grin, and she knew she had done exactly what he had wanted (and expected) her to do.

Did she have any other choice though? Hermione didn't even want to *think* about what Zabini would do to little Samual. He had said anything that she refused to do for Malfoy he'd make Samual do. The thought made her want to hurl.

Hermione shut her eyes, hiding the tears that were beginning to form. "Alright then, Malfoy, I'll do so willingly," she grimly said as steadily as she could.

At least until I can find a way out of this rretched place, away from you, and your disgusting friends, and master.

No Other Choice

AN: I want to apologize, I accidentally deleted someone's comment when I went to reply. They corrected my spelling on 'cummed'. It's been a rough few weeks, but I believe I remember changing it. Thank you.

He took off the top of his suit and draped it over the back of the chair. His eyes stayed on her the entire time he did it. His fingers went to his tie, loosening it. His staring made Hermione suddenly feel uncomfortable. She felt like prey to a starving wolf, and she didn't like it.

Her hands tightened at the bathrobe that she held close around her body. She watched him neatly set his tie onto the previous piece of clothing he had removed. Her pulse picked up in anticipation as he reached behind his head, grabbing the back of his light grey shirt to pull it over his head. Hermione swallowed hard when his face was once again visible, meeting his eyes, forcing herself not to look lower than that.

Malfoy's eyes bored into hers. He wanted her. It scared her. It wasn't a real feeling, created only from a spell, one that he probably disliked having himself. He only wanted to satisfy an urge. The same urge she had—the reason she refused to look at his naked chest, knowing the need would amplify if she did.

Hermione squeezed her eyes shut, trying to dismiss the thought of any part of him being naked. That only intensified the 'fantasy' as her mind pictured his pale, slightly hairy chest and slowly followed the trail of blond strands to his bare waistline.

She heard Malfoy chuckle, stopping her mind from going any further with the thought—*thank Merlin!*

She kept her eyes closed and made an effort to calm her breathing.

"Well?"

"What?" she dared to ask.

He didn't answer right away. She expected him to, but all was silent, besides the thudding of her quick pulse in her ears.

"Open your eyes."

Hermione's eyes flew open, startled by how close his voice was. And close he was. Malfoy was right in front of her, within touching distance. Out of the corner of her eye, she was relieved to see that the slacks of his suit were still on, hugging his hips. Her breath hitched as she caught sight of his nude stomach. Her gaze took in his torso, stopping at a scar that

stretched from beneath the mid of his ribs to around the right side of his waist. She couldn't see where the long scar stopped at, as it was hidden somewhere around the backside of him.

She hadn't remembered seeing it before. Then again, when had she had the time to actually *look* at him?

"Which friend of yours do you think was capable doing this?" Malfoy's tone was curious one.

"I—" Hermione shook her head. She didn't know of anyone in her circle of friends who would cast such a curse. But of course, there were lots of things she learned in the war. People on both sides died, not just hers.

"Don't concern yourself with such traumatizing thoughts." Malfoy traced a finger along the visible part of the scar. "This was done from someone on my side. I miscalculated my opponent's move—only took me once to learn not to do it again; nearly died from it." He turned around in a complete circle, showing off the top half of his body. It was free of scars besides the one, of which Hermione learned finished at the center of his back.

"Why were you fighting someone from your side?" she found herself asking.

"Training would be the correct term. You and your friends did the same thing, ours was just much more... *damaging* should we become careless during the match. This obviously wasn't caused by the tickling charm."

Hermione finally looked away, setting her gaze to the floor between them, not wanting to even think about the curse that could do something so terrible.

"I won the match," he added smugly. "But then again, I always do."

And she was sure Malfoy had cast a curse just as bad, if not worse, ending the battle. She shuddered, terrified at the thought of such evil.

He scoffed. "You pretend that your side was *so* innocent. Maybe some were, Granger, but do not let yourself forget that many of my housemates and friends are dead—dead from some of the same spells that we had cast unto you, our own spells used against us. Stolen."

Her lips pursed. "I *never* used such a spell to kill a person! I've never *killed* anyone!" Her voice was hoarse from the thought of such awful doings, vivid images of war flashing into her mind.

"Well, perhaps you're partially to blame for your side losing then."

Her body began to shake, realizing that he could be right. Maybe if she had fought a little dirty, her friends, her family, and a numerous amount of people would still be alive. And maybe she wouldn't be here with him, standing next to him, he, half in the nude, tormenting her with words of what she should have done differently.

Her gut wrenched, pushing her dinner up into the back of her throat. She gagged, covering her mouth to prevent from hurling completely. She sobbed, missing the people she loved, truly comprehending the state she was in: alone, with nowhere to go, stuck with a man who

would do nothing but torture her for the remainder of her short life. A man who will dispose of her as soon as she was no longer of use to him.

"Get it a grip, Gryffindor," Malfoy snarled, grasping a hand around her upper arm.

"Don't touch me!" She pulled free from him, tears trailing down her face. "You don't understand what it's like!"

"Don't understand what what's like?!" Malfoy demanded, stepping closer to her after she had backed away. "What do you think that I don't understand?! You think it was all sunshine and roses for me?!"

"Everyone I loved is dead! Because of people like *you!* I hate you! I hate you, and I hate your bloody friends— every one of them!"

Malfoy laughed deeply. Coldly. He was anything but amused. Hermione backed away from him, but he just followed her around the room while she stumbled in her stepping, trying to keep out of his reach. She had heard him laugh before, but not like this. She had no idea what he was capable of doing in this state of mind, and didn't want to find out.

"Love is a word often overused by foolish people like yourself," he told her as she bumped into a shelving unit. He caught a hold of her, squeezing her upper arms into his grasp, pushing Hermione against it, holding her at his arms length. "And you don't know anything about my personal life." His grip on her tightened, making Hermione wince. "So, you'd be wise to never make assumptions about me again," Malfoy warned her. He harshly shoved her against the shelf, painfully pressing the edges of it into her body, scowling at her with his top lip slightly curled upward.

"Quit that!" she shrieked. "That hurts, Malfoy!"

Malfoy released her abruptly and took a step back. "Let's get this over with, Mudblood." He waved his hand at her as if she was some house elf. "Remove your bathrobe, and present your body to me."

Hermione stiffened. Her arms were still wrapped around her body to conceal it from his view. "I think you need to take a breather first."

"You will not tell me what to do," he told her darkly and lunged for her. Her arms flew out, blocking his attempt to grab at her shoulders. She began kicking at Malfoy until he snagged a bit of her hair, tugging at it roughly.

"Is this what you call 'willing', Mudblood? I ordered you to disrobe, and you dare to defy me?" Malfoy hissed through his teeth, angered at her. "Do you want that bloody nit of yours tortured by Blaise?! Do you think he won't do it?!" He shook her head in his fit. "He will, Mudblood, he'll do things that will haunt you for years to come, no matter if you're awake or sleeping! He *enjoys* inflicting pain and suffering, especially to Mudbloods!"

"No!" she wailed, grasping at his hands to stop his abuse to her head.

"Do not piss me off!" Malfoy growled, and he then released her. He crossed his arms, watching her silently sob. "Stop crying! You're stronger than that, and I'm not going to fuck you while you're sniveling like a pathetic child! If you want a reason to cry, I can certainly create one for you!"

Hermione pressed her fingers to her eyes, summoning up her courage. Malfoy was in control right now. She had to accept that. Until she escaped, saved Samuel, and found a place she could hide them at, she had to make sure Malfoy was content with her presence.

She looked passed him, focusing on the light of a lamp and loosened her hold of her bathrobes. Hermione blinked a few times, forcing herself to calm down as he stepped up to her. Malfoy removed the robe from her, sliding it off her shoulders. It sank to the floor at her feet.

She held her breath as he leaned his head closer to hers and set his lips to the bare skin of her right shoulder. A cold chill ran throughout her entire body, down to even her toes. Hermione gasped in horror as Malfoy cupped a breast into his hand, massaging it.

"Look at me, Granger," he ordered softly, his voice lacked annoyance or anger, his previous foul mood had vanished when she had lowered her hands. "I can promise you that you'll get some enjoyment out of this."

"Just do it, and get it over with," she pleaded quietly without breaking off her stare. The light blurred in her vision.

She jumped, feeling a hand trail the bare skin of her body, his fingers lightly skimmed the surface of her, prickling up the short hairs scattered around her body. Heat blared up in her core as his hand inched lower and lower where it stopped at the dark hairs of her most private of areas. Hermione stopped breathing for a few moments when his fingers slid between the slit of her vaginal lips and gently touched her, delicately toying with her sensitive flesh. She stiffened at the jolt of unexpected pleasure his moving fingers caused.

Hermione closed her mouth tightly, forbidding herself from letting a sound escape. During the time of his fingering her, he had been swirling his tongue at her shoulder, occasionally nipping at her skin every so few seconds with his teeth, slowly making his way to the nape of her neck.

She hated him for doing this to her. For making her excited by his touch— for getting hyped up by his mere sight and presence.

"Please, don't touch me like that. Just... Just do what you must, Malfoy. This is unnecessary." *And terrifyingly wonderful.*

His mouth made its way to the lobe of her ear, where she could hear his breathing had deepened. He did not pause his movement between her legs, not even for a moment. "It's easier to do it if you're wet with orgasm," he whispered against her ear before encasing her earlobe directly into his mouth, sucking on it. "And also most satisfying."

She bit her lip hard, suppressing the moan that erupted from the back her throat. She didn't like this. Didn't like that she was experiencing pleasure from it. She didn't like that she didn't want him to stop. Hermione hated herself for wanting more, for wanting to allow herself to just give into the feelings she had about him—even if they were fake, and brought on by some charm that she couldn't mentally break.

She wanted to cry, but she willed herself not to. Malfoy would not like it if she did. Samuel's face appeared into her immediate mind, but Zabini's grinning smirk quickly invaded the pleasant thought of the little boy's smile.

Hermione had to keep Malfoy content. She just had to. She inhaled a breath, bringing her hands up to his hips. Her fingers tingled at the feeling of his skin against hers. She heard him moan deeply in her ear, and his fingers moved faster, deepening her breathing. Her lips parted as air exhaled out of it, no longer able to keep breathing through her nose.

"Yes," Malfoy purred seductively. "Surrender, Granger, you've no choice but to. Fighting will only prolong your release. That's it, touch me. It feels nice..."

Hermione leaned back her head, squinting her eyes from the building sensation in her gut. She spread her legs, taking his advice to permit her release, assisting in getting it over and done with.

Or so that's what she told herself. Deep down, she was loving what he was doing, even though it was wrong. Wrong on so many levels.

His fingers moved faster and faster, causing her knees to buckle. He pressed harder, bringing her closer and closer. Her fingernails dug into his skin at the sides of his body where she held onto him, fearing she'd collapse to the floor if she didn't.

Hermione shrieked a moment later, startled by the sudden rush of many things happening at once. Malfoy's fingers became very slick against her now throbbing bud, he still worked his fingers while he gripped the back of her neck, guiding her over to the desk, where he spun her around and pushed her down onto it. She grunted at the cold surface of the desk top against her breasts, feeling her nipples harden on impact.

He spread her legs wide apart from behind her with the hand he had used to make her orgasm. The sound of a zipper was heard. She closed her eyes, and sucked in a breath, bracing herself for pain. Nothing painful followed though. A hand was set firmly on her back to keep her from standing up. There was a tickling at her thighs from the material of his slacks brushing up against her. Something hard and soft (if that was even possible) pressed gently to the surface of her sex, sliding up and down the wetness of it. It felt wonderful, but she stopped herself from pressing closer to it.

And then Hermione felt pressure. She knew that he was beginning the task. He started slowly, stopping only when he was completely up inside her. It was mildly uncomfortable at first, but when he moved inside her, increasing with speed and strength with each stroke, it got better. Much better.

Malfoy started grunting after a while, his cock growing in size inside her. "I know you're liking this, Granger," he said, panting. "I can tell by the way you're breathing."

Hermione didn't respond, too ashamed to admit that he was right. Though she had no choice in the matter in the first place.

He wasn't really raping her, she decided. He could have been a brutal arse with her. He could have held her down with his hand clamped around her throat, constricting her ability to breathe. He could have done all that while she was dry and tight, making the experience terribly unpleasant. She had heard worse moments involving a bad man and his victim. She had been through worse, being torn apart as she was greedily used for pleasure; a terrifying moment in her life that was enough to keep her from sleeping at night.

But he hadn't done any of the things that had been graphically described to her. He hadn't repeated what Voldemort had made him do while he was under the Imperius curse. Malfoy had been relatively decent about it. Unlike Voldemort had.

In truth, she didn't want Malfoy to stop. The feeling of him pushing in and pulling out was just that great.

Malfoy leaned over her, groaning as he stopped movement altogether. His cock pulsed inside her, and she felt a slight filling sensation.

He was coming...

"Next time you'll kiss me," Malfoy said breathlessly. "Next time it'll be your turn."

What he meant by the second thing, she wasn't sure.

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While Granger responded nicely to his touch, Draco wanted more. He wanted *her* to pleasure *him*, but he also wanted her to be good at it, like when they were under the spell. Sure, some of its effects were still in play, but it wasn't the hardcore, mad dash for passion, like the time before this one. He wanted *that* sex again. The thought of her riding his leg, sex-crazed to near insanity, made his cock grow hard.

Next time, they'd do it that way. Only, she was going to kiss *him* instead, and initiate the stronger effects of the spell. He couldn't wait to taste her lips again. Draco had almost kissed her himself while they were in close proximity together, but he had told her that she could choose how she wanted to go about it this time, and she didn't want the kiss. So he respected that, as much as he really didn't want to, and that was only because Astoria's advice had played in his head, telling him to treat Granger like he would treat her. He'd never hurt Astoria like that.

Draco wasn't going to hold himself back the next time though, so it'd be better for Granger to allow the spell to be cast once again on her.

He closed his eyes, thinking about her nails digging into his hips. He touched the stinging, wounded area of his body, groaning in arousal.

Oh, yes, their next session was going to be raw, wet, and wild. His dick ached at just the thought of her trapped beneath him, as she begged him to pound harder into her, pleading him to suck on her glistening, damp skin, screaming out his name in a pure, primitive manner.

So what if it was a spell that made them this way when it concerned the other? It was well worth it. It was the greatest thing to ever happen to Draco. It felt real—though he understood that it wasn't. It felt good. And he didn't want it to ever go away.

He'd have to remember to gracefully thank his Master for such a wedding gift.

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"Busy day?"

Severus sat down at the tea table, heaving out a heavy sigh. "Extremely," he answered, pouring himself a cup of tea, taking the sugar canister from Draco, who was holding it out for him.

Draco didn't ask the specifics of his godfather's tiring day. Severus didn't tend to share much information on it, besides just a couple stories of the young people he had to put up with. The Dark Lord insisted that Severus often review the Death Eaters In Training, testing them on their abilities. Severus was climbing up there in age, and fighting multiple people in the prime of their youth took a lot of energy out of the man.

Draco awaited to hear the list of Severus's complaints about those in training, but the elder man quietly sipped at his tea, staring off in space.

"That one bloke still giving you a hard time?" Draco asked conversationally, knowing that the unnamed man had a sharp tongue and often aimed it at Severus.

Severus grunted. "When hasn't he? He's getting better about taking my advice though, but that could be because he's learning that I'm much more wiser than him." It was said with mild amusement, but the man did not crack a grin.

"What'd you do to him this time?" Draco asked knowingly.

"I told him to block my curse." Severus shrugged carelessly. "It is not my fault that he refused my advice. He'll be bald for several weeks." He finally smiled at this. "Burnt his hair all off. He looks quite ridiculous now, but I feel he's learned his lesson," he finished with a simple nod.

"Well, good for you."

"How did your day go? I assume by the lack of urgent news that your wife is still lacking with child?"

Draco stirred his tea uneasily. "Nothing yet..." he announced quietly.

"Well, it's only been a few days, sometimes it takes a while."

"It's just strange, since we're both fertile. She should be pregnant with as often as I do it."

"Do you use potions to drug her? Sometimes that can attack her eggs."

Draco rolled his eyes. "I know that, and I don't have to, now that her little Mudblood friend is being held hostage."

"Just remember, Draco, if anything happens to him, your leverage is gone."

"Not if I can get her pregnant. The nit will be useless to me then. She fall in love with the baby, and then I'll have her hooked to me."

"And what do you plan on doing with her once you have reproduced?"

"I haven't thoroughly decided on that yet... It depends on what the Dark Lord expects me to do."

"You may want to ask Him about it to be clear, but I do not think He paired you two up *just* for breeding."

"What additional reason could He had done it for, Severus?" Draco was surprised with the idea that he had to marry Granger for more reasons than one.

"Who knows with Him."

"You know Him, Severus, you know Him more than anyone, if He has multiple reasonings, you, out of all people, would know it."

Severus tilted his head in agreement. "But it does not mean that I wish to spout off presumptions. If you want to know the answer to that question, you'll need to ask Him for it.

"The baby will come," Severus assured him, changing the topic back to the previous subject. "In the meantime, it doesn't appear that you're too upset with the act of mating." He nonchalantly took a sip of his tea, eying Draco.

Draco grinned. "She's quite the shag, Granger is. Especially when the spell kicks in. Borderline bitch in heat, if you ask me."

One of Severus's eyebrows raised up. "From what you tell me, you're no different."

Draco shrugged. "At first, I was infuriated with the spell, but it does make her willing, the sex is quite enjoyable, and she is fulfilling my needs nicely. I thought having her around would be aggravating and burdening to my life, it's very much the opposite though. It's nice having a woman just in the next room from yours. Even if she is a mouthy Mudblood."

"Your behavior and opinion toward her is improving," Severus noted, impressed.

Draco's lips slowly spread out into a smirk. "I've won. That's why. She knows I'm in absolute control, and there's not a thing that she can do about it."

"I'd advise you not to get too cocky though, Draco, arrogance runs in your blood, sometimes it's not bad to have, but most of the time, it finds a way to foul up something with your life. Do not underestimate her like last time."

"I'm not," Draco said indignantly. "My life depends on keeping her around, and I certainly don't want a repeat of last time after she got away— neither does she."

"I believe it would be in your best interest to attempt in making her happy, or at the very least, content. If she feels safe under your wing, it's less likely of her to plan another escape."

Draco saw Severus's point, but Granger wouldn't run off now that they had her nit to use against her. She wasn't going to leave the nit behind, knowing he could face a slaughter if she were to escape. The nit's existence alone kept her rooted here. And Draco bid her good luck in finding the nit too. There was a reason why he had Blaise take the Mudblood child: if the child was stored here at his Manor, she would eventually find him and run off with him.

Besides, Draco no longer was up for torturing the 'innocent'. Blaise got a devilish delight with cutting off limbs, and letting the blood drain from the stubs, all the while, the unfortunate person screamed in agony. Blaise was an insane man, he got aroused over such actions. Draco had once caught his friend jacking off to a scene of a dismembered woman, who was nearly dead. It was something Draco still wished he could erase from his mind.

Draco had only killed when he had to— when he was ordered to do it, and most of the time when he had, he hadn't enjoyed it.

Of course, with his childhood rivalries, it had been different. He enjoyed killing those good for nothing blood traitors with a curse of his wand.

But it wasn't like he hadn't given them a chance to beg for his mercy, they just didn't think their life was worth an exchange for humiliation.

That wasn't Draco's problem though. They chose their dying fate, just as he chose his living one.

The Wardrobe

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been a while, it's been... pretty busy here. I've not got writer's block or anything, it's hard to focus lately, that's all.

Love you guys, and thanks for reading!

It didn't matter how much soap Hermione applied to the bathing sponge, she couldn't get rid of Malfoy's scent from her skin. She scrubbed aggressively, growing frustrated by it.

She cried to herself, having little idea how to escape this terrible predicament. She was tired of what the spell was doing to her. It made her sick to even think about the lust for Malfoy that it was forcing her to have. Her body literally betrayed her, reacting to his touch, and her mind was no better, often having explicit thoughts of him, warping them into 'fantasies'.

'At least they aren't actually real,' she thought with determination, irritating her skin into a burning redness with a vigorous attempt in ridding it of the man's smell. It lingered, as if physically clung to her body.

She hated him! She hated him *so* much!

Hermione gave up on getting Malfoy's smell off her when the water was cold, and her fingers and toes were wrinkled like prunes, getting out to towel off and dress. She had a passing thought that perhaps making her smell like him was part of the spell's doing. She shivered in disgust and shook the towel angrily through her bushy hair.

Hermione reached for her clean set of bathrobes, tilting her head in confusion when she saw that it wasn't where she had placed it next to the sink on the bathroom counter. She made a quick search with her eyes, thinking she may had set it somewhere else, but the bathroom was bare of anything to wear.

Wrapping the towel around her body, she opened the door to the bathroom, stepping into the bedroom. The bathrobe wasn't on the bed, in the sitting chair, or on the dresser. It was nowhere in sight.

"Bobby?" she called the house elf that seemed in charge of the cleaning duties in the suite Hermione had been locked up in. Bobby had refused to allow Hermione to clean the rooms she was residing in, stating that her master would be angry with her if she didn't do her job.

"The Mistress shall not clean. The Mistress shall just focus and keep the Master happy," Bobby told her when she had offered to help, repeating it exactly that same way every so often, as if to remind Hermione of it.

"If he's not happy, that's not my problem," Hermione huffed.

"Bobby disagrees, Mistress. Bobby is sorry, but it is up to you to make hims happy. Yous Master's wife. Yous his mate."

"Not by choice!"

Bobby didn't respond that. She tilted her ears downward and scurried off, busying herself with her work.

Bobby popped in on Hermione's calling of her name. "Mistress has called?"

Hermione sighed, just like any other elf she had met, Bobby refused to call hermione by her name.

"Would you happen to know where my bathrobe went?"

Bobby shifted her feet uneasily. "Master told Bobby to take it away, Master says that Mistress has stuff to wears in hers wardrobe and doesn't need to wears bathrobes like it is new fashion statement." With this, the elf grinned, mildly amused by her Master's term.

"I'm not wearing that yellow dress, if that's what he's meaning," Hermione said firmly.

"Oh, noes, Mistress!" Bobby squeaked excitedly. "Master had Bobby put clothes in there for yous. Come see!" The energetic little elf took Hermione's hand and lead her to the ancient looking wardrobe and opened the doors to it, revealing an abundance of dresses.

Hermione hitched her breath, having not seen so many different vibrant colours in years—white, uncoloured clothing was the least expensive to buy. It had been so long since she wore such colour, such *beauty*.

And that was just for starters: the materials the clothing was made from were of ones she had only ever read about in books or seen on the telly and in magazines, fine clothing that wealthy and important people wore.

Not people like... *her*.

"Is this..." she trailed off in awe, fingering a dress with golden buttons. Upon closer observation, she learned that her first thought was true: they were made of *real* gold. She let the piece of fabric fall from her hands, backing away.

It couldn't be right... It had to be a mistake...

"Well, tell me what you think."

Malfoy's voice made Hermione jump at least mile. He was standing at the threshold between the bedroom and the sitting room, leaning against the jam with his arms crossed, watching her intently.

Hermione's gaze went back to the fancy expensive clothing, needing to avoid from looking at him for too long, afraid of what she might do if she did. As it was, her pulse started racing wildly at the knowledge of his presence. The smell of him stronger now that he was near.

She wet her lips, gathering the nerve to answer him. She lowered her eyes and spoke, "They're... magnificent," she told him truthfully. "But where's my real clothing? What am I actually going to be *allowed* to wear?" Hermione rose her eyes up to look him in the eye. "You're not really going to permit me to wear this, so quit playing around. I don't like games, Malfoy."

"You thought I was going to make you wear a bathrobe for the rest of your life? That's hardly the appropriate thing to wear outside, is it? Or even out of this room."

Outside? Out of the room? He was going to let her out of here? When? And why? What was he up to? Did she have to go back and see Voldemort again...?

She backed up a few steps at the thought of having to see that monster again, stopping when she hit the wall. "I don't want to go," she whispered hollowly. "Just kill me now. I *won't* go back!" Hermione's voice rose in determination. "I'm *serious*, Malfoy, I won't go back there! Not after..." She didn't finish, shuddering in fear, thinking about what had happened there.

The fear, the pain, the red, evil eyes.

"You're not going back there," Malfoy said. He stayed where he was, watching her closely. "Not unless He summons us, but I doubt he'll ever wish to see you, as long as you do as you're told."

Hermione was shivering now. His words helped her none. She rubbed her hands up and down her bare arms, trying to warm herself up from the sudden chill.

"Granger?"

Swallowing hard, Hermione met his eyes. He looked at her impassively. She could not read any sort of emotion from them.

"You're not going to wear that bloody bathrobe as an everyday wear."

Her eyes settled on a red and silver dress made of silk. If it were any other time in her life, she would have gladly ran to that dress, squealing happily, and slipped it on.

But she didn't want to wear anything like that. Not if it came from Malfoy. Malfoy was up to something, and anything he wanted her to do she was against—what *did* he want in return anyway? *What* was he scheming?!

"I don't want anything from you," she bitterly informed him.

"Oh?" he asked. "Then in that case..." Her towel completely vanished from her body, leaving her stark naked, standing there, shocked.

"Give those back!" she shrieked.

"You don't want anything from me, Granger," he repeated her words with a shrug. "I guess you'll be running around in the nude from now on." He stepped into the room and walked to her.

"Get away from me!" she demanded and made to dart around him, but he caught a hold of her wrist, pulling her to him. Malfoy's hand skimmed her sleek back, making her body flush with goosebumps.

"It's going to be great having you naked all the time," Malfoy said under his breath, pulling her close to him, ignoring her struggles and pleas.

"Malfoy!" she screamed. "Don't! Let me go, please!"

"I'll be able to grab this—" He gripped her ass hard, squeezing it, letting out a growl. "—anytime I want."

Hermione pushed against him to try and break free, but his hold was a tight one, chest to chest. She lifted her leg to kick him and was unsuccessful, as he had somehow sensed she was going to do it, blocking her leg from the area she had been aiming for.

"You're not playing a very fair game, Granger, and I thought you just said you don't like playing them?" he scolded her, teasing. "No matter, it's not one you're going to win at anyway." He then leaned his head in to delicately flick his tongue to the skin of her shoulder.

Her stomach flipped in excitement. She felt her knees turn to jelly, and Hermione clutched onto Malfoy for support, gripping his shirt, even though he was holding her firmly to him.

Her body wanted more than a quick swipe of his tongue. It wanted him to explore her, from head to toe, with that sexy, wet tongue of his.

"Don't," Hermione pleaded, mustering up some self-control. "Please don't!"

"I thought you wanted to stay inside all day," he argued, murmuring against her ear. He pressed into her, making her feel his sudden growth against her leg. "What do you think I'm going to do, having a naked woman in my home twenty-four seven?"

Hermione yelped in surprise to him roughly pinching her ass, then he sunk his teeth softly into her neck, nipping at her, before sucking on it. He snatched a hold of her hair when she wailed and tried pulling away from his assault.

"I'm going to fuck her brains out is what I'm going to do," Malfoy whispered against her ear, fogging it up with his hot, damp breath. Hermione felt a wetness trail out from beneath her legs. She closed her eyes, embarrassed that she was growing aroused by his touch and voice.

He whirled her around, slamming her up against the wall. "No, please!" she begged, her cry slightly distorted, since her cheek was mashed up against the surface of it, making it hard for her to move her jaw.

"That's what's done to women who parade in the nude all day," he told her as he squeezed each of her breasts into his hands, and then proceeded to pinch her nipples.

Hermione almost moaned to the shock of pleasure that ran throughout her body.

Almost.

Malfoy tugged the hair at the back of her head. She gasped as he pulled it back toward him as far as he could without harming her. "So, my naked wife, would you like to wear the lovely clothes I have specially ordered for you, or would you rather I just fuck you until you can no longer think properly?" he asked.

Hermione bit her lip to keep her from giving in to his offer to fuck her. Her insides were a fluttering mess. She ached to be touched, and she wanted the sweet pressure of his hard penis buried deep into her, just like what had been done the night before.

But she *really* didn't want it. It was the spell that was making her crumble like a brittle biscuit.

"Hesitation," he purred in delight. "You're liking this, are you, Granger?" he taunted her, bucking his hips at her ass.

Hermione shut her eyes to the thought of his hard penis. A slight whine came from her throat, but she was able to keep herself from pressing back into him.

"You like it rough, Granger? I should have known." He pulled her hair a bit more.

"No, don't, Malfoy!" Hermione finally found her voice, stopping him from going further. "I don't," she said hastily. "I don't like it! It's just the spell! It's drugging me!"

"An excellent effect of the spell, indeed." Malfoy growled huskily, trailing a hand down the side of her body. "Get dressed or get fucked," he ordered abruptly, pushing himself away from her.

Shakily, she hurried away from him, relieved to have some distance. He watched her closely though, making her feel uncomfortable.

"Can't I have privacy while I do it?!"

Malfoy pursed his lips in annoyance. He gave her a short nod and made to leave the room. "Shoes are in the closet," he informed, and then he was gone.

Hermione took a few deep breaths to calm her nerves. She was glad to know that he still had some self-control. How long that was going to last she didn't know, hoping she wouldn't have to find that out.

She looked through the wardrobe, searching for something not so... *extravagant*, but it seemed that all Malfoy had bought her were fancy, flamboyant dresses that would bring attention to her.

She finally choose the plainest one she could find. The mid section was very pale pink with no designs, though it was made with a fine silk and had white sleeves. The length of the dress was also white, flowing at a prudish length. She'd have to pick the bottom up to walk, but out

of all of them, this one was the one that fit her choice of fashion the most— even though no one would likely recognize her if they would happen to see her in it.

Choosing the shoes were even worse. She had never seen so many gems in her life: diamonds, sapphires, rubies— the list of expensive jewels went on and on.

But way back, in the far depth of the massive sized closet, she found a pair of white flats without any jewels. The leather was probably made from something rare and nearly extinct, but since she wasn't absolutely sure of it, she shoved them onto her feet, wincing as she stood up, feeling the uncomfortable feeling of new shoes cutting into her skin.

Now that she was dressed, Hermione wasn't sure what to do. Was she supposed to call Malfoy back in, letting him know she was finished? Or just sit and wait for him to return? It had been twenty minutes since he had left her alone. He obviously had something planned for her, and not knowing the details was driving her mad.

She decided to call him back in, curiously gaining the best of her. She was unsure if he was even close by, but Draco had many house-elves who would alert him of her calling his name, this she had been told a few times over by the elves who would talk to her.

The wait for his turn only made her more anxious, desperately wanting to know why he had wanted her to dress up.

The need to know every little detail was going to end up being the cause of her death one day.

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Draco had taken Granger's 'moment of privacy' to step into a cold shower. He sucked in deep breaths as the ice cold jet of water, aimed at his hard, aching dick, poured on him.

He had almost lost his control. Her naked, freshly bathed body had been a bit too much for him to handle. He had almost taken her, right up against that wall, not even caring if she had refused.

The *smell* of her was driving him mad. The green apple scent made his insides stir. He had been able to smell her from his own bedroom across the way. That's how he had known she was finished with the bath: it had somehow seeped through the three walls dividing them.

He groaned in discomfort, shutting off the water. His dick had shrank back up, it throbbed painfully from the abuse Draco had just put it through, but he felt better than before, the threat of taking Granger forcibly was no longer a craving.

Draco dried himself off with a spell and took a potion to ward off any unwanted hardons. He'd have to wait before he could fuck Granger again. Tonight. Yes, after their dinner, he'd fuck her then. And one way or another, she was going to suck him off.

At this point, Draco didn't care what had to happen to make her do it, just as long as it was done. The thought was becoming unbearable enough to handle. He *needed* her mouth. *Soon*.

Just as he was tightening his tie, a house-elf popped in, informing him that Granger was calling for him.

Draco smirked. She wanted to see him, likely cluing in that he had daily plans with her. He pictured her pacing the floor, anxious to know what it was.

Well, since Granger was his wife, he may as well give her a little enlightenment of what to expect in the upcoming years of their marriage.

She needed to get out of that bloody suite anyway.

What Are You Playing At?

She looked magnificent...! She was like an angel, a princess, a *goddess*. When had the Mudblood acquired such beauty?

He could hardly breathe, standing there, absorbing in the sight of her, storing this image deep into his mind for safe keeping.

Because of the spell they were under, Draco adored her nude body. He was indefinitely aroused by it—the simple thought of a stiff nipple or her slick cunt made his dick hard—but he never had expected her to catch his attention while she was clothed, covered completely from her shoulders down to her feet.

Oddly enough, Granger had chosen to wear one of his favourite dresses that he had ordered for her. It wasn't a provocative one (proper wives were not to dress too revealing outside their homes. Many men died in duels over such skimpy attire worn by women. Then again, it also was an unspoken rule applying to the husbands too). It was the pink one. He absolutely admired a woman who wore pink. It was a bright, cheery colour, appropriate for a woman who was attached and unsingle. It made them appear happy and fun-loving—a reflection on her partner, be it boyfriend or husband. It brought out her beauty—her womanly figure.

Ah, so that was why she was so sexy, he discovered. It was the feminine colour of it.

His cock twitched in excitement, the effects of the potion he had just taken was now null and void. Draco pursed his lips and forced himself to look up from her concealed breasts, shutting out the thought of his face being planted between them.

He couldn't allow himself to lose control.

Oh, but it was *so* bloody difficult! Now all he wanted to do was throw Granger onto the bed and bunch up her expensive dress, pulling it above her hips. He wanted to explore her delicious, glorious heat with his fingers and tongue, all the while, with her silky, smooth legs tightly wrapped around him.

He wanted to taste her, to mischievously toy with her sensitive flesh. He wanted her to whimper and scream out his name.

He desperately wanted to fuck her until she begged him to stop, until she couldn't *move*.

But he couldn't. Well... he *could* physically do it, obviously, and he *could* do exactly what his body yearned to do and bury himself deep into her tight, wet hole, but that's not what he had been planning to do that day, not right then anyway. And he was a stickler to plans. If he reacted on lust alone, he'd get nowhere with her.

He'd be no better than Blaise was with his wife, using her simply as a sex object; a slave.

Draco wanted more than that with his own wife though. Granted, his choice wife really wouldn't be the filthy, Mudblood *Granger*, but he was stuck with her either way. He'd prefer if they could at least manage a mutual understanding of each other.

She knew he wasn't a rapist—or one by choice—and he planned on using that tiny bit to his advantage.

If only she would cooperate. *That* was the problem with her. She knew neither of them had no choice with their marriage arrangement, yet she still refused to do it without a fucking fight. Why did she have to fight with him so much?!

Besides threatening her, what else was Draco supposed to do in order to get the deed done? Potions tended to mess with fertility levels, and the—

Draco swallowed uneasily. He had made threats about it. He had said he was going to spell Granger into submission if she didn't comply with his orders. In reality, he wasn't too sure if he had the guts to follow through with the threat. No one knew this—*no one*—but he couldn't get hard over an Imperiused woman sucking him off and doing a list of *other* things while under the spell.

He had tried it once, as practice, when he was still new to the spell, making a true effort to learn it. Pansy had willingly volunteered to be his guinea pig upon his suggesting of it. She would have practically done anything he had wanted of her at the time.

She trusted him wholeheartedly. She knew he was capable of success.

When he had cast it, her eyes became unfocused, lacking life. It had terrified him, watching her approach him like some inhuman, possessed monster. He didn't even allow her to get so far as unzipping his pants.

No.

That was just too... *creepy*. He had nearly shuddered over it.

Pansy had asked what was wrong. She had been afraid that she had done something to fuck his concentration up, but he stroked her hair gently and told her that he had changed his mind.

She pouted, upset that she hadn't got to do anything to please him, ever the properly brought up pureblood: obedient, eager to please those she cared for.

So he permitted her to carry on what he had originally wanted, under her own control.

He liked it better that way. It was lively and exciting. It was personal and natural.

It was *enjoyable*.

There was a small list of things he found that could bring him pleasure. That was one of them.

"Could you stop looking at me like that?!"

The snap of her voice brought him out of his thoughts. Draco straightened his shoulders, realizing that he was allowing her mere presence to gnaw at his ability to control himself. He was not an animal, he was not a monster, he wasn't Blaise, or Goyle, or even the Dark Lord Himself. He was Draco Malfoy, and he had control over himself. He could manage being close to her without indulging into his urges.

Couldn't he?

Draco swallowed hard, resisting the urge to readjust his slacks at a specific part of his body. He wanted— no, he needed, he *ached* — to be touched, to be stroked, to be *fucked* .

He could stay sane under such pressure, he knew, but it was going to be a bloody challenge, for sure.

"Like what?" he asked innocently, looking her in the eye, pretending as if a simple glance at her didn't send him into a series of erotic daydreams.

"Like...like..." she paused, trying to find a fitting term or word. "Like you've been deprived from any sort of food, and I'm the first meal you seen in ages!" Granger visibly shuddered. She did that a lot, Draco had noticed. She was often uncomfortable with what was going on, unable to fully accept this new life of hers.

You'll adjust, my little, sexy Mudblood. Eventually, you'll fall into the endless pit like I have and crave for my touch. You will sit, and wait for me to come to you, and my darling wife, you'll want me to kiss you, to take you to another land, fulfilling your every desire for pleasure.

And I will, Granger, but first, you must want it. You must need it. And I'm not going to do it unless you ask me to.

"You know how it feels then." Draco told her, not even bothering to deny that he *had* been looking at her the way she had accused him of.

Their feelings for each other were practically mutual. Just the night before, *she* had looked at him the same exact way— just as if she was going to attack him where he stood and fuck him until he passed out.

Unlike Draco though, Granger didn't give in so easily. Not that he blamed her, it wasn't long ago that his own *body* had taken her virginity, the one thing she even had left of herself. She probably had been saving it for—

No, he wasn't going to think about that. It would only anger him.

"It is nice to see you dressed like a proper person who walks on two feet and not four."

His mild insult made her indignantly narrow her eyes. "I was only just given clothes to wear today!" she spat, glaring daggers.

"I provided you with a dress the other day, perhaps you have forgotten?" Draco's tone was patronizing. He knew she hadn't.

"I'm *not* wearing *that*!" Granger insisted, crossing her arms along her chest.

"You're going to wear it tonight," he told her evenly. "To the dinner party."

Granger looked at him, disbelieving the words she had just heard. "Din-Dinner party?" she squeaked. Her eyes clouded with fear, obviously knowing who was probably going to be at this party.

"We've been invited. It'd be quite rude to decline, yes? Most impolite. And now that you're a..."

He had almost choked out the next word. He needed to swallow down the uncomfortable, throat clenching pain he was having.

That mere thought... the thought of *her* ... being a *Malfoy* ... It had nearly made him gag...!

Granger—*the Mudblood*—was his wife, was now... a Malfoy... His...*family*.

The feeling was... *confusing*. He knew why that was. With the marriage spell, he wanted her, but the spell didn't make him *love* her, nothing could do *that*. It did *oppress* his real feelings for her though, creating a new *fake* ones. Ones that Draco actually *enjoyed* having. But since they weren't real, there was the rare chance of his true feelings emerging and bubbling out from deep within wherever feelings came from.

It meant that occasionally he could become disgusted at the thought of the Mudblood carrying his name.

Mind-washed or not, he could not stomach calling her a Malfoy. She'd *never* be a Malfoy to him. She was dirty, in more ways than one. She did not *deserve* his name. She didn't even *want* it!

So how could he call her a Malfoy, if she didn't want the name herself?! Draco had been taught that everyone wanted to be a Malfoy, and anyone who hated them was jealous.

And he still believed it.

Except when it came to Granger. She was different. She didn't envy people, or if she did, no one knew of it.

With her morals set in stone, she had no reason to be jealous over anybody. Besides maybe her blood type, but did that matter anymore? She was a Mudblood, who was standing in his home, the finest home amongst the purest of wizards, and he, Draco Malfoy, was her husband.

The reality of it hit him like a iron bludger right square to the gut:

No one will be Pure after my generation.

His bloodline would seize its importance, then what would the Malfoy name have?

Nothing. It'd have *nothing*. It would mean nothing. It would *be* nothing. His heirs would be just like any other wand-swinging moron out there.

In that moment of realization, everything that Draco had been taught for the entirety of his life completely sailed out the window.

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Hermione stood in silence, watching Malfoy's mood change from many different ones in a short amount of time. Whatever was going on inside his mind was scaring her quite a bit.

Right now, he looked like he was disgusted with her. She hadn't insulted him, so Hermione didn't know what she had done to anger him this time.

It didn't take much to send him into a raging fit though, that much she knew.

She almost wished he would look at her with starvation again, that look wasn't as frightening. That look didn't make Hermione nearly as uncomfortable as this one did.

Malfoy's jaw was clenched tightly, his eyes were narrowed darkly. He had his fists clenched to his sides. His face was red with anger. He was about ready to pop.

Hermione, slowly and cautiously, backed out into the bedroom, step by step, not wanting to be there if he did blow up.

"Where are you going?" he demanded in a growl.

"I only need to use the toilet," Hermione told him, her voice slightly above a whisper.

His stance relaxed some. Hermione watched as he moved his shoulders around in circles, loosening them. He nodded at her response.

"Best hurry it up then. We've got a lot to do today."

She wasted no time, hurrying to the bathroom, eager to have a room and a door separating them.

He was incredibly strange. One minute, he was calm and in control, the next... he was... well, *different*. Distant and... *dangerous*.

Like the first day she had seen him after the war, just before bringing her to the Manor.

Hermione shivered, his cold angered eyes were so vivid and fresh in her mind. He had looked like he was going to strangle her; murder her with his bare hands.

Malfoy wouldn't do that though.

Not with his bare hands anyway, her inner-voice pointed out. *He's definitely a wands-on sort of person*. Most Pureblood were that way.

She sat there in the bathroom, giving him time to cool down. Maybe it was her presence that had made him angry. He had said it himself. The *sight* of her disgusted him.

Was he upset because he... because he *wanted* her? Was he upset at himself? Or was he going to blame her for it?

She was defenseless against him, whatever he decided to do. He had his wand. She didn't. That was a major disadvantage for her.

Oh, she'd still fight until her last dying breath, but death it would be, if he had the choice.

But he didn't. Not if he wanted to live himself. He would never dare to defy Voldemort's orders. None of his followers would. There were deathly consequences for that.

Although... what if... what if Malfoy wasn't thinking about all that? What if... his anger with her was so ruddy strong that he just... *cracked*? He could hurt her, with no thought of punishment in mind, focusing on one thing alone: damaging her beyond repair.

Hermione jumped when she heard Malfoy call out to her.

"What's taking so long?!" He pounded his fist on the door, making it thud. "We're on a schedule here, Granger!"

"Coming!" She stood up from the toilet and went to meet him, not wishing to irritate him any further.

Malfoy grunted in impatience and snatched a hold of her arm, leading her out the suite.

Hermione's mind went back to fearing what was going to happen that day. The dinner party they were 'invited' to had to be no good, knowing the people Malfoy associated with.

Malfoy was saying things as they walked along an eerily lit corridor. She was not registering any of it, too much in thought of how she was going to be able to cope being around a group of Death Eaters— people who could murder someone and shrug it off, like it was an everyday thing.

Only it *was* an everyday thing for them...

Hermione shuddered. If *He* was there, she wasn't sure how she'd keep her sanity.

"Merlin, Granger!" Malfoy snapped, yanking at her arm to get her attention. "Are you even paying attention to what I'm saying?!"

"I don't want to go!" she suddenly shrieked out hysterically. "Please, Malfoy!" Hermione slipped out of his grasp and backed up into something. Something odd... Something *rough*.

Finally she calmed down enough to realize she had been taken outside.

Outside .

What she had bumped into was a gigantic, thick tree. Glancing up—in complete awe that Malfoy had taken her outside of the Manor—Hermione noted that she was under a maple tree. Its branches were just starting to sprout little, tiny leaves; an effect of spring's approaching.

"What's wrong with you?!"

"I—uh, I'm just shocked." Hermione confessed distractedly, taking that moment to absorb the beautifully manicured yard around her.

There were many tulips of different colours, one of the flowers known for their early blossoming. Grey bricked paths snaked through the yard of trees, bushes, flowers and grass. And while each one disappeared around obstacles, she had this understanding that they went on for miles.

"You had to have thought this would happen eventually, didn't you?" Malfoy asked bluntly, looking off to where she had brought her eyes from.

"No," Hermione answered honestly. "You didn't particularly give me a decent welcoming."

"Let me remind you of who attacked who first!"

Her eyes faulted to her feet, guilty of the accusation. "I was—I had been—You killed—"

"We're not going to talk about what went on in the war," Malfoy said, a warning hung solid in his voice. "That's the in fucking past. Forget about it."

She grew angry at that statement. How was she to forget—?! The *nerve* of him...!

"*No ! I won't ! I refuse ! I can't —*"

Malfoy closed the gap between them, securing his hand around her throat, cutting off her sentence. "Then you shall not *speak* of it!"

His grip tightened, making her gasp for air. The surrounding scene of nature had turned into one hue of color: grey. A second later she couldn't see anything at all.

"This is your life now, Granger!" She could hear him snarling threateningly. "You're no longer to speak about the other, no longer *wish* for the other, and if I hear another word about the *past*, you will no longer *know* of it!"

He let her go after that. Hermione crumbled into a heap at his feet, wheezing for gulps of air.

"Now, shall I show you the rest of *our* empire?" Malfoy asked blandly, using the same tone as he would if he was asking for someone to pass him the salt at the breakfast table.

He stood her up to her feet, balancing her against him. She was too stunned by his words to even acknowledge that he was taking her deeper into the glorious, ancient garden, rattling off

trivial facts.

Had she heard him correctly?

Our empire, he had said.

Our ...

Had he decided to share his wealth with her? Was he trying to buy her? Why, *why* would he consider his stuff *theirs* all of a sudden?

What kind of game was he playing with her?!

As he continued with the tour, voice non-stopping, filled with random facts of his family's history, Hermione kept silent, purposely not thoroughly listening to him. She was not going to make a move on whatever game this was. She was not going to accept anything he'd give her, and she was not going to consider anything that belonged to *him* as hers or, as he put it, *theirs* !

She refused to play his ridiculous, confusing, manipulating game!

He could go drop dead for all she cared!

On the Brink of Insanity

He watched her closely. The Mudblood had said nothing as he led her around the decorative garden that each lady of the Manor had added her own piece to, together creating a masterpiece throughout the years.

Draco couldn't quite read the expression on her face. She hadn't responded to what he had said when they had reached her designated piece. He was starting to think he really didn't know her as much as he had first assumed. This immensely disappointed him. His job as her husband was going to be challenging enough, given their past and true feelings of each other. But if he couldn't even predict her actions and thought process, how was he going succeed with showing her that he wasn't as bad as he could be—that she was *lucky* she had been chosen to be his?

He could be a lot worse... Sure he wasn't some sappy, romantic fellow that she had probably *fantasized* about marrying, but Malfoy men never were known for that anyway, she'd just have to accept the fact. And it wasn't like *she* was his fantasy of a wife—*he* had to accept that she was *Mudblood*, for Merlin's sake! She wasn't the only one who's life got fucked up with the Dark Lord's little arrangement.

And it wasn't just Draco and Granger this was affecting either. Many, many people had been forced into a marriage they didn't want. Some took it well, as he had learned from Astoria about Longbottom, but others... Well, according to Blaise, Goyle's Mudblood wife had already been sent to the hospital from an injury. With Goyle though, that may not mean much at all, since he was still incompetent with healing spells—he had had no interest learning to heal, only wanting to cause destruction.

Goyle was going to make a terrible father.

Draco himself decided that it was time to move on. Eventually, he was going to have children; they'd need a proper upbringing. So he spent the day informing Granger of her duties as the woman of the house rather than having to do it at the last minute, where she'd be completely clueless and weighted down with responsibilities.

"You'll have lots of time until the baby comes," he said after he assumed that she wasn't going to make any comment. They were standing at a grassy large patch of land. It was sectioned off with a black wrought-iron eight-foot-tall fence. There was a good acre or so of 'pastureland' for her to create whatever monument she pleased to mark her existence as the newest Lady Malfoy.

"Huh?" She came out of her daze, looking him in the eye. The colour had drained from her face. She scratched at her hand, glancing back out to the small field. The grass was still short since spring hadn't brought many sunny days just yet.

"The baby," he reminded her. "The entire reason for us fucking every night—when he comes, I expect you to dedicate most, if not all, of your time nurturing him; you'll be his mother after all, that's your job."

Again, she didn't respond. He didn't think she suddenly mastered hiding her reactions. She was a Gryffindor; most couldn't control their feelings. He knew *she* specifically couldn't—past experiences with her proved this.

Which meant she hadn't been paying any attention to him. None of this was sinking in. Draco was beginning to doubt she had even absorbed a word he had said. He pursed his lips in annoyance. She was probably too bloody worried about their upcoming dinner that evening.

This had been a complete waste of his time...! Merlin, she was going to make such a *worthless* wife— how could the Dark Lord think any differently?!

He took her by the arm, leading her back up toward the Manor. His fingers dug into her skin, making her cry out and tug from him. He released her instantly, commanding her to follow him.

By the time he made it back to the Manor's back entrance, Granger's steps had fallen greatly behind him. He waited impatiently for her, scowling at her, noticing that she was wincing with each step that she took.

"What's wrong with you?!" he demanded, irritated that she hadn't at all said anything about her pain.

Granger stopped next to him and set her hand up against a pillar, leaning into it for balance before she swung her leg up to her knee, slipping off a shoe. It hit the ground with a clunk.

"My feet..." she went to explain, but stopped to hiss in pain.

Draco's nose wrinkled when Granger moved the hem of her dress out of the way, exposing her foot. There were a couple of holes in her panty hose where ugly blisters had formed from the friction of her walking.

"Is your other also like that?"

Granger gave him a quick nod, placing her foot to the ground, pressing her lips together. She leaned to the opposite side now, breathing hard, and took off the other shoe, also letting that one drop wherever without a care in the world. She massaged a sore-but-not-yet-blistered spot, slightly groaning.

"Why didn't you alert me of this when it was first bothering you?!"

"As if you ruddy care at all about me!" Granger muttered.

Her snatched her wrist and pulled her inside the Manor, making her yelp from the sudden movement and the inability to favour the tender spots on her foot.

"The next time you have an issue, you will immediately tell me of it!" he scolded her.

He was bound to squash her pathetic, useless pride! He was a wizard; he could heal such trivial problems away! And *if* she was so fucking smart as everyone had always said she was, she should know that early treatment is a necessity; so why would she wait until her wounds

were just about to bleed— when she was about literally crying from the pain?! If she supposedly had so much fucking *pride*, she'd not wait until she was in so much fucking agony, becoming a blubbering *baby* about it— what did that prove?!

No! She wasn't going to do that anymore! Not around Draco! She was not going to make him look bad and neglectful!

He pushed her into a sofa that was in the entry room, pressing a hand to her chest when she went to get up. "Stay!" he growled. "I mean it, Mudblood; don't get up!"

She shoved his hand away. "I'm not going to do what you tell me!" she hissed in anger. "I'm not going to listen—"

He tuned her out, leaning over to his right to pull the footrest near him to sit on. He took out his wand, gripping onto an ankle of hers.

She yanked it out of his hand. "Don't touch me!" she demanded, kicking him in the shoulder with her other foot, too angry to notice the pain.

Damn fucking bint! Could she not see that he was trying to *help* her?! He had been right to think that she hadn't 'suddenly' learned to control her emotions!

Draco gripped her foot, purposely digging his fingers into her sores, inflicting pain. She screamed out, trying to writh from his hold.

"Let me look at it, you stupid bitch!"

Of course she wouldn't listen to him. She was too stubborn to even know what was best for her!

He stilled her with a spell. The room also went peacefully silent, as her vocal cords had been silenced.

With another spell, Draco positioned Granger where he could easily look over her injuries, leaning her low into the couch, with her ass at the edge of the cushion and her feet set into his lap.

He didn't speak to her, too inclined to get this out of the way and then send her up to her room where she could cool off.

A few simple casts later, he stroked one of her smooth feet, satisfied with his work. No blisters or redness, no signs of any sort of injury. He looked up at her face without pausing the movement of his hand, brushing it along the arch of her foot.

She was in a very vulnerable position, he noted, with her feet on either side of his hips. All he would have to do was crept forward and nestle himself between her legs. She'd not be able to do anything about it, stuck under his spell.

His hands moved up to her thighs, skimming the skin under her dress. Draco was grateful that she had picked one of the looser styles. He inched closer to her, molding their bodies

together. His dick grew at least twice its size, feeling the heat of her pussy pressing against him— even through his clothing and her panty hose and knickers.

She was so fucking hot with need. He could fuck her. Here. Now. His breathing quickened at the thought. He settled himself on top of her, bringing a hand up to her now blushing face.

She was hot for him...

All he would have to do was—

He lowered her face down to hers, staring at her intently, wishing he knew what she was thinking. Merlin...! Her face was... *beautiful!* He touched her cheek with his bottom lip, grazing it against her heavenly smelling surface before flicking out his tongue to kiss her with it.

He shuddered, not yet over how shockingly great she tasted.

If our lips touched, we could have fun... That's all that would need to be done...! The spell would take care of the rest...!

Draco abruptly took her face into his hands, looking her in the eye, finding that they were glowing with absolute arousal.

He closed his eyes and made to touch her lips with his. But they never connected, the only thing that did was her hand to his cheek, creating a sharp noise, followed by a stinging pain. Granger spouted a series of curse words he never even had considered her capable of saying until now.

"You slimy, disgusting piece of fucking shit!"

She knocked Draco to the ground, where he clutched his hands to his balls, groaning out in pain from her kicking of them.

In the slit of his eyes, he dejectedly watched her stalk out of the room; her beautiful, wild, flowing hair flying behind her, matching her mood entirely.

He grit his teeth, grounding them out in frustration. He knew he hadn't mistaken her lust-filled eyes.

Fucking Gryffindor bitch. *Fuck you and your bloody pride!*

He rose up, weak from her abuse, sitting on the footrest. *Had she broken my spell?* he wondered suddenly. His spells didn't usually wear off so fast...

His eyes widened in realization. He glanced at the pathway she had disappeared into, swiping his tongue along his lips, still tasting her on them. He sucked on them, deep in thought.

If she was able to break his binding spell it would certainly explain how she had escaped those few times when he and Blaise had tried to get her back.

He could break through binding spells himself, even knowing exactly how strong one was from each person— though some strong casters like himself would throw weak ones just to distract the opponents, though very few could master the art of breaking through them, especially the stronger ones. Only true fighters could master this.

It couldn't just be luck though: now that he thought about it, she had done it numerous of times with him, and once with Blaise's binding.

Now he'd have to test this on her. Next time, he'd cast a stronger binding spell and secretly time her on it. Draco would need to know what she was capable of, after all. He certainly didn't need any surprises.

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Hermione paused in her steps, bending over, taking deep breaths. Her pulse was racing, her stomach was sick. She wanted to turn around, go back to him, and tell him to continue what he had tried starting.

She swallowed several times, growing dizzy from his lingering smell.

Oh, God, it's consuming me!

She *had* to find a cure, it wouldn't be long before she'd not be able to fight it!

She leaned up against the wall, pressing a hand to her head. It was damp with sweat. She felt like crying, confused between what the spell was forcing her to feel and the true feelings hidden deep inside her.

She set her head against the stone wall, focusing on the coolness on it, hoping it would take care of her nausea.

Moments later, after several more deep breaths, she gently pushed herself from the wall, setting her jaw in determination. She had expected Malfoy to chase after her and attack her, perhaps even punish her for striking him, but he hadn't.

His behaviour was perturbing. Today especially. He gave her clothes, let her out of her prison, let her *outside*, treating her like... *like...*

No.

She was not going to think that. He was still horrible to her, making threats to her, and most importantly, he was abusive. Real men— real *husbands*— didn't do those things.

But he *had* healed her. He had also looked at her as if he would simply *die* if he was to look away. As if... As *if...*

That wasn't even possible! Like he would consider her worthy at all! Draco Malfoy *love* her?!

Ha!

What an awful spell to cast onto someone.

He was losing control too. It scared her, because if she hadn't had the needed control, he would have followed through with his intentions. And if he had been able to kiss her completely, *she* would have lost all her logical senses too.

She shivered at the memory of the feeling of his lips and tongue tasting her. He enjoyed the taste of her—and she had immensely *loved* that he had done it!

Merlin's ruddy beard! Hermione just had to break this terrible spell!

She halted her walking, listening for him; for anything, but all was quiet except for her breathing.

Why hadn't he locked her back up? He couldn't possibly trust that she'd not run off again, could he? She all but told him that she would when she had the chance again.

But until she could save Samuel, that chance was not there.

There was one thing she could do though, if he wasn't going to confine her into a locked suite, and that was search for the library. Hermione knew Malfoy must have one somewhere in his huge Manor. Hopefully, she had time to look for it without him discovering of her plan.

She walked on for a while, opening each door she came across (some Hermione had to magically unlock, which she was able to do with little trouble). None of them opened into any sort of library though. Many were just unused furnished rooms. Some even had cloth covers over the furniture to prevent dust from clinging to them.

"Are you lost, perhaps?" a slow, quiet voice startled Hermione, making her jump.

Severus Snape was standing up the hall in front of her, awaiting for Hermione to answer him.

"I think so," she lied. "I'm trying to find my suite."

Snape sidestepped elegantly and pointed ahead of him. "There is a staircase up on the right. Take it to the fourth floor, your room is the second on the left."

"Thank you," she said politely, forcing a smile.

She'd have to look for the library later.

"I suppose if you're looking for something specific, you may just have better luck asking your husband for it," he said after she had passed him.

She paused long enough to turn her head and meet his eyes with a cold look before continuing on.

When she returned to her room, Hermione stopped at the doorway, seeing Malfoy lounging in the desk chair. "There you are; I was about to send Bobby to fetch you. We need to get ready for the dinner party."

Hermione stiffened, glancing at the elf who eagerly held the magnificent dress that Malfoy had gotten her, ready to help her dress.

"I'm not going," she said firmly, bringing her eyes back to Malfoy.

"You have a choice, Mudblood, either you cooperate, or your don't—" He shrugged. "Doesn't matter much to me, but if I have to assist you, you better expect me to reward myself for my trouble." Malfoy raised eyebrows suggestively and stood up, pulling out his wand, pointing it at her. "What will it be?" he asked tauntingly.

"Fine," she seethed, stalking to Bobby and snatching the dress from her.

"Aww, what a pity, I was hoping to get a quickie before dinner!" He was behind her before she even noticed that he had moved, pulling her hair from a shoulder.

Hermione caught her breath, putting space between them. She set a hand to her fluttering stomach, watching him closely.

"Look at you trying to fight your sexual desires," Malfoy purred.

"I said I'll get dressed on my own!" she told him, heaving a deep breath. She was starting to shake, losing energy. There was only so much fighting she could do.

Hastily, she turned from him, running into the bathroom.

"Make sure you bathe, wife!" she heard him call after her.

In the bathroom, she splashed cold water on her face, forcing herself to keep the tears at bay. She knew she wouldn't be able to handle this for much longer.

"Bobby is sorry, miss," the house elf said behind her, gently tugging on the dress she wore. "Bobby isn't supposed to talk about her private life, but Miss should know that Bobby knows what Miss is going throughs. Bobby is forced to breed with mate she don't love too."

Hermione turned from her reflection of the mirror, looking down at the house elf in awe.

Bobby nodded in confirmation. "My mate is not so gentle as yours is... Mine does not care if he hurts me..."

"Oh, Bobby," Hermione gasped in sympathy. "Oh, how awful! *Why*?"

"Why else, miss?" Bobby said hollowly. "For money..."

Hermione forgot all about her own problems then, kneeling down to the elf, embracing her into a hug.

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The dress looked wonderful on her; she actually looked better than he had imagined. He had the best looking Mudblood wife, Draco now realized. Everyone was going to be jealous of

him.

Good. I deserve it.

He grinned, wrapping her arm around his affectionately, tapping her forearm, not failing to notice the tiny hairs on her arms stood straight up, creating goose pimples.

Oh, he would have trouble keeping his cool for another two hours, but the wait would be worth it.

"Love the dress," he whispered in her ear after he had apparated to the Greenglass estate. "But I'll love it even more when I've removed it from your luscious body once we get back to the Manor."

Her face flushed from red to pale white, as she went through those thoughts in her head—definitely flooding with explicit ones.

Draco chuckled, satisfied with her response. He set an open mouthed kiss to her neck before leading her up the walk path of Astoria's home.

The Party Crasher

"Hi." Malfoy was greeted by Astoria Greengrass who pulled him into a hug. "You look good."

"I am," he simply said, following her in after she had released him, escorting Hermione in with him. "And you?"

"Oh, wonderful! It's been awhile since I've hosted a get together, so I'm a little excited."

"Who's all coming?"

The woman shifted her eyes toward a spot in the room. Hermione's eyes followed, where they settled on a pink bassinet in the corner.

"What are you up to?" Malfoy asked, immediately suspicious, causing Hermione's attention to turn back to the couple she stood near.

"Nothing," Greengrass said, failing at sounding innocent.

"Uh-huh," Malfoy said in doubt, eyeing her over. "I'm not going to regret coming over, am I?"

"Certainly not!" She laughed. "I had Crusty make your favourite dish!"

Malfoy's lips spread out into a welcoming smile. "Wonderful! It's been a while since I had chicken and roasted vegetables Greengrass style."

"You can sweet talk all you want, mister, but you aren't getting the recipe from me!"

Malfoy pouted. "Come on, Tori!"

"No," she said firmly, though she smiled and gestured them to come further into the home. "And how are you, Grang—" she stopped herself from finishing, looking from Hermione to Malfoy, expecting one of them to correct her.

"I still call her Granger," Malfoy told her with a shrug.

"Yes, I'd rather not have Malfoy connected to my name at all, if you please," Hermione snipped, purposely not meeting Malfoy's eyes.

Astoria whistled under her breath. "Not good then?" she asked, directing her question more to Malfoy than to Hermione.

"I suppose you'd think the same if you had been forced into marriage with *him*."

Malfoy smirked, amused with her, for whatever reason. Hermione glared at his smug look. "If only you *knew*," he told her cockily, shifting his eyes toward Greengrass.

"Oh, Draco, that's history," Greengrass huffed, rolling her eyes. "I'll have you know that I took your advice—" A baby's sudden wail cut her off. She turned on her heel quickly, hurrying to the bassinet to soothe the baby's cries.

"My advice?" Malfoy inquired when the baby had quieted down, seemingly liking her gentle bouncing of it.

"For a husband—or rather... a partner more like."

"Oh?" Malfoy sounded surprised.

Greengrass began to pace with the baby in her arms; Hermione noted that she appeared to be keeping her back to Malfoy. "Yes, I've been seeing someone."

"Whom? Aren't all the Purebloods taken—Oh, did you find yourself a Halfblood?"

Astoria giggled. "No, he's not a Halfblood!"

Malfoy crossed his arms over his chest. "Whom is it, Tori?" he asked without any humour to his tone. "You're avoiding from answering the question for a reason—" He gasped suddenly. "You're not seeing a *Mudblood*, are you?!" he hissed in disbelief.

"And if she was, what would it mean to you?" Hermione cut in before Greengrass could answer. "You're *married* to one yourself. Bit of a double-standard, don't you think?"

"Quiet!" Malfoy barked at Hermione, narrowing his eyes at her. "This concerns you none!"

"It doesn't really *concern* you either, Malfoy. You're a married man. What she does with her personal life—" Malfoy withdrew his wand, silencing Hermione from saying anything further.

"Oh, don't do that, Draco," Greengrass scolded him. "You know she's right."

"It's still not her business!"

"He's not a Muggleborn; or even a Muggle before you even think of that too." Here Malfoy visibly shuddered.

Hermione smacked at Malfoy, giving him a dirty look. '*Unsilence me, you creep!*' she told him with her eyes.

"Hit me again, and I'll glue your hands to your sides," he warned her simply, turning his attention back to his Slytherin friend. "Tori?" he prompted.

"Longbottom," Astoria finally admitted, busying herself with the baby.

Both Malfoy and Hermione's eyes widened.

Neville is alive?!

"Longbottom? *The Longbottom?!*"

"Yes, Neville Longbottom." Greengrass laughed at Malfoy's dropped jaw. "A bug's going to crawl into there and lay eggs."

"He's married, Tori. You can't—! It's against the law—!"

"Actually, it's not," Greengrass informed him smugly. "It's against the law to fool around with a *married* woman. I'm not married, and *he's* no woman."

"If the Dark Lord ever finds out—"

"He already knows."

"And he approves?"

Greengrass shrugged. "I was told so long as Longbottom doesn't fail his duty of impregnating his wife, that he didn't care what we do in the privacy of our homes."

So, Draco wasn't the only one forced into a marriage to make babies... And from Astoria's words, she just learned that the Slytherin Pureblood wasn't married. Why hadn't she been forced into a marriage too? Had she been married and then divorced? She did have a baby...

'But also... what of Neville's wife...? How does she feel about Neville cheating on her- does she even know?' Hermione thought. 'Why would he cheat on her? That seems out of character for him.'

Hermione couldn't help to think of poor Neville who had to do the same as Malfoy did every night. Malfoy was used to being a prick, but Neville had always been so sweet. He wasn't full of himself, and he certainly wouldn't threaten his wife into submission. He probably had sat his assigned wife down and explained what he had to do, ensuring that she knew he had no choice— Voldemort would make them do it, as violently as he wanted, just as Hermione learned herself.

Why couldn't Hermione have ended up with Neville? Or some other kind, decent, wizard who wasn't a pathetic Death Eater? Why did it have to be *Malfoy*??

Because Voldemort knew who his supporters had been; he'd not be stupid enough to put two people who fought against him in the war together— they'd likely form a rebellion, or die trying.

Hermione's heart clenched, desperately wanting to see a friend from school. How many more had survived? Would Neville know?

A soft tune played suddenly, breaking off Hermione's train of thought. It was an announcement that someone had arrived. A magical equivalent to a Muggle's doorbell.

Greengrass rushed off to meet them at the door.

"Nutty woman," Malfoy muttered when she was gone.

"Neville's a gentleman, unlike certain people I know," Hermione quipped. The silencer spell had finally faded.

"His wife probably respects him."

"Maybe she doesn't; he *is* cheating on her. Respect is earned."

She stood in her place as Malfoy made to approach her, his jaw clenched. "Don't make a scene," she teased him in sarcasm. "It wouldn't be *proper* to create a scene at your friend's party, *would* it?"

Malfoy reached up, and Hermione had to refrain from wincing, thinking he was going to hit her. Instead, he cupped the side of her neck with his hand. He leaned forward, touching his lips to her jaw line. Hermione cocked her head, pulling from him.

His hand gripped her tightly. She sucked in a breath, scowling at him. "Remove your hand, Malfoy," she said warningly.

He moved it, grasping onto a handful of her hair, tugging on it to tilt her face up to his. Their noses were practically touching. His eyes were staring at her intently, as if searching deep within hers for something. He delicately set his lips to her forehead, allowing them to just slightly brush against her as he whispered, "Respect can also be learned through fear too." It was eerily said, strictly done for effect, successful at sending a shiver throughout her body.

Hermione twisted from his hold, feeling a heat flush across her entire body. Her heart thudded wildly. There was an ache between her legs. She closed her eyes, inhaling deeply, focusing on her hate for him.

"That's not respect," she growled. "That's the product of being bullied!"

"Whatever it is, it works," Malfoy said arrogantly.

"Not with me."

"We shall see."

"Try it, Malfoy; see where it gets you."

He chuckled. "I intend to."

"He's here!" Greengrass practically cheered. A gasp erupted from Hermione when she looked up, seeing the once-boy-turned-man at the entry of the room, holding Greengrass's hand.

"Neville!" Her voice cracked, as tears flooded her eyes, blurring them. Before she knew it, she was running to him, hugging him, crying into his chest, so happy to see at least one person she loved was still standing among the living.

His arms wrapped around her. "Hermione!" he choked, emotion also affecting his ability to speak clear.

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Draco stiffened at the sight of his wife hugging Longbottom. His insides turned cold. He balled his fists at his sides. How dare he?! How dare *she*?!

"Draco," Astoria made to speak with him when he stalked over to the Gryffindors, but he pushed her aside, and snatched his wife's upper arm, yanking her from Longbottom. "Get your blood-traitoring hands off my wife!" he snarled, drawing his wand out, preparing to burn Longbottom's face off. Granger shrieked as Draco's hand tightened his hold on her when she made to escape from his grip.

"You're hurting her!" Longbottom alerted him, pulling at his own wand.

"Oh, please don't fight!" Astoria pleaded, setting a hand on Draco's shoulder. "He wasn't trying to kiss Granger or anything, Draco. They're just friends, remember? Nothing more than you and I—"

"*You* fancied me," Draco pointed out, curling his lip up at Longbottom. The man didn't attack though, shifting his eyes from Granger and Draco.

"Let her go. We can talk. There's nothing between Hermione and I—I never liked Hermione more than a friend."

"See, Draco?" Astoria slid her hand down his arm until it was on top of Draco's wand. "They're just old friends."

"*Do not touch her again,*" Draco drawled darkly. He didn't have to apply anything more to the threat; there were a few moments of silence that followed it. He knew his words had frightened them all, even Astoria, who knew he had a soft part to him. It was a serious talent Draco had learned from his father, finally putting it to use.

Longbottom nodded, acknowledging the threat. "I'd not want to upset you nor your Master, Malfoy," he said politely, but he didn't lower his wand and probably wouldn't until Draco would his own.

"*Do not talk to her. Do not look at her; hell, don't even think about her.*"

Draco turned abruptly from Longbottom, and wrapped his arms around Granger, breathing in her glorious scent, relishing over how whole her body felt against his. She was *his*. His *alone*. No one but himself was allowed to touch her. *No one*.

Granger squirmed from his hold, elbowing him in his gut, issuing a pain, knocking him out of the trance he had gotten himself into from thinking of her. "I hate you," she hissed when she was a few steps away. She wiped tears from her eyes and darted out of the room.

"You must understand where she's coming from, Draco" Astoria tried explaining the situation. "The world as she knows it no longer exists."

"No one is to touch her—especially anyone from the *losing* side. Not unless I permit it. If *anything* happens to her..." he trailed off, narrowing his eyes at the place she had disappeared

from. "They'll answer to *me*."

The chill in the air was broken off by another cheerful ring of Astoria's bell. "That'll be Theo," she announced. "Try not to murder each other..." she said to Draco and Longbottom.

"You've accepted the spell," Longbottom spoke up when Astoria was gone. "You're in too deep, Malfoy. If you don't want her hurt—if you want her to like you—you best pull back the reins a little."

"I know what I'm doing. I don't need advice from an incompetent, blood-traitor Gryffindor like yourself," he snarled.

"I'm just trying to keep her from getting hurt, Malfoy. There's a proper medium with the spell; you need to find it."

Draco wasn't going to listen to *him*. He left to look for his wife, calling out for her, hoping she'd answer. He doubted it though.

He didn't have to look for her long, knocking on a locked door, hearing her muffled, "I'm not coming out!"

He unlocked the door and stepped in to see her sitting on a toilet. Granger looked up briefly before hiding her blotchy, red, sticky face, dabbing a piece of tissue to it.

"You're not to touch any man besides myself," he simply ordered of her.

Granger stiffened. "Or else *what*, Malfoy; you'll strike me?! Like a disobedient, Pureblood wife?!" She stood up, glaring at him. Her eyes were glowing, dark and dangerous, making his throat tighten up. He didn't know why, but he was suddenly overwhelmed with an uneasiness. "I'm *not* a Pureblood," she snarled quietly, stepping forward.

Without a thought, Draco took a step back, not liking the look she was giving him. It was a mistake he regretted as soon as he did it. It was a sign of weakness; of retreat.

"I'm a *Mudblood*," she continued, taking another step.

He kept his ground this time, maybe she hadn't noticed that he had backed away from her.

"So don't think I'm going to *act* like an obedient, proud, happy-go-lucky, Pureblood who's been brainwashed into thinking she has to do everything her bloody, disgusting, women-beating husband says!"

Merlin, she was sexy when she was angry! *Frightening*, but *exceptionally* sexy! Draco made to reach out and touch her face, needing to caress it, but she smacked his hand away. "*You will not touch me!*"

He blinked at those words, stunned by them. She couldn't tell him what to do...! He could touch her! Granger was *his*! She *had* to let him touch her. He *needed* to touch her!

"Didn't expect me to talk out of turn, did you?" she sneered when he hadn't said anything, too dizzy under the spell. His head was aching terribly, and he felt as if he was about to burst. His lungs weren't getting enough air, even though he was breathing as heavy as he possibly could.

He was losing it! He was going bonkers; nutty; insane! He couldn't take it anymore! He couldn't wait any longer!

He caught her throat in his hand, choking off her spewing insults, and spun her around, slamming her up against the door, pinning her with his body. He removed his hand from her neck when she started gasping for air.

His eyes softened, noticing the red marks from his abuse. Draco ran his thumb over one of the marks. Guilt swirled through him. He hadn't meant to *hurt* her, he just needed to touch her body with his, that was all.

Granger screamed, pushing at him, cursing him out; doing anything in her power to get him away from her. He stood there, letting her run out of steam, admiring her stamina. Her fighting did her no good, but she still was determined to break free. She stopped after a few moments, exhausted, whimpering, breathing hard from her fit.

"Are you done?" he murmured against her neck and grazed it with his teeth. A wave of pleasure washed over him, feeling her relax against his body. He closed his eyes, stifling a moan. "It's tiring, isn't it? Fighting...?"

He nibbled on her neck. Granger swallowed from the touch.

She nodded, answering his question.

"Then why do you?"

"It's n-not r-real," she shakily said under her breath.

"It could be."

"No, it cannot."

"Because you hate me?" Draco lifted his head from Granger's delicious neck to watch her as she answered the question.

"Yes," she told him firmly with closed eyes.

That word made him frown; he didn't like that she hated him.

"But you can't deny that you're enjoying my body clinging to yours. That my kisses make your little toes tingle, that my fingers make your pussy wet, that the mere *thought* of my dick buried inside you makes your pulse quicken."

Granger's face scrunched up. She shook her head, refusing to allow the spell to take over.

"*Can you?*" he whispered, their lips were almost touching. He stuck his tongue out and trailed it across the seam of her lips, inviting her to take it to another step, hoping she'd accept the offer. Granger let out a trembling moan, exciting Draco even further.

Yes, finally...! She is cracking!

There was a sudden knocking on the door they were propped up against. "Draco?"

Draco sighed in annoyance but forced himself to answer back without any hint of it. "Yes, Tori?"

"Dinner's about ready— did you find Granger?"

"I did," He looked at his wife who was completely embarrassed. She probably would rather not have anyone catch them in such a position. "We'll be there in a few minutes," he promised his friend, reluctantly separating from Granger. She tipped over, losing her balance.

"I don't need you bloody help!" she snapped when he went to grab at her. "I'm *fine!*"

"Come along then, wife. And try to have a little chivalry around my friends, if you please— it is allegedly a Gryffindor trait, isn't it?"

Once outside the bathroom, Granger's steps fell behind Draco's when she heard Blaise laugh. Draco was surprised that he was there too, since Astoria didn't really like him much.

Draco saw him seated already, as if it was his own home, sipping on a glass of water. "Oh, when Theo told me about your little party, I just *had* to come," he was saying.

Draco watched Astoria give Theo a look. The man cleared his throat uneasily, giving her a helpless look. Draco did the nice thing and sat next to Blaise so Astoria wouldn't feel compelled to do it. She had always been polite and kind to others, often having been teased that she should have been sorted into Hufflepuff instead of Slytherin.

Blaised hummed in delight, leaning toward Draco. "Your wife is quite stunning tonight, Draco."

"That she is, no need to stare though, you'll make yours jealous." At Draco's comment, Blaise set his hand on his own wife's arm, tapping it.

"I do apologize, love," he said. "You understand though, don't you, dear?"

"Yes, of course, Blaise," she automatically said, placing a napkin into her lap, to prevent a mess from dirtying her dress— naturally, she wasn't going to argue with the man who was holding her family hostage to make her mind.

Dinner was served then, and the Slytherins began talking, reminiscing over their childhood, while the outsiders sat in silence, eating, listening to their chatter.

Draco recognized Theo's wife from Ravenclaw. She was a Halfblood if he remembered right. Her mother had been a Halfblood herself, who had married a Muggle. He wondered how

Theo had lucked out with a Halfblood. Maybe they were closely matched on the Scoreboard. Theo hadn't ranked too high, Draco recalled. Twenty-eight, if he remembered correctly.

"How's your Mudblood doing?" Blaise had pulled Draco aside after the meal.

"No change really. She still hates me."

"Does she?" Blaise sounded surprised. His eyes shifted over to Granger where she stood by Astoria, who was showing off her adoptive daughter to Bernice. "I would have thought she would be eating out of your hand by now..." Blaise smirked, admiring her from afar. "I knew she was brilliant, but that's an incredible amount of control there."

"It won't be long," Draco told him. "She'll crack soon, but her hate for me is awfully strong. I'm sure that has something to do with it."

Blaise nodded. "You'll have to fix that."

Draco sighed. "I've tried everything," he confessed. "I've even given her some control of the Manor."

Blaise gave him a passing look, showing how shocked he was to hear that. He cocked his head toward Granger, thinking. "I may I have an idea that could work..."

"Oh, *Merlin*, Blaise...!" Draco groaned. "Not again!"

"No! It'll be nothing...*fun*— well okay, it'll be a *little* fun, but trust me, it'll work!"

Draco sighed, contemplating it. Blaise's ideas usually *did* work, he just didn't like the gore and torture that were often involved.

"No blood, no pain," his friend quickly added. "I promise you, she'll be wanting you by her side, day and night. She'll think you're the greatest person alive— that's what you want, isn't it?"

Draco stared at his Mudblood wife, watching her grow a mild interest over the baby who was now in Blaise's wife's arms, being cooed at. He saw Granger actually smile as the baby happily talked back.

Someday, she'd look at their own baby like that.

He'd like her to smile at him like that too.

He gave a single nod to his friend. "Alright, let's hear it then."

Terrors in the Night

The baby was cute, and her laugh was simply too adorable to ignore. Hermione couldn't stop herself from smiling. And why should she? What was wrong with enjoying just the tiniest amount of happiness? She certainly needed it following the cruddy events that had happened in the past month (and even the last few years).

But she didn't want to focus on the bad things right now. For now she wanted to embrace the joyous feeling inside her that was caused by the amazing giggle of a sixth-month old baby.

The baby was an orphan, and her name was Colleena. Greengrass had explained that she volunteered to be her mother, which Hermione thought was admirable since the child had belonged to a pair of Muggleborn parents.

No guesses as to *why* this baby was an orphan... Hermione wasn't sure why Colleena had been kept alive though...

Hermione got to hold Colleena. She had only held a baby once before: Professor Lupin's. She teared up at the thought, knowing the boy (wherever he was) would grow up not knowing his parents, just the same as this little girl (and even Samuel).

The world these days was just lousy.

"The additional emotions you're experiencing will pass in a few weeks," someone said very quietly behind her.

It had been the woman Zabini had married: Bernice. She was in the same position as Hermione; forced to be the wife of a despicable Death Eater.

"I was frightened at first," Bernice carried on without looking at her. Her lips barely moved. "But now... maybe having a baby won't be so bad... I do like Samuel—he's an amazing young man."

"Samuel...?" Hermione gasped, stepping closer to the woman to hear her better. "He's alright?!"

"Don't make a scene! They're watching us! They're always watching us—or rather *you*!" Here, she narrowed her eyes, finally looking at her. She took Colleena from Hermione.

"Well, I like the thought of giving my husband a child!" she said louder than she had spoken before.

Hermione was confused with the statement at first, but then she realized what the woman was doing.

"You can't possibly be serious?! After all he's done to you?!"

Bernice shifted her eyes toward the Death Eaters who no doubt were watching—Hermione didn't look that way, not wanting them to suspect anything. She balled up her fists so the men would think she was furious at the woman.

"You've been brainwashed! You—You've given up! You have to fight back! You can't let—"

"No, *you* have to just face the fact that this is your life now! There's nothing you can do about it!" The woman snapped around on her heel and stuck her nose up in the air. In awe, Hermione watched her stalk to the horrible man that she had been forced to marry and loop an arm around his. Hermione nearly shuddered as Zabini smiled down at his faithful bride and kissed the top of her head as if he truly loved her.

Bloody creep-toad!

And Malfoy, he wore his ever-popular blank face, masking whatever he was feeling over the scene, eyeing the Zabini couple.

But Hermione's thoughts quickly went to Samuel. Bernice had said she liked him, so maybe she was caring for him and spending a lot of time with him. Maybe she was protecting him from harm.

Hope lit up in Hermione. Perhaps they had a chance! After what just happened, she realized she really wasn't alone in the world. Until tonight, Hermione had thought that Bernice had been scared into submission, but that woman could put on an incredibly believable act. It wasn't easy to fool the typical Slytherin; Hermione had had a lot of practise and still failed at it sometimes.

She would have to figure out a way to talk with Bernice so they could plan an escape.

The rest of the party went on without her paying much attention to it—she was too lost in her thoughts. Only when she felt the pull of apparition did she come out of her deep thoughts. Malfoy was escorting her up to the entrance of the Manor.

She slipped her hand from his hold, determined to walk on her own. Oddly, he ignored what she did and didn't even check to see if she was following him, likely expecting it of her.

The walk path was lit up with decorative Muggle looking street lamps so they could see in the night. The Manor ahead was gorgeous looking with the abundance light coming from the extravagant windows. If it hadn't been linked to the name Malfoy, Hermione could honestly say that it was a lovely place to look at, and she would probably like going inside it.

But that wasn't the case, and she dreaded going into it. This was her prison. She was stuck here, and unless she found a way out, she'd be locked up here for the rest of her life.

With *him*.

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Why was it that everything Blaise did was right? How could that woman so disgustingly walk up to him and allow him to kiss her without so much as a cringe of distaste? How had

he made her accustomed to things it so quickly?

To comply under fear of threat is one thing, but in the past two weeks, Draco seen a complete turnaround with Bernice. Blaise told him that he hadn't drugged her. He assumed that it was the marriage spell; Bernice had completely accepted her position as his wife, and since then, she had been practically at his beck and call, eager to please him..

Now, Draco only needed Granger to do the same. But how...?

"How did you get her to accept it?" he asked. "And don't tell me it is because you're holding her family as hostage. She wouldn't go for that; no one would. My Mudblood is still quite disobedient even with the Nit's life at stake!"

Blaise had shrugged. "As I said, the hate your wife has for you must be incredibly strong. It's obviously going to take longer for the spell to consume her. You said she's close to crossing that bridge; let's give her a little *nudge* in the proper direction."

Draco felt his wife's eyes on him as he entered the Manor. He hadn't said much to her at the party, knowing she was lost inside her mind. She was probably trying to develope an escape plan..

Good luck with that, Granger.

Clenching his jaw, he stalked out of the foyer, ignoring the hardness below his waist. He couldn't do that right now... He'd have to wait for that. Draco looked at his watch, dramatically closing his eyes when he read off the time.

It was going to be one hell of a long two hours...

He locked himself in a room and sat down, calling out the name of the first house elf that came to mind.

Stoney faithfully appeared, bowing to him in pure respect. "Master has called for Stoney, sir?" He was old and had once belonged to Draco's mother when she was still alive.

Draco swallowed back a lump in his throat that had appeared at the thought of his lost mother. Having difficulty blinking away the stinging blur of tears, he told Stoney that he needed a drink. "Firewhiskey, please."

The house elf frowned and gave him a nod. "Of course, Master." After he poured his Master's drink into the glass that was being held out for him, Stoney sank his head and quietly said, "This house elf is sorry for reminding his Master of his mother..."

Draco sensed the sincerity in the words. Stoney, as with any house elf, blamed himself for any of his Master's problems. It wasn't because they were trained to be that way, it was just the type of creature they were. Many of them had very caring, considerate souls. "I know you are. You say so every time."

The old elf lifted his head up, looking his Master in the eye. A corner of his mouth sadly pulled up. "And Master tells Stoney every time that it is not Stoney's fault."

Draco sipped his firewhiskey and let the liquid burn his throat. "It isn't."

"It still doesn't stop the pain though..."

"No, Stoney," Draco agreed, "it doesn't. Nothing will."

"Stoney remembers when his Mistress gave birth to his now Master." The house elf's eyes glazed over in sadness of the happy memory. "Stoney knew from then on, that his Mistress loved no one else more."

Draco swallowed down a sob with his drink. "The love she gave me was deeply matched," he told Stoney with a croak to his voice. "I have loved no other more."

"Stoney thinks that will change when Master has his own son."

Draco wasn't sure what to say to that. He hadn't given it much of a thought, never before picturing him actually doing anything with the children he was going to have someday (preferably soon). But now, because of what Stoney had just said, Draco pictured a small body in the arms of Granger, who smiled down at the blond-headed bundle. She laughed at the tiny sound the baby made as he expressed his love for her.

Draco had been much closer to his mother than his father; his mother had raised him, his father had schooled him. He knew he had made his father proud, even though the man had hardly ever shown it. A smile from him was rare indeed, but Draco did remember quite a few pats on the head when he was a small child, and a few on the back during his time at Hogwarts. Each of his parents expressed their love differently toward him.

And now... he wondered... how he would express love toward his own son...

He would probably smile more at his son than his father had done with him. Draco had really enjoyed it when he had earned a smile from his father. And maybe... he would hug his son too: he always liked getting hugs from his mother— so long as his friends weren't around to see it. He didn't want anyone to think he was soft. Not that he *was*. Just because a man liked the feeling of another person close to them, it didn't make him *soft*.

Another elf popped in. Draco was stirred from his thoughts, realizing that he had been sitting in the room for ninety-three minutes with Stoney who he had yet to dismiss.

He stood up, looking down at Snappy, the one that just came in. "Thank you, Snappy," he said when the elf informed him that Blaise had arrived. "You're both dismissed."

The two servants bowed low and apparated off.

"Meddles?"

Without a sound, a body appeared next to Draco. "Master has called," it said, giving a bow. His ears were bigger than the average elf. This could be what made him a good spy.

"Where's your mistress?"

Meddles lifted his head, proudly rocking back and forth on his feet. "The Mistress is in the north tower. Meddles believes she is exploring and getting to know her surroundings, but Meddles advises his Master to not be fooled; Meddles doesn't trust that his Mistress is interested in staying here."

"Well, that's a given," Draco muttered. "You're dismissed, thank you."

"My pleasure, sir," the elf bowed, and without even a pop to indicate his leaving, he was gone.

Draco met Blaise in the Flooing room where his stormy eyes fell down to a wooden box in his friend's hands.

"Are you sure I can't just stage a wolf attack?" Blaise asked, pointedly licking his lips.

"No," Draco answered firmly. "She'll know it's you after the last time."

Blaise frowned and muttered a word in regret.

"Well," Draco sighed. "Let's do this then."

"I'll lead the way," Blaise offered with a smirk. "I can smell her from here."

"Just remember what I said..."

"Oh, I'm not going to hurt your precious Mudblood," Blaise whispered as they stepped out into the hall. "Now keep quiet while I do my work."

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For some reason, Malfoy wasn't paying Hermione any attention. With the way he acted at the dinner party in the bathroom, she had been sure he would have pounced on her as soon as they got back to the Manor. Instead, she watched him trot off as if he had some business to tend to.

Well, maybe he did, for all she knew.

Hermione stood there, expecting him to come back and bark some order, but after a few minutes, she decided that he wasn't going to do it.

She wandered down a hall, taking this moment to search for the much needed library. It was going to take her forever if luck didn't have anything to do with it. The Manor was enormous, about half the size of the Hogwarts castle. As far as she knew, only she and Malfoy lived here, with the possibility of Snape—she'd seen him a few times without the presence of Malfoy, telling her that Snape was rather familiar with the building.

Malfoy had a lot of elves too, but the place still made her feel like a pinball in a pinball machine, and if she spoke out loud in most of the rooms (which she hadn't done much in the couple times that she had been allowed to wander), her voice echoed, repeating back what she had said.

She grew tired after walking a while. Many doors were locked, so she had no access to those rooms. Hermione tried to get in a few of them, her curiosity getting the best of her, but without her wand, she couldn't get the locks to undo.

Tiredness was growing her. Hermione had no idea where she was now, losing track a while ago. She decided that she'd lay down in the next bedroom she came across—there were plenty in the Manor, she had past several of them during her search.

It didn't take long to find one. The lamps in the hall lit the room up enough for one to see, but with a simple wandless *lumos* spell, she was able to get the actual light to the bedroom to flicker on.

The room was decorated in brown, green, and orange—an ugly scheme, but nevertheless, at least it had a comfortable looking bed.

The air was getting cold, and Hermione shivered. This section of the Manor must be neglected when it came to heating, but she was so sleepy and tired, she didn't care; the bed had plenty of covers on it, she'd just bury deep into them.

She slipped out of the dress, draping the beautiful piece of fabric over a chair and slid into bed, closing her eyes.

Hermione wiggled around, trying to warm the bedding up. She couldn't believe how cold it was! And so suddenly too!

Maybe Bobby could help her, she'd hate to call the elf, but the temperature was practically freezing!

She tossed the covers off her head to call out for the house elf—maybe Bobby would at least tell her where some fire building supplies were.

But Hermione didn't have time to call out to the delightful, little creature. Instead, all that came out was a gasp as she saw a body, cloaked in black, standing next to the bed near her. The surrounding darkness made it hard for her to make out who it was, but it definitely wasn't Malfoy, this person was bigger and taller.

She yelped out and made to scramble out of the bed. She got to the other side of it before she was magically pulled back toward the body, and thrown onto her back.

She squirmed to break free, grunting the whole time, but whatever spell that had been used, firmly stuck her in place.

"No!" she screamed when the body climbed into the bed and on top of her.

Icy, cold fingers clamped ahold of her chin, tilting her face to make her look up at the head of the body. Hermione could only see two yellow, glowing dots that she could only assume were eyes.

She shut hers, trying to concentrate on getting this monster off her, but all the struggle did was decrease her strength, and quickly. She could feel her life draining from her with every

spell she tried to wandlessly cast.

Hermione screamed as horrific images began to flood her mind. Ron's dead body hunched over over the shoulder of Harry when he had returned to the Borrow, announcing their friend's death. The mutilated bodies of her family. The warning written in blood on the wall of her childhood home.

All the terrors of the war came flooding back all at once. The memories were playing inside her mind as if she were reliving them all over again.

She knew she had to fight, and she did try, but fear and weakness were overpowering her. It wouldn't be long before she'd be a casualty just like everyone else she had once known and loved.

Clever Tactics, Foolish Actions

"Alright," Draco whispered from his place at the doorway, unable to remove his eyes off the shadow of his crazed wife. Her screams were getting quieter as she grew weaker. "Put it away, she's had enough."

Blaise opened the lid to his wooden box, and Draco cast a spell. A silvery light zipped to the Dementor that was attacking Granger. The Dark creature howled at the sight of it and flew to the box that Blaise held out for it.

Blaise brushed a hand over the box tenderly after he closed it. "Done?" he murmured to Draco so Granger wouldn't hear him.

Draco nodded and mouthed a thanks before stepping into the room to tend to his wife. The room was cold from the presence of the Dementor. Draco warmed it back up with a spell and turned on the light to see.

Granger was shaking uncontrollably, whimpering softly. She winced at the sudden bright light.

"Granger," Draco asked in just above a whisper, leaning over her and gently touching her shoulder.

She spun her body around, and her feet flew up, rapidly kicking at him. "Get away!" she cried frantically, her voice hoarse and scratchy. "Get away!"

Draco dodged her kicks and quickly got into the bed beside her, wrapping his arms and legs around her body. Her body was so cold, he nearly gasped from the shock of it.

"You're okay now," he murmured against the side of her head and kissed her. "It's gone now. It can't hurt you anymore. You're safe with me."

Granger trembled against him, but as he continued to speak in a soft, gentle tone, he noticed that she was pressing her body closer to his. Then she broke out into tears with her face buried into his shirt.

Draco's grip tightened around her as his stomach retched up from what he could only guess was guilt. But there was no going back now, and this needed to be done. She *had* to learn to trust him. He wanted her to be a proper wife, and the first step for that was to get her to embrace the marriage spell.

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His voice was so friendly and comforting; his body: warm and soothing. She shivered against him as her internal temperature returned to normal, concentrating on his calming words.

"I'm sorry," he said against the top of her head where he had been putting an abundance of light kisses between his sentences. "Please don't hate me anymore..."

Then she recognized the voice, which at first hadn't been possible, since she had never heard it speak such in a tone before. She stiffened as reality flushed back through her.

Malfoy was trying to... *comfort* her...?

Was this a nightmare? Malfoy would never hold her like this and apologize. He'd never leave tender, meaningful kisses on her. What was happening...?

It *had* to be a dream. She could actually sense that he meant the words he was saying, and Malfoy had never expressed a soft side— Hermione didn't think he possessed such a thing.

Then she remembered the monster. She hadn't gotten a grand look at it, but with what had happened during its attack—the freezing temperature of the room, the flood of horrid, awful memories, and the feeling of being sad, alone and lost forever— she knew that she had been attacked by a Dementor; her soul had been nearly sucked out of her.

Hermione pressed closer to Malfoy and wept into his chest, scared and confused, unable to speak, trembling.

The light of a spell right before the Dementor went away came to her mind, and soon after, Malfoy had appeared, asking if she was alright...

He had... He had *saved* her. Malfoy stopped that horrid creature from eating her soul. Malfoy had cast the Patronus Charm. She had never heard of a Death Eater doing that— they didn't need it. It was rumoured that the Dark Mark alone warded Dementors off, as they had formed an alliance.

Why would Malfoy even need to learn the Patronus Charm? Dark Marks allegedly did the same thing, plus more.

Hermione lifted her head to look at Malfoy, hoping to find answers in his facial expression alone.

He gave her an uncertain smile. "Are you feeling better now?" he asked, wiping away a tear from her face.

She narrowed her eyes and pushed away from him, rolling to the edge of the bed when he released his hold on her.

The only explanation for his sudden kindness was the spell. He couldn't just miraculously care for her, but it was indeed a pleasant change from him.

She rubbed her arms, trying to warm up from a chill that had ran throughout her body.

"Please," he whispered behind her. He sounded desperate, as if he was begging her not to kill him.

What in the name of Merlin is wrong with him...?

She felt the bed shift from his weight as he scooted closer to her, and she closed her eyes as his lips touched the skin of the back of her neck. She moaned softly, thinking how lovely they would feel against her own.

Bloody spell! She mentally fought it off, fisting her hands in determination.

"Where did the Dementor come from?" she finally spoke to him after a deep, shaky breath. It was hard to ignore his soft lips. She wiggled from him and stood up, glaring at Malfoy.

Now was not the time. She wanted answers. She wanted them *now*.

Malfoy looked hurt that she had moved away from him, but that wounded dog look was only there for a split second before he thumbed behind him.

"The window was open when I arrived. I've never had a problem with a stray Dementor wandering in, but it must have sensed... *you*..."

Hermione nodded. It made sense. Though, she didn't remember the window being open, but it wasn't like she had looked at the time.

"I... I heard you screaming..." Malfoy fiddled with the corner of the quilt that he was sitting on, avoiding from looking at her. "I was so afraid that I got here too late. Granger... I was so worried that you..." He finally looked up, his eyes were pooling with tears.

Hermione softened her stance, caught off guard. Malfoy was... *crying*? All because he thought she had been *hurt*?

"I just... I thought..." He was at a loss of words, burying his face into his hands. "I don't know what I would do without you anymore..."

What was he saying...? Had he turned into a complete sap in just a day?! Was that even possible...?

"I don't want you to hate me anymore, Granger... I... think I might... well..." He sighed, sounding defeated. "I didn't realize it until tonight... but... you actually make me happy."

"You cast a Patronus," Hermione asked, trying not to focus on his confession. She certainly didn't match his feelings, and she didn't need to make him angry with her. Besides, his feelings shocked her, and they couldn't be real. How could his opinion about her change in just a few weeks? It was not logical.

Unless... He wasn't fighting the spell...?

"I did."

"Happy memories of sending people to their deaths?!" she snapped. As if he would actually have any decent, non-violent memories.

Here, he smiled. It wasn't a smirk or a grin. It was a googly, sheepish one.

"It was of you... the happy thought was of you..."

Hermione swallowed hard. She wasn't ready for this. She hadn't prepared herself for this. Never would she have thought that Malfoy would *fall* for *her*.

It was rather... *disgusting* to think about.

She hid her face from him, trying to decide how she was supposed to react to this.

"I hope someday you can understand what I feel for you," he told her. "I'd do anything if you would."

"Let Samuel go," she immediately said without a thought.

Malfoy's face fell, appearing to be disappointed with the request. "He's not mine," he told her, surprising her with a regret-filled voice.

"You're a powerful man, Malfoy, that's all you ever tell me. Give Samuel his freedom, and I'll consider what you've said to me."

Malfoy nodded, accepting the request. "And in the meantime, what can I do to show you that I have changed how I think of you...?"

Hermione was incredibly puzzled by the question. Was the spell they were under backfiring? Would she actually be able to use it to her advantage...? Was this how Bernice was keeping Samuel safe? Were the men becoming so absorbed in trying to get their wives to reciprocate their feelings that they would literally do anything to make it happen?

There were so many questions that she didn't have answers to ...

She *could* use this against him though... His weird new feelings could eventually assist her with an escape.

Hermione rubbed her chin in thought. "I have been bored lately..." she told him slowly, trying to not show any sort of oncoming excitement. "I would love a place to sit in and read — a library perhaps?"

"Is that all you want?" Malfoy asked, getting up from the bed.

"Unless you want to let *me* free?"

"You know I can't..." he said seriously.

"Then yes, I want a library." Hermione nodded, then she gently added, "please," hoping if she asked nicely that he would consider it.

He took a step, taking her hands into his and bringing them up to his lips, looking at her the whole time. "Only if you kiss me first..."

Hermione tugged at her hands, but he gripped them so she couldn't.

"Just one kiss," he asked pleadingly. "I just want to see something."

"What is it that you want to 'see'?" She eyed him over suspiciously.

"If there's anything real between us—"

"There's not—"

"Maybe things have changed!"

He was looking down at his feet now, rubbing his thumbs over her knuckles. He looked quite pitiful. Hermione couldn't believe this was the same man who had dragged her by her hair three weeks ago.

Maybe... it *was* possible... that he *had* had an epiphany...

Would a kiss really hurt? If that was all she needed to do to get a library, it wasn't a big price to pay, was it? It would allow her to access material she would need to plan an escape with.

And perhaps... she might be able to con a wand from him... if he had become *that* devoted to making her not 'hate' him.

Hermione inhaled a breath and leaned forward, making up her mind. She'd kiss him, if that's all he wanted; she saw no harm. The spell was strong, but if she could find a way to cease its effects, it'd be worth this one kiss.

She closed her eyes as their lips touched. Malfoy's hands dropped hers and rose up to her upper arms, roughly grasping onto them. His mouth opened, encasing her bottom lip into the gap of it. Her insides lit up like a match when his tongue swiped across it for a taste.

She grew faint as the magic of the spell swarmed inside her, making it difficult to keep control of her feelings. And as his hands roamed under her undershirt, massaging her back, she moaned in delight.

Hermione pressed into him with a demanding need. Her thoughts were becoming fuzzy, and she couldn't remember why she was supposed to hate him. How can anyone hate a man who could make you feel so good, so safe, so... *wonderful*...?

He broke the kiss off to breathe, gulping in breaths, their chests heaving in unison. He fumbled for his wand and wrapped an arm around her waist.

"You're going to take me to the library now?" she asked, confused on why she was even asking for that. She'd rather feel the touch of his skin on the tips of her fingers. She rather he kiss her. She'd rather he bury himself into her and make her scream out in pure pleasure.

So why was she asking about the library?

She honestly couldn't remember the reason for it.

He didn't answer her right away, staring at her with unblinking eyes. He bent down, nipping at her lips. "The library can wait, don't you think?" he asked in an aroused voice. "Wouldn't you rather prefer we go to my bed?"

His question matched her thoughts *exactly*.

"Yes," she whispered, crashing her mouth to his, plunging her tongue into it. His lips spread out into a smile before she was whisked away with their faces still connected.

He landed in his bedroom. It was dimly lit in dark shades of red and black. Malfoy put his wand away and pushed her into a corner of the room, snatching her wrists with his hands and pinning them against the wall; her left beside her head, her right just above it.

His body touched hers and Hermione whimpered when she felt his hard male member touch her. She was only wearing panties and could very much feel how ready he was for her.

Their eyes were locked together, staring at each other for no reason at all; perhaps each of them were waiting for the other to make the first move.

The burning need between her legs was getting hotter, and Hermione moved her hips forward, moaning when her body jolted with an incredible feeling. She closed her eyes, repeating the movement, and parted her lips when she felt Malfoy's against hers. He began devouring her mouth, as if he couldn't get enough of a taste for her.

His hands released her wrists, but she kept them in place as he pulled her panties down, causing them to fall at her feet. Their mouths didn't stop as she stepped out of them.

When Malfoy began rubbing her wet, excited flesh, she broke off their kissing, crying out. And just as she was about to go blind from her release, he stopped, taking her into his arms and walking to the bed.

She grunted with need, placing her own hand at her clit to rub it, but he stopped her with a harsh wack to her backside.

She looked at him in awe. Hermione couldn't believe—!

"It's my turn to go first, remember?" He sat at the edge of the bed, setting her on the floor between his legs. "You want me to finish, dear, you must suck me off first." He leaned back onto his elbows, raising his eyebrows, prompting her to begin.

"And you'll... fulfill my needs if I do this?" she asked, suspicious that he may not.

"I promise that by tomorrow morning, you'll be so sore from my fucking you, that you won't even want to get out of bed."

Hermione's eyes fell down to the bulge of his pants. She had never sucked a man off before—not willingly.

"It takes nothing at all, Granger," he told her coaxingly, lifting up his hips a little in anticipation. "Just wrap your hand tightly around it, and stroke it. Pop it into your sexy little

mouth, swirl your tongue around it, like it's a sweet pop, and in no time, it'll be done."

He unfastened his belt, unzipped his pants and tucked his hand down under, pulling out his penis. It stood tall and stiff. Hermione couldn't help but to eagerly watch him as he stroked himself a couple times before he returned his elbow to the side of his body. "You may begin anytime."

Malfoy let out a long groan when Hermione grabbed it like he had just done a moment ago. She curiously watched his eyes roll up toward his skull as she stroked it slowly. Her eyes fell down to his battered up penis when she felt the roughness of it.

Her hand dropped from it, and she stared at it in horror. She remembered when Voldemort took over her body and forced her to suck Malfoy off. She remembered the taste of his blood, the chunks of shredded pink skin stuck between her teeth. The screams Malfoy hurled out...

She looked up when Malfoy took her hand and replaced it back around him.

"It'll be nothing like that time," he promised her, knowing exactly what she was thinking.

"Does it hurt?" Hermione softly ran a thumb along him: his legs shuddered.

"No," he hissed. "It doesn't hurt at all. Your touch feels lovely, *very* lovely."

She ducked her head down, closing her eyes and gave it a quick lick.

"Yes, Granger," he growled. "That's it...you're doing it right... don't stop...!"

Wanting to please her husband, she stuck the tip of it into her mouth, pumping him with her hand, becoming more actively involved as he praised her. She felt good. She was making her husband happy; that's all that mattered.

She groaned as his hand grasped a fistful of her hair, pressing himself deeper into her mouth. She gagged when it hit the back of her throat.

"Merlin, yes!"

Tears filled her eyes when he did it a second time, and he preventing her from pulling away. She felt like she couldn't breathe and whimpered.

"Sorry," he whispered through his gritted teeth. "It's been so long...! You have no idea how great you feel..." Malfoy then fucked her mouth with a slow, gentle motion, pulling back before she had the urge to gag.

He tensed up a moment later, and Hermione paused when his hot, thick semen shot into her mouth.

"Swallow it, Granger," he ordered through his panting, holding her in place to do so.

She instantly obeyed and licked him clean.

"Is it my turn now?" she asked when he was finished.

"Of course, wife. Whatever do you want?" Malfoy lay back onto the bed, placing his hands behind his back, looking up at her with a smile.

Hermione stood up and grabbed his soft member, immediately bringing it back to life. Without a word, she straddled him and pushed his penis into her.

Malfoy's hands went to her hips, gripping her tightly. He chuckled at her, but Hermione didn't care what he thought; she just wanted him inside her. She wanted him to fill her. She needed him to... *fuck* her.

He had her bra off in no time, and was cupping her breasts, toying with them, making her arch her back.

"You like that, Granger?" he asked, grunting as he pushed deeper into her.

She nodded, determined to get him even deeper inside her.

He abruptly rolled her over underneath him, increasing his strength and speed, pounding into her, making her cry out in bliss.

"That's it... tell me how much you like my fucking cock! You love it, don't you?!" When she said nothing, he pulled at her hair, demanding an answer.

"Yes!" she gasped out.

Malfoy growled, going balls deep. "Fucking yes! You're so wet!" he buried his face into her neck, sucking on it. "Did I make you cum? Tell me! Tell me I make you all slick and wet! You're wet for me— only me!"

"Yes! Only you!" she wailed out, pushing him into her, breathing hard. Sweat coated their bodies, and she stopped suddenly, feeling the heat of his cum filling her insides. His thrusting slowed as he milked himself dry using her body.

She moaned as he slipped out of her and collapsed next to her in an exhausted heap. "Can we do this every night?" Malfoy asked, breathing heavily.

"If that's what you want," she faithfully answered, smiling as he leaned toward her, kissing her shoulder.

"I would dearly appreciate it," he told her and cupped a breast, brushing his thumb over her nipple.

"Then what my husband wants is what my husband gets."

Malfoy grinned and returned back to kissing her shoulder. "After we rest, let's go for another round. I'll eat you this time." He purred in delight as her legs spread out to his offer. "Would you like that, my sweet?"

"Very much so," she answered, touching herself, anticipating his lips kissing her, his tongue licking her, and his fingers stroking her.

"Are you going to finger yourself as we rest?"

"Is that what you want?" Hermione asked, pausing her movement, alarmed that he may not like that.

"I would very much enjoy watching you finger yourself. It's fucking sexy."

She let out a sigh of relief and proceeded to rub her tingling, excited bud. "I like it better when you do it, though," she told him, snuggling up against his body.

"Well, then, wife, by all means, move your hand aside, and your husband will pleasure you the way you wish to be."

"Thank you," she whispered, sighing happily as his fingers touched her to begin their play.

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She was fantastic, she was incredible; amazing! She trembled against him, she gripped the blanket beneath them, she thrashed around, whimpering and screaming his name—his *first* name.

He couldn't get enough of her. And she didn't want to stop either. Which was great. She was trapped now, finally becoming a victim of the spell like he was. She was going to start feeling different with him after tonight; she had accepted the spell, putting aside her hate, wanting nothing more than to please him.

He smirked triumphantly against ear, digging his fingers into her dripping pussy.

It's about bloody time, he thought as he mounted her when she pleaded him to do it. Her slick cunt easily swallowed the full length of him. He leaned down, kissing her, invading her mouth with his tongue, groaning as her legs wrapped around his hips.

It's about time you learned your fucking place, wife.

An Alarming Occurance

Hermione woke up to several pairs of eyes staring at her. At first, it had startled her, but then she relaxed— they were only Draco's house elves.

She hadn't realized how many he actually owned until right at that moment when they were all standing near the side of the bed that she had slept on. He had over two dozen of them!

They continued to look at her, as if they were expecting something of her. Some looked bored, while quite a few were eager or anxious.

"What's going on?" she asked through a stretch, groaning at her abundance of sore, protesting muscles, wincing at the tight pain.

"We's waiting for the missus to direct us," a tiny one answered. Hermione had not met this one (she hadn't met most of them!), but she guessed that this one was very young, as she sounded so.

"You can't mean me?" Hermione asked.

"The Master said so," another one said with a nod, who was surprisingly well rounded for a house elf.

Hermione sat up in confusion. She rapidly tapped her still-sleeping husband until he gave a gruff, "What?"

"Your house elves are staring at me," she told him quietly. Then she mumbled an apology for waking him up.

Draco rolled over to sit up, arching his back in a stretch. He groaned just as Hermione had, loud and long, his own muscles worn out after their late night activities. "Fuck, I need a good, hot soak," he muttered under his breath, tilting his head side to side to loosen up his neck.

He smirked when he noticed her waiting for him to explain what was going on with the house elves. He lifted his hand, fingering some of her hair. "That was some night, wasn't it?"

Hermione looked away, blushing, recalling the very wild night that they had together. It had been incredibly wonderful, and her gut tightened up with excitement knowing they would do it again tonight.

"Every night," he had promised with a whisper in her ear. "I'll fuck you like this every night — if you'll let me."

And she promised she would.

Hermione closed her eyes, humming in delight as Draco leaned over and brushed her hair from her neck to kiss at it.

"Good morning, my lovely wife," he purred. "Did you sleep well; I hope?"

"Very well," she told him with a croak in her voice, an effect of his soft, nipping lips. "Thank you."

"And are you currently satisfied with your husband— tell me that you are."

She nodded. "I am," she assured him.

"Wonderful," he murmured against her skin, toying with it.

"And what about me?" she asked, pulling away in a sudden worry that she wasn't good enough for him.

Draco smiled at her and cupped her cheek, caressing it with his thumb. "You are responding perfectly," he said. "Don't you feel much better now— having accepted the spell? Isn't it just... *euphoric*?"

"I can remember hating you, but... things have changed..." Hermione admitted. It was foolish to keep on hating him when he had proved to her that he would keep her safe and happy. And she honestly believed he would continue to do so. After all, they were both under the same spell, each of them needing to please the other.

She couldn't say she *loved* him, but something was different today than yesterday. She felt like she never wanted to be apart from Draco. She could sit in bed all day, if he was there with her. Hermione was glad she decided to kiss him the night before. He was right: she felt so much better now.

Now all she had to focus on was making him happy, and he already said she was doing that just fine.

"It's supposed to be like that; it forces our differences to fade away, so we can become a better couple."

Hermione leaned into him, relishing over his brilliant mind. He really was smart. Like herself. They were perfect for each other.

"Why are the elves waiting for me to give them commands?" Hermione asked when she seen that the elves were still there, watching the scene.

"My sweet wife, I explained this already to you yesterday, but you weren't paying me any attention."

"Sorry," she mumbled truthfully, feeling bad about how she had acted toward him— even though, at the time, she believed he had deserved it.

"You're alright," Draco told her, looping his arms around her body, pulling her back into his chest. "The Malfoy women traditionally always conduct the house elves," he explained. "So they are here, awaiting for their daily chore list from you."

"I've never... had servants," Hermione said shamefully, regretting her less-than-wealthy past. It was no wonder he had hated her... she was clueless when it came to riches. "I—I wouldn't know how..."

"You make them do whatever you wish. Some are better than others when it comes to certain things. Loopy—he's the one on the far right with the red tea towel—is the best laundry washer a man can ever have. And Dinnger—" Draco pointed out a taller one in the back who straightened up nice and tall when she was mentioned, "—she's a great cook. Flooter's not here right now, she just had a baby last week, but she normally tends to the gardens. Root has taken over for her, though he's not as good."

A house elf covered his eyes, whimpering in shame. This could only be Root.

Draco went on and on, telling her of each house elf's duty and even announced that Bobby was now her personal one; though they *all* would do practically anything she asked them.

"They won't assist you in an escape though," he advised her. "But you don't plan on doing that anyway, do you?"

Hermione had a terrible time thinking as his lips were grazing over the lobe of her ear. He softly flicked at it with the tip of his tongue, making her let out a quiet moan.

"You'd rather stay here in the Manor with me, wouldn't you, wife?"

She nodded, unable to give him a verbal answer.

"That's what I thought," Draco said, pleased by her answer. "Tell the house elves their duties for the day, then you and I can take a nice, hot bath to sooth our over-worked muscles."

"Erm..." Hermione eyed the crowd of house elves over. "How about... do whatever Draco usually has you do any other day?"

They responded with a unison of "Yes, Mistress," before they all gave her a bow and cracked off, each crack sounding different.

Two remained; Bobby and the cook, Dinnger.

"What would Mistress like Dinnger to make for this day's meals?"

"What do you want to eat?" Hermione asked Draco.

He shook his head. "As the Mistress, *you* get to decide the main meals."

"But what if you don't like what I have her prepare?"

"She knows what I'll eat, and she'll tell you so. In time, you will learn what I like and what I do not like, my wife."

"Okay," Hermione agreed warily. "Um, for breakfast, I'd like a ham and cheese bagel, please. For lunch... vegetable soup with buttered bread, and for dinner, I'd like roast chicken with

chips and a green salad."

"As you command, Mistress." Dinniger was then gone.

"And when a house elf waits for you like Bobby has been, and you have nothing for them to personally do, you only have to dismiss them. They will then be on their way."

"Okay," Hermione said, storing this information in her head. "Then, Bobby, I've nothing for you to do at the moment, thank you. You may leave."

Bobby bowed low, thanking Hermione for her time before she was also gone, leaving her Master and Mistress alone.

"Brilliant! You're already getting the hang of being a Malfoy wife!" Draco hugged tightly her to him, rewarding her with a kiss to the top of the head.

"Now, how about we soak in a tub of hot, bubbly water for a while?"

"I would love that, thank you, Draco."

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"Merlin, Blaise! I could actually kiss you—"

"Well, don't!" Blaise darted from Draco, who had floored to the Zabini estate to show him his gratitude. The man cringed at the thought of Draco kissing him.

"I take it she's worshipping the ground you walk on?" he asked, pouring Draco a drink and holding it out for him.

"And then more!" Draco took a quick sip before continuing, "Even after I saved her arse, she still refused to trust me, so I asked her what I could do to get her to understand how I feel about her; at first she wanted me to let the nit go, but I told her I had no control over him—"

"Bernie's gotten quite attached to him," Blaise said firmly.

"I know, but she doesn't."

"For a nit, he's really not all that bad; awfully smart, little thing, I reckon he gets that from your wife though."

"Anyway," Draco returned to the original subject, not caring about the nit, "she requested a library, out of all the possible things someone could ask for!" He rolled his eyes. "She's so bloody predictable!"

"And yet, you sound surprised."

"She's a captive, who can have about *anything* she wants— she didn't even ask for a wand! What kind of witch doesn't want a *wand*?!"

"And if she *had* requested a wand, would you have given her one?"

Draco scoffed. "Do you think I'm thick?! Of course not!" Draco's face then turned thoughtful. "Not *then* anyway... But *now*... well... perhaps I would... *if* she asked."

Blaise's eyebrows raised, surprised Draco would actually say that.

"All morning, she's constantly been asking if she's doing everything right to my liking," Draco said with a smirk. "She even asked me what I wanted her to wear!"

Blaise lifted his glass in a toasting gesture. "Congratulations, then. 'Bout time really. So what finally turned her?"

"I tricked her into giving me a kiss."

"Oh, *mate*!" Blaise gasped out in amused laughter. "That's fucking gold there! And she actually did it?! *Hermione Granger* actually willingly kissed you?!"

Draco nodded smugly. "I knew she'd do it, if I offered her the library in exchange."

"And have you even given her the library?"

"Not yet," he answered with a shrug. "But she also hasn't asked for it either. She's too busy trying to make sure she doesn't foul anything up with me."

"Just remember that it works both ways, Draco," his friend warned him. "I can't even begin the list of things I've done for Bernice, she's the only reason that the nit is still sane around me."

"Oh, I know. I'm going to make sure she's just as happy with me as I am with her. I plan on pampering her and introducing her to the luxurious life she's been married into. She's my wife after all, it's my duty as a Malfoy to spoil her— now that she *wants* to be married to me! She's changed for the better! And she'll be greatly rewarded for it!"

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"Mr. Blaise has a visitor," Samuel announced to Bernice in a hushed voice.

"You're not supposed to spy on him!" Bernice scolded the boy. "You won't like it if he catches you doing it!"

"But he won't catch me," the boy insisted. "And if he did, I can just pretend I'm cleaning!" He held up the mop that he had been propping his body against, waving it in the air.

"You know how he gets, Sam; I mean it, don't piss him off!"

"But he promised you he wouldn't hurt me."

"That doesn't mean you need to test the honour of his word!" she hissed.

Samuel sighed in defeat. "Fine! But I just thought you would want to know that Mr. Malfoy is here."

This piqued Bernice's interest. Blaise had been trying to help his friend convert Hermione Granger to the dark side— something that couldn't be allowed to happen!

"What did Mr. Malfoy have to say," she asked the boy, all warning of spying on the Master of the house forgotten.

"He was happy, and I almost thought he was going to kiss Mr. Blaise!" the boy answered in a whisper, laughing naively at the thought. Though, he stopped when Bernice didn't echo the action.

"It's not good then? It's not good that Mr. Malfoy is happy? I thought it is always good when the Purebloods are happy and smiling? Because then they aren't mad, and we aren't punished!"

Bernice kept her tragic thoughts to herself, not wishing to alarm Samuel. He was a smart young man, but was defenseless against anything Blaise could do to him, both mentally and physically. It was best that the six-year-old was kept in the dark.

"Of course it's okay that Mr. Malfoy is happy, I was only thinking that I forgot to do something that Blaise requested of me."

Samuel's eyes widened in alarm. "Oh, you better do it then, before he notices!" he urged her.

Bernice nodded in agreement. Though, Blaise was somewhat lenient with her, he didn't spare to make threats toward the people he held captive to make her mind.

And Samuel knew this. More than Bernice was willing to accept. Blaise had made the boy witness a brutal beating of a Muggle that he had 'hunted' as a way to make him fear him. With great difficulty, Bernice had charmed Samuel's mind to help forget a lot of the event, but there was only so much she could do since she wasn't actually trained in that type of magic and certainly didn't want to risk his mind anymore than she had.

Thankfully, Blaise felt that that one time was good enough to prove to Samuel who was in control, and he hadn't done anything like that again. But there were a few times where Bernice had went to refuse one of Blaise's commands and he threatened to tie Samuel up in the room he used for torturing.

The room he made her clean after he was finished with it.

The room that lacked any actual bodies of the unfortunate, innocent souls he had finished 'playing' with, because the bodies would end up butchered so badly, all that would be left was mush.

"You're really lucky that you're magical," he told her once, as he watched her mop up the bloody mess. He had 'claimed' Bernice as his wife only two days before making her clean his mess up for the first time. "Those remains could have easily been you. Can you imagine?"

Your brains smashed into the flooring just like that disgusting Muggle's you're mopping up now?" He had giggled when Bernice responded with a whimper, scared of the thought of being a victim caught under Blaise's many inventions used for such destruction.

This was the same man who could speak so gently to her, never once raising his voice.

He didn't have to.

"I'm not allowed to hurt you," he told her the first night that he tied her to the bed. "I don't even *want* to hurt you. Don't you realize how special you are? The Dark Lord especially picked you for me. I will treat you like my queen, but only when you first accept me as your king. That's marriage, Bernie, together we're a team. You give, I take, and then I give to you, and you take what I give."

Even when she refused, begging him to not do what he had been ordered to do by the Dark Lord, his voice was gentle, patient, and calm.

Though he did use her until she could no longer fight, exhausted from the effort of getting him to stop. She learned that Blaise got more excited and more violent with a fighter.

She learned to... just let him get it over and done with.

But he was also like that with the victims he intended to fatally harm. His voice never rose while he did his dreadful deeds, always staying at a calm, soft level and getting bored when they gave up fighting, and when they did, he didn't want to 'play' with them anymore.

He was incredibly insane. There was nothing right about him. Absolutely nothing.

Bernice felt like crying. Her chest tightened up with a sharp pain. It was often difficult to breathe and stay strong. But she had no other choice.

"Go to your room until I return for you," she ordered Samuel with immense struggle not to cry.

Samuel didn't argue with her, recognizing tone. She watched him hurry off, not taking her eyes off him until he was out of sight. She listened to his quick, faint footsteps and waited until all was quiet except the muffled voices of Blaise and Mr. Malfoy.

Bernice closed her eyes and took a deep breath, choking back a sob before retrieving her wand from her dress and cast a spell with it.

"She's... been consumed..." Bernice announced slowly, emotionally affected by the news herself.

Neville stiffened, momentarily stunned by her words. "*Please* tell me you're not speaking of Hermione?"

Bernice clasped her trembling hands together, refusing to show the Pureblood her nervousness. "I'm afraid so," she confirmed. "And she knows..."

"Knows what?" Neville practically snapped, probably fearing the worst.

"About me— that I'm... *pretending*..."

"How does she know that?"

"I... well, I kind of gave her a hint about it yesterday—" Bernice pressed her lips shut when Neville groaned.

"We don't have a defense for this!" he burst out. "You got the last Flatterbug Egg until the autumn! If she takes his mark before then, before she swallows the egg, then we're in trouble!"

"We're already in trouble! When word gets out that the *strongest* person of our time has been *consumed*, she won't even have to take his Mark before people start dropping out of the Rebel Force! And when those two produce an heir, who will *also* be on his side, there is not a thing anyone will be able to do..."

Face it, Longbottom, we're... *screwed*."

Neville visibly took a deep breath. "Maybe we *can* do something..." he said a moment later.

"*What?*" Bernice was doubtful at this point.

"You need to erase Hermione's memory of you telling her that you aren't consumed yourself — before she tells Malfoy..."

Bernice went still, unable to hear anything more Neville had to say. If Blaise found out she was lying to him, he'd surely punish her for it. And then, he'd want to know *why* she was lying.

He couldn't know why. If he knew that she belonged to an opposing party, one that the Dark Lord didn't even know about, he'd surely take it out on the people she loved. Not to mention, he'd tell the Dark Lord about it, eliminating their plan for the element of surprise.

"I'm not doing anything more until my family is released from that freak," she interrupted Neville who was telling her what she could do about Hermione.

Neville stared at her a moment, frustrated with the current issue at hand. He placed a hand to his forehead, rubbing it.

"Your friends... you said they would help you? With *anything*?"

Bernice nodded. "But I don't want to get them involved if I don't have to."

"Well, I'm telling you right now, Bernice: we've no choice. If they are as well trained as you have been saying—"

"They are."

"Then I'll need some contact information. I'll send for them."

Bernice shook her head. "They won't respond to you at all."

"Why not?"

"Because you're Pure... I'm going to have to do it, but before I do, my family needs to be safe."

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Hermione walked along the path which looped around the masterpieces that the previous Lady Malfoys had created. She studied each one, deep in thought, trying to understand what was being expressed in the designs.

Draco wanted her to start on her own as soon as she was willing. He had told her that it would show him how serious she was with her role as his wife.

She noticed two Lady Malfoys had never got around to theirs. She didn't want her space in the oversized garden to be bare.

Hermione sadly looked at one piece created by Draco's great-grandmother. She had made a statue of a crying woman who was surrounded by several child-like angels. A statue of a man very much resembling Draco stood behind the female one, sneering down at the angels.

Hermione really didn't want to understand what that was about. She feared she wouldn't like the story.

Narcissa's masterpiece, which was right next to Hermione's, was a lovely one with charmed, wooden, carved birds swooping right above bushes of different coloured flowers; most of the flowers were white and blue.

Hermione didn't know what she wanted to do with hers just yet. She sat down on a stone bench that allowed her to look off in the green field, thinking about what she could do to leave behind for her children to look at one day and remember her after she was well and gone.

Something happy. That was a for certain. She was happy right now, and Hermione wanted to show it.

She sat back, closing her eyes, relaxed. The sun was out, and it was a nice Spring day, curing anything and everything that had cabin fever. Birds sung happily, branches with fresh new leaves swayed in a calming breeze, soothing Hermione into a sleep.

"I went out into the garden today," she told Draco quietly at dinner after he had asked what she did while he was out.

"Excellent. Have you made any decisions about it yet, or is it too soon?"

Hermione shook her head. "Much too soon. I'm also not so sure how much I can do without magic; I'd surely hate for my piece in the garden to be dull in comparison to all the previous Ladies of the Manor." With her Muggleborn status, that was enough to make the situation uncomfortable for her; Hermione didn't add that specific detail, not wanting her husband to be reminded of what she was. She already had something to prove with that alone. Besides her blood type, she had a terrible green thumb, and it was worse without magic.

"Bobby can do whatever you need." Draco looked at her and placed his fork into his mouth, chewing the lettuce thoroughly. He seemed to be expecting her to say something.

"I suppose that will work." She had been hoping for a wand, feeling naked without it, but if he didn't want her having one, then she wouldn't bother him about it. And Bobby could do what she needed done. Though, it seemed redundant to have an elf do it when she could herself.

Mudbloods aren't allowed to use wands anymore, she reminded herself.

It was unfair to be treated less than a house elf.

She looked down in shame at her plate of dinner, no longer hungry, feeling disgusted with herself.

"What's wrong?" her husband asked, sounded troubled. "Is your meal alright? If not, I'll have another one cooked to your satisfaction."

"The meal is fine, thank you," Hermione mumbled, hastily shoving something into her mouth so he wouldn't think otherwise.

His fork dropped, clanking against the plate. "You will tell me what's bothering you. There's no other reason to avoid my eyes if you're not hiding something—tell me what it is, *now*."

Hermione's eyes flickered up to meet Draco's, and she swallowed at the intense look he was giving her.

"I'm just sorry," she told him hoarsely. "I'm ashamed of myself; my blood." Then she looked away again, tears flooding her eyes.

"I do not want you to *ever* bring that up again, *understand?*"

She nodded, taking a moment to wipe a teardrop off her face.

"Now look at me, wife," Draco ordered in a tone that she knew better than to argue with. He was giving her a dead serious look. "The Dark Lord assigned us together, neither of us had a choice in the matter, but it had to be done for the future of our being. Your status before our marriage, be it blood or any other, shall no longer be acknowledged. You're my wife, Lady Malfoy, and will be until you are no longer breathing."

"But it was only yesterday that you called me a Mudblood. It has been your *name* for me since I arrived here..."

"That is true," Draco admitted. "But that was also because you fought me with all your might, but now, because you had willingly kissed me last night, starting off our lovely, wild night as a *real* married couple, you let the spell take over your feelings, just as I have; it is allowing me to overlook your defects, and it's stronger now that you've accepted your fate, making our feelings mutual. This is what the Dark Lord wants of us."

"Okay," she said when she gave his words a thought over. "I won't make you angry anymore."

"I would hope not. And I have no plans to make you angry with me."

Hermione sat up straighter, feeling a little better now that she knew what Draco thought about her.

"Are you fine now?" he asked, picking his fork back up.

"Yes, thank you, Draco."

He nodded. "Finish your meal then. After we eat, I'll show you the library; would you like that?"

"Very much so." Her heart skipped with excitement. She wondered what type of books her husband possessed.

After they finished, Draco led Hermione by the hand, tracing his thumb tenderly along her knuckles to his library. He stopped at an arched door with a frosted iron-wright window.

Hermione gasped at the design, completely in awe at the detail of it.

"It's lovely, isn't it?"

"Oh, it's just beautiful, Draco!"

Draco stepped forward to open it for her, pushing the door inward. It creaked loudly, revealing the room. Hermione's jaw dropped at the size of it, unable to define its parameter, as the other side of the room appeared to have no end.

Her wide eyes scanned the room, absorbing the pine coloured shelves of books. She aimlessly wandered, not having any clue as to where she should start.

It was unarguably the biggest library she had ever been in.

"Do you like it?" Draco asked behind her.

"Oh, Draco!" She spun around, racing to him and wrapping her arms around Draco in a hug. "It's the best one I've ever been in! Thank you for granting me access!"

"This is yours now too," he told her, petting back her frizzy, wild hair.

Hermione had no idea what to say! All her life she had wanted a home library, and not one even as massive as this one was, and now... she had it. Her very own, full of magical books she had yet to even know titles of and large, comfy chairs to snuggle up in!

She pulled from Draco, grinning brightly, and walked to the nearest shelf to find a hoard of books to start reading, unaware that her husband was complacently watching her every move.

AN: So Hermione's in a complete daze about Draco, literally in agreement with practically anything he wants of her; what can this mean for our heroine? Will she be saved? Will she save herself? What does her future have in store? Though, have no fear, our favourite character has not lost her spark.

Bernie is teetering on a very dangerous slope. And Neville is building up his own army right under Voldemort's-- oh... right... Voldemort has no nose...

Things are start to unfold! Until next time, readers!

Vengeance

Draco stared at his wife while she read one of the many books she had picked out. She was beautiful in her pale yellow dress, and the shine of a light from behind her illuminated her, making the dress appear to glow.

She hadn't looked up since she had opened the book, absorbed in it from the very first page. The book she had chosen was about old-fashioned, outdated spells that no one even used anymore. It would have bored Draco if he had had to read it (which he never had), but Hermione seemed to be heavily interested in it.

The witch could read fast, Draco learned as she turned page after page, halfway through the book in just under an hour.

"Wife?" he called for her attention, scooting along the sofa to sit next to her.

"Hmm?" She barely even glanced up from the book.

Draco set his hand to her knee, rubbing it. "I do hate to disturb you," he told her. And it was the truth, she just looked so happy, sitting there reading. "But we still must do what the Dark Lord has ordered of us."

Hermione closed the book with a soft thud and set it onto the stand next to her. "Of course, Draco. We mustn't make him angry."

"To my room then?"

"Ooh..." she said with sudden wide eyes. "Why not here?"

"In the library?" That seemed a little strange to Draco.

"Well, I am a little excited already," his wife admitted with a shy grin. "The smell of parchment has always had this... *effect* on me."

Draco raised his eyebrows, but he quickly forgot about her odd kink when she straddled him, placing her knees on either side of his thighs and looping her arms around his neck. He set his hands to her hips and kissed her lips, tasting her sweet mouth.

Hermione's fingers threaded through his hair while he pulled the zipper at the back of her dress down, eager to touch the surface of her silky skin.

She pulled away to tuck her arms out of the sleeves of the dress when Draco slid the dress off her shoulders, furthering the task of its removal. Draco growled when her breasts were exposed to him and buried his face into them, taking turns with sucking each nipple until they were hard and stiff.

Draco moaned when his wife started kissing at his neck, gently biting at it. "Ah, you make me so hard, wife," he whispered against the soft mound that he just finished marking with his mouth.

"Would you just fuck me already?" she pleaded harshly. "You're nearly torturing me with those teeth of yours!"

Hermione let out a surprised screech when Draco pushed her off him to the open space next to them. Without a word, he quickly unbuckled his belt while she fumbled with getting the dress completely off her. It wasn't long before they were each completely in the nude, their clothing scattered on the floor around them.

She was dripping wet for him, gasping in pure delight when he plunged into her. Her nails dug into his shoulders as she pushed him deeper in. He hissed, cursing her, though he was thoroughly enjoying her aggressive streak. He tugged at her mess of hair, tilting her head up, making her look into his eyes.

"Deeper," he demanded in a growl. "Let's make this one count."

Hermione's face twisted in confusion, not quite understanding what he had meant, but Draco didn't allow her to ask the question that showed in her expression, he took her mouth with his, sending her off into a blissful daze.

He grinned against her lips as they fought for control over the other. He moved in and out, grinding against the walls of her insides, making them both moan.

He truly loved the effect he had on her now. She was completely his. His forever.

And there wasn't a soul out there who could save her.

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Bernice was able to talk Blaise into inviting Malfoy and Hermione (she and the others in the Rebel Force refused to acknowledge Granger as a Malfoy unless they had to) over for brunch.

It took two days before Malfoy finally agreed to it. During this time, Bernice's nerves were on the fritz, every second that ticked by was a chance that her secret was exposed. She had been so paranoid that Blaise commented that her pregnancy hormones were off the charts—as if he had any idea what that meant to begin with, Blaise had never been around a pregnant woman until recently.

"What is your baby going to be to me?" Sam asked innocently. "My brother?" Bernice was in the process of getting him ready for the upcoming small party they were going to have. Blaise had said he could be there as long as he didn't speak out of turn.

Bernice combed the boy's hair, parting it at the middle like Blaise had ordered it to be. "I don't think Blaise would like that at all," she told the boy.

"Will he be my friend then?"

"Possibly," Bernice said with uncertainty, unsure of what the future really held for any of them.

"Maybe your baby will be my master when he's older," the boy said with mild hope.

Bernice gave him a lengthy kiss on the top of a head. "Who knows what is in store for us." It was incredibly difficult to sound optimistic, but she really had no other choice.

A house elf announced their arrival, escorting Malfoy and Hermione in. Any hope Bernice had went out the window when she saw Hermione. She looked as if she *really* was the wife of Lord Draco Malfoy. The dress she wore was amazing, made of expensive material, and it was appropriate for Hermione's modest views, concealing anything that could be considered erotic.

Blaise still had an aroused twinkle in his eye though, but that wasn't because he had found her exact looks attractive: he loved her fire. He wanted the chance to hose it out with his 'game play'.

"You changed her hair," Blaise noted, somewhat disappointed, having liked her wild, untamed hair, since it matched her spirit.

"It looks much better straight," Draco said approvingly.

"He had to regrow it," Hermione informed. "I was actually bald for twenty minutes!"

Bernice had taken her usual place in the back of the group, analyzing the situation. She had known that Hermione's acceptance of the spell was going to be bad, but hadn't expected *this*. It was like... Hermione was completely comfortable with her new lifestyle. *Too* comfortable.

Cozying up to Blaise? Talking to him as if they were friends? Bernice had to keep herself from shuddering.

"Brunch will be served in a few minutes," Blaise announced. "In the meantime, why don't you show Lady Malfoy around, Bernice?"

"Alright," Bernice agreed quietly, her pulse picking up in anxiety. So far, Hermione must not have said anything about Bernice to Malfoy. Blaise hadn't confronted her about it, nor given her any reason to believe he knew that anything was going on.

"Sam will be down in just a few," Bernice told Hermione, leading the way out of the sitting room where their husbands stayed.

"I've been waiting weeks to be allowed to see him again. Thank you for taking care of him." Hermione then explained how she had acquired the boy. "I had considered him as my own, he reminded me of the Weasleys so much."

"Which ones?"

"All of them combined, oddly enough."

And then Sam saw Hermione and ran to her, wailing out. Little tears fell from his eyes. "I was so worried! But Bernice said you were fine! And you are, she was right! I'm glad Mr. Malfoy let you see me— you have a very pretty dress! And your hair— it's straight and clean! It looks really nice, Hermione!"

Hermione laughed, hugging him. "I missed you too, and it looks like you also got some new clothes and a hairstyle."

Sam smiled proudly, standing straight in his fancy, royal blue suit. He squared his shoulders off. "I actually almost feel Pure."

"Oh, me too! Isn't it great?"

"Totally. Mr. Blaise might even let me ride a broom! He said so— if I'm a good nit. I'm trying. It's hard though."

Bernice hung back as they walked, allowing Sam to show Hermione around.

"This room," he said in a hushed voice, poking at a red door with his finger. "I'm not allowed in. I been in there only once, when Blaise was teaching me how bad Muggles are. He said that even though I'm a nit, since I'm magical, I get to live here. I'm lucky to stay here with someone as Pure as him."

"Indeed you are," Hermione agreed.

"He may even show me some spells when I'm old enough!"

Bernice was just now understanding what was happening to little Sam, able to witness what was it from the sidelines. It was quite frightening to watch. He was so young, so innocent. But if things didn't change soon, she wasn't sure how long he would remain that way.

"Sam, go down to the kitchens, and see if brunch is ready," Bernice interrupted his rambling on how he planned to stay out of trouble and not make Blaise upset.

"Did you tell your husband what happened the other day between us?" Bernice went right to the point when they were alone, leading Hermione to a specific room.

"The topic of you never came up," Hermione answered, looking around at the empty room except for a fireplace. "What's this room for?"

"Flooring," Bernice simply said, pulling out her wand. Hermione's back was to her.

"You didn't inform Draco that I'm not under the marriage spell?" This made Hermione turn around. She saw the wand, eyeing it.

"I didn't... but now that I think of it— why *would* you fake it?" Then her eyes widened in realization. "You're blocking it! But... you shouldn't be able to...! It's quite strong... I was barely managing myself... and you've been exposed to your husband for longer than I have..." Hermione's eyes narrowed. "You must have an antidote," she accused, finally

figuring it out. "Oh, but the Dark Lord wouldn't approve! You're ruining his plans! He'll be so angry when he finds—"

Hermione was silenced with a spell. Bernice pursed her lips grimly, fully aware of how consumed their alleged heroine was. This was *not* the Hermione Granger she had been told about. She truly hoped Longbottom's plan would work.

"I'm sorry I have to do this..." Bernice pointed her wand at Hermione who calmly shut her eyes, expecting the worse. "Obliviate," the woman whispered, wiping away the memory of their exchange the other night and this one too. Then she put the witch to sleep, sending her slowly drifting to the floor in a peaceful slumber.

With one last look at Hermione, Bernice slipped out of the room and unhooked a safety pin that had been attached to the inside of her dress and tapped her wand to it, sending off a message to Longbottom. A moment later, the pin was hot to the touch, indicating that her message was received. Bernice inhaled a deep, slow breath, knowing that whatever she had just done could not be reversed.

She hurried to the end of the corridor, stopping at the top of the staircase and started screeching at the top of her lungs. "Blaise! She's fainted! Something's wrong with Lady Malfoy! Hurry!"

Thundering followed, and both men came into view, running toward her. "What happened?" Malfoy demanded in complete concern.

"Where is she?" Blaise asked as they raced up the steps, occasionally stumbling over one.

"The empty room!" Bernice informed, allowing them to take the lead, Blaise in front.

Right as Blaise got to the door, swinging it open, Bernice knocked Malfoy out with a spell, and Blaise immediately joined him at the floor, hit by a spell that came shooting from out of the room.

Bernice's heart nearly stopped. She couldn't believe what she had just done! She attacked a Pureblood! It was a crime punishable by death!

But it felt *so* refreshingly good to do it!

She inched toward the men, commotion unfolding from the room they lay just outside of.

"Bernice?" someone called out.

She heard it, but didn't respond, eyes stuck on the dark, sleeping man. Bernice stepped around Malfoy, not even giving him a glance. Even in a magically induced sleep, Blaise looked terribly evil. Her wand was pointed at him, shaking from her trembling hand.

"Bernice?" Though she was now closer to the voice, it sounded a lot further away than it had the first time it had called out to her.

She stared, unblinking, at the man she had been forced to call her husband for the past month and a half. Then Bernice did something she had never done in her entire life. She attacked him, stomping on his face, using such force that his entire body jolted from the impact. She screamed out, doing it again, harder this time. And again, then made another stomp, and another. She continued, over and over, until someone wrapped their arms around her, pulling her away from the defenseless man to stop her abuse at Blaise's now bloodied, unrecognizable face.

Bernice broke out into sobs, losing all sense of control, seeking comfort in the arms of a man she had never even met before, immensely relieved to finally be rid of the monster who had haunted the most recent weeks of her life.

/

Draco stirred awake, an obnoxious sound disturbing him out of his sleep. He groaned from a pain in his head. He coughed; his throat was severely dry.

"Creet," he sputtered out, his mind foggy. A house elf's crack did not follow his call. "Creet!" he said more firmly, opening his eyes.

He looked around in confusion. He was not in any room he recognized. He groaned again, his head ached with a great deal of pain. Draco went to place a hand to his forehead, but it didn't move. He tried again, grunting. He couldn't move his arm! Nor his other! He couldn't move his legs either! It was as if he was paralyzed!

"So you're awake," a male's voice simply declared.

"What's going on?!" Draco demanded dizzily, now noticing that he was bound to a chair. His pulse picked up, a fear settling into his gut. His memory was slowly returning. "Where's Hermione? Where's my wife?!"

The voice laughed, stepping into view, large hands moved back and forth, and Draco swallowed hard when he noticed where the sound that had brought him out of his slumber was coming from.

"*Wife*, huh?" The man growled in disgust. "One thing I've learned with you disgusting Purebloods is that you have no *respect* for the modern times—I saw what you did to her, you slimy, soulless worm! The bruises, the blood, the trauma—and you have the *nerve* to call Hermione Granger your *wife*?"

"W-wait," Draco struggled against the binds that kept him bound in a chair. "You're m-mistaken—"

"No," the man shook his head, continuing to work his hands back and forth, filling Draco's ears with the annoying, frightening sound that brought the hairs at the back of his neck up. "Your *dictator*—of who you *support*, of who you fought *for*—forced her to marry you, and you *abused* her, *beating* her into submission before you *raped* her to have your despicable *heir*. You worms disgust me! You hypocritical, fucking, sick bastards! Well, where I come from, *Pureblood*—" he said this word with the utmost disgust, "—an eye for a fucking eye!"

"No," Draco pleaded, his eyes widening in horror as the man stepped forward with the two butcher-sized knives that he had been sharpening against each other. "Please!"

"Let's start with that pretty, little face of yours," the man said, pressing the tip of a knife to Draco's cheek, poking it, drawing out blood. "And then we'll work our way *down*." With his second knife, he trailed down the front of Draco's body, cutting into his suit, creating a shallow slit into his skin and stopping at Draco's belt where he sliced it apart.

The Ghost

Their hideaway camp had been set up in one of the hottest, uninhabited deserts of the world, safely tucked away, miles and miles from any sort of civilization.

No one would find them, no one would even think that anyone in their right mind would want to be here. It was hot and extremely dry, feeling no different than being locked up in an oven at the peak of the day. There was no water and food source, everything they used had to be imported, but there was an unofficial rule to bring an essential with you when you came to the camp. This insured that the supplies never got low.

With magic, the magic of several powerful witches and wizards, they had been able to make their claimed area liveable, ceasing off the parameter and controlling the temperature inside it.

Charms had been cast, concealing them, and thanks to Bernice (who had spent the last few weeks with the most successful Snatcher known to man, giving them info), Muggleborns Unite knew of the latest spells and devices that were currently being used to find people.

They really believed that they were safe for the time being. Or at least *most* of the group did, but then again, some were arrogant and incredibly egoistic, often underestimating the enemy's next move.

Constant vigilance, Longbottom was often reminding Bernice, as if she hadn't been *living* in it for the past few years of her life.

Bernice entered one of the many tents, blinking from the sudden darkness of it, eyes having been adjusted to the brightness of the day— getting here had been a long walk, since this was the first and original camp that M.U. had created, thus being the largest. There were nearly two hundred tents scattered around the camp.

She went deeper in, knowing where she was going, even though this specific tent she had never been in. All of the tents were the same though: three, separate sleeping quarters, each having its own bathroom, and a place for the bunkers to sit and converse. The tents weren't exactly small— in fact, for a tent, they were rather huge— but they were simple, and that was the way most of the members liked it. It was easy to add on to the camp while also making it easy to pack it up should they ever need to.

She passed the sitting room and went straight ahead, stopping when she seen two men in her way. They stood at the door to the room she wanted to go in. Bernice knew one of the men. She had not realized that he had been reassigned to this freshly built tent. Travis Topper was his name, and he was the man who was to blame for everything wrong in her life...!

Bernice drew out her wand, making the two men do the same, the second man who she didn't know looked at her in confusion, wondering why she would do such a thing.

"Hi, Bernie," Travis greeted as if they were about to sit down for tea. He smiled at her with half his mouth, trying to look apologetic.

"I told you never to speak to me again," Bernice growled lowly. "And don't call me that. Ever."

The second man started shaking a little, frightened of Bernice's tone, but Travis only smiled wider.

"Now you can't really be that upset with me, can you, sugar bear?"

Bernice answered by snapping her wrist, shooting a flame at his head to which he blocked without even a twitch of his body.

"I can see that you're still a *little* angry," he noted, stepping forward. He was going to attempt to try sweet-talking his way out of trouble, but Bernice knew him too well to fall for that.

"Come near me another step, Travis, and I *will* kill you!"

He smartly stood in place, knowing her threats were real. "You know I would never—"

"I don't want to hear it, I didn't come to speak with you! Get out of my way!" Bernice got into her fighting stance. She had given him the warning, but Travis wasn't going to move from his post. Travis made a good watchman. His friends had nicknamed him 'The Watchdog'.

"Don't do that," Travis said softly. "Don't make me fight you, Bernie, you know that I love—"

Bernice conjured up a large rock, sending it racing toward Travis's head. He ducked out of its way. The rock crashed into the door behind him. Bernice looked at the dent in the door it had made and determinedly licked her lips. She *had* to get in there!

"What'd you do that for?!" Travis demanded, pretending to be shocked by her action. "It's no wonder you have issues, woman! A man goes to tells you that he loves you, and you go all nuts on him!"

Bernice clamped her jaw together. "You don't love me," she said through her teeth. "You never have."

"Now Bernie—"

Bernice, without any movement of her wand, sent a flame out of the tip of it, shooting it at Travis, and since he didn't see her move the wand before hand, he couldn't block the spell in time. The flame grazed over the top of his sandy blond hair, lighting it on fire.

"You're crazy, you know that?!" Travis hollered out in frustration when he saw that he no longer had hair. "The craziest bitch out there!"

"I certainly wasn't *born* this way," Bernice told him. "Now *move*."

Travis lifted his chin up in defiance. "I will not. I have orders."

"I could care less."

"We can't foul up Jordans plans."

"Fuck Jordan." As soon as she had said it, Bernice regretted it. It was bad to disrespect Jordan. No one spoke about Jordan like that.

In fact, because Jordan was so highly respected, the man standing next to Travis let out a quiet gasp. "You-You *have* gone mad!" he squeaked. "Oh, Travis, we need to get her help! Maybe she's spent too much time with the Pures!"

"Settle down." Travis shook the man's hand off his arm, looking at Bernice.

"You should talk to someone," he advised to her gently. "Obviously, you're not as strong as I thought—"

"How *dare* you!" Bernice screeched, tears instantly clouding her eyes. "You insensitive, arse!" She started a series of attacks, not even caring about what she was casting, letting her magic take control, angry with Travis for what he had done to her, for what he had done to her family—for the cause of her little sister's *death*!

"I *hate* you!" she screamed in roaring anger. "You should burn in *Hell*!"

"Bernie, don't!" Travis pleaded, only able to block half her attacks, hissing in pain when the other attacks hit him. "You need help! Stop this! Oh, God, what have the Pures done to your sense of mind?!"

Then there was a thump, and Travis went silent. Bernice wiped the tears from her eyes, clearing her vision to see what had happened. Travis was lying on the ground, his eyes wide open and glassy.

The man next to him was stuttering incoherent words, thinking she had killed Travis. To Bernice's disappointment, the bastard was still breathing.

"This is your only chance to get out of here, else I'll do the same to you," she muttered to the whimpering man, not informing him that his comrade was perfectly okay.

The man stumbled out of the tent quickly.

Bernice straightened her dress out, feeling somewhat pleased with herself. She unlocked the door, opening it, and stepped over Travis's 'frozen' body.

/

Hermione woke up with a bit of a foggy head. Her mouth was dry. She tried wetting it, but it was a useless attempt.

She rolled out of bed, making her way to the bathroom for a drink but walked right into a dresser. Hermione narrowed her eyes in confusion. She didn't remember a dresser being at this location in the bedroom.

She looked around, realizing her mistake. The room she was in wasn't Draco's bedroom. In fact, she was fairly certain it wasn't a part of Malfoy Manor at all. Everything in it was plain and ordinary, nothing that Draco would waste his time on buying.

So where was she? What had happened the night before (or was it day? She couldn't remember anything from the previous day)?

Hermione was alone in the small sized room, which was smaller than the tiniest bathroom that Draco even owned.

"Draco?" she called out his name, hoping he was somewhere where he could hear her.

He didn't reply.

She did find a bathroom to relieve her bladder and swallow a few gulps of water.

They hadn't gone on some wild vacation, had they?

No... Draco wouldn't be caught dead in something so... *primitive*.

Where is he anyway?

She went to a door that she assumed was the way out but found it was locked.

How odd...

Hermione checked out the window next (which she had learned it had been made from a spell and wasn't a real window), finding it locked too. She looked out it, gasping at what she saw.

Sand and tents were all she could see for possibly miles.

Draco wouldn't come to a place like this. He wouldn't *bring* her to a place like this.

A lump homed itself in her throat. This place reminded her too much of one of those Snatcher camps she heard stories about.

Then she saw a person. A clean person with Muggle wear. Relief settled her stomach and calmed her pulse. She was able to swallow the lump away.

This wasn't a Snatcher camp.

But then *what* was it? It couldn't be good, could it? She *was* locked up in a room. Why would she be locked up like a prisoner?

Had she ran away again and was being punished? She promised Draco she wouldn't, but who knew what happened the day before. Those memories were gone.

I must have been obliviated...

She was sure of it now. It explained everything. The dry mouth, the foggy head, the lack of memory.

She *had* to find out what happened during the time of her memory loss!

Hermione went to the door, pounding on it. "Hello?! Can anyone hear me?!"

A loud thump came from the other side of the door in response. "Quiet down in there!" someone barked out.

Murmuring followed. Hermione couldn't make out the words. Only voices. A female and a male's. They appeared to be arguing, over what, she didn't know.

"Let me out of here!" Hermione demanded.

No one replied back. The voices stopped talking. All was silent.

Hermione stepped back, looking at the lock of the door. If she had a wand, she could easily unlock it, but obviously she didn't have one, and hadn't had one in weeks.

If only she knew some wandless unlocking spells... When she had the chance again, Hermione was definitely going to research a load of spells that would require no wand to cast. Those spells usually weren't very powerful and were useless against those with wands, which was why she had busied herself with learning more useful spells, but they would have been nice to know for a time like this one.

Who would have thought she'd ever not have her wand?

But that was something she should have thought of—*what if I didn't have my wand with me, such as a time like right now?*

She was paying the price for her lack of forethought.

Not as if she had had much spare time to think of much though; how many times was she, Harry and Ron in trouble, needing to save their lives and others? And then after their deaths — Hermione swallowed back a sob at the thought of them no longer with her — it hadn't gotten any better; she had always been on the run, hiding from the Dark Lord and helping those she had stumbled across.

Hermione had always been one step ahead until Blaise caught her, and after that...

Draco.

She balled up her fists and pounded on the door once more. "What do you want?! Where's my husband?! When the Dark Lord finds out about this, you'll all be in some terrible trouble!"

Hermione stopped immediately. Something dawned on her right then. Her pulse started racing in sudden fear.

When the Dark Lord found out that she was not at the Manor with Draco, He would be upset. These people keeping her imprisoned weren't going to be the only ones that were going to be in trouble with the Dark Lord. She and Draco would be punished too!

Frantically, Hermione once again started pounding on the door. "Please let me out! I have to get back to the Manor!"

The door did not open, and no one spoke out to her.

/

The light was not on, the shades had been drawn to keep the sun from heating up the room with its solar effects, but even though it was pitch dark, Bernice knew where he was; his breathing gave out his location.

He had called out to her, but Bernice had not responded, remaining silent as she crept toward him with her wand pointed out.

He was grunting, not from fear, but from his exhausting efforts to break out of whatever device Jordan was keeping him shackled up with.

"Your attempts to escape are useless," Bernice dryly told him. She almost smiled, somewhat pleased to see him getting a dose of his own medicine, dangling on a fishing hook and being tossed out into a body of water, all just to be eaten alive by some hungry beast.

"Bernie?" He had stopped grunting, stopping movement altogether, and she stood in place, letting him sit in silence with confused thoughts rolling around his head.

How many times had he done this to his own victims?

"Is this some strange sex game you've come up with?" he spoke with amusement, relief now in his voice. "That's actually incredibly sexy, shy bird. I'm proud! These chains are awfully tight though, how about you loosen them a little? My hands are starting to tingle—and not in the good way."

Bernice shined a light beam at the place where Blaise's voice was coming from. The brightness of it made him squint his eyes. The swelling of his face had been magically cured—not by her; she would have never healed him, not *willingly*!

Bernice quickly shut the beam off when she saw that he had been stripped of all his clothing, evidence of his excitement apparent, standing *erect*.

"The chains, Bernie," he reminded her softly, almost demanding it of her.

Bernice grit her teeth and pictured the chains turning his hands purple.

He gasped out, huffing in pain. "Loosen them!" Blaise said, panting. "Not *tighten*!"

"That's the least of your worries," Bernice muttered. "It's time to play a little game, and this time, *you're* it!"

She flicked her wand, sending a curse to him: the pain of a hundred needles poking him.

"Ah! What are you—" He hissed out, pausing his words, and thudded his head against the wall that he was chained up to. "—doing?!"

"Playing," Bernice answered simply. "Let me think... what else can I do...?" she wondered out loud, mimicking what he used to do to his own helpless victims. "Oh, I know! *Razor* blades...! Won't that be fun, Blaise?"

"On *me*?" he squeaked.

"Well, sure, isn't that how the game is played?"

"Maybe we should play a different one," Blaise said coaxingly, his voice slightly shaking, yet Bernice could tell he was quite turned on by this all.

She almost shuddered. He was such a *freak*.

"How about you let me free, and give me a wand, then you and I can have a duel, and whoever wins, gets to be on top— how's that sound, shy bird? Fair?"

"No. After all the times *you* tied *me* to the bed...?! I think not! My turn's definitely due!"

"Come now, Bernie, I never did anything like this to you. I was gentle with you, you are my wife—"

She crucio'ed him, making him scream, and Bernice pulled up the shades with a spell so she could watch him suffer.

"No," Bernice told him with she lifted the curse, finding some pleasure in listening to his hard breathing and soft whimpers. "I am *not* your wife! And I'll have you know that I had the baby killed!"

He looked at her with widened eyes, in complete astonishment over her announcement.

"You do not mean *mine*?"

"Whose else would I mean?"

Blaise was looking at her in deep concern now. "How could you— That child... he was yours too! And... oh, Merlin, Bernie! The Dark Lord is going to be so angry! Why? *Why* would you kill our baby?!" Tears filled his eyes then. He was really upset with the news.

But Bernice didn't have any remorse. "The baby was not *mine*," she snarled darkly. "It was never going to be *mine*. It was never going to be *yours*! And surely, *positively*, it was never going to be *ours*!"

"What's gotten into you?!" he cried out. "Look," Blaise adjusted his tone to a firm, desperate one. "If we restart now, He'll never know you killed the baby. We'll just tell Him he was born a bit late— yes, we'll do that! Alright, Bernie, love, let me go, and we can both forget this ever happened! I won't tell, you won't tell, no one will ever know you killed the baby!"

"Except for maybe me," a different voice spoke up off to the side of the room.

A woman in leather pants and a matching jacket stood with her arms folded across her chest. Long, wavy, red hair was flowing down the sides of her shoulders. She snapped a piece of pink, bubble gum in her mouth, eyes set on Bernice.

"Hello, Jordan," Bernice greeted quietly.

Jordan raised her thin, red eyebrows in question. "Do you realize how much trouble you're in, Bernice?"

"And just who are you?!" Blaise demanded.

Jordan didn't even look his way. She lifted her palm up and curled her fingers into a scratching motion. Blaise screamed out in pain. On his face were now four scratch lines; blood dripping from each one.

Jordan motioned Bernice out of the room. "*Serious* trouble," the woman emphasized to Bernice.

Bernice dropped her eyes to the ground and rushed out, wanting to be anywhere but there.

"My office," Jordan directed the woman.

/

Hermione tried everything she could think of to break out of the room, even picking the lock with a couple of bobby pins she had found in a drawer of the bathroom, but after several hours of trying, none of her ideas had worked.

She was still in the process of picking the lock when the knob turned, making her jump. She quickly stuffed the pins behind her ear and stood up to see who her captor was.

Her jaw dropped. Her heart stopped.

"Hi, Mione," the man greeted, closing the door behind him.

"I thought... I thought you were—"

"Shh!" Fred shushed her, looking behind his back as if expecting someone to pop in behind him. "*Technically* speaking, Fred *is* dead."

"George then?"

"No..." the redhead answered slowly in a hushed whisper. "I'm just... *posing* as Fred, since... not everyone knows of his... passing."

"Who are you?!" Hermione asked. "You have some nerve! You have no *respect* for the dead! And—" she cut herself off, covering her mouth. Her voice had reached such a high level in her state of disbelief. She was trying not to cry.

"You monster!" Hermione shrieked, lunging out at the man who was pretending to be one of her dead friends.

Fred had been like a brother to her!

"Hermione! Hermione!" the man said, blocking her hits to his chest. "It's alright! Look. Look at *me*!"

She paused long enough to look up; something weird was different about "Fred's" eyes. She backed, bumping against the edge of the bed, covering up her face. "I'm losing my mind!" she declared. "You're *dead*! I watched you *die*!"

"I know," the man said. "But that wasn't exactly... *me*..."

"Was—Wasn't you? What are you *talking* about?! Of course it was you! Who else would it have been, if not *you*?!" Hermione balled herself up on to the bed. "Just get out!" she screamed. "Get out now! You are crazy and evil! How could you pull off such a terrible joke?!"

"It's not a joke!" the man insisted, growing annoyed. "Sirius died for me, okay?! It's not a fucking joke!"

"Leave me alone! I want Draco! Where's my husband?! What have you done with him?!"

"God, Hermione..." the man's voice trailed off. He sounded full of guilt. "If I had known you would take off like you had done... It took me ages to find you... and then... I heard... I can't apologize enough... I should have just let Voldemort kill me..."

Hermione lifted her head up, blinking back forming tears, eying him over.

"I trusted them," he continued. "It was a dumb mistake; they said it would give me time to prepare myself, but... it's done nothing except make things worse," he went on, confessing his guilt.

But all Hermione could think of was...

I've truly gone mad.

The Choice Between Death or... Death

Bernice sat across from Jordan watching the leader of Muggleborns Unite pace back and forth who was clueless of what to do with her.

"Who permitted you to abort the baby?" Jordan asked in a cold tone, clearly upset.

Bernice wanted to readjust her placement in the chair, uncomfortable with Jordan's piercing brown eyes, but she forced herself to remain still.

"I did it on my own."

Jordan rubbed her forehead in obvious conflict with the situation. "This was not part of the plan, Bernice. You told me you could handle this—"

"I was promised Malfoy, and that stupid Scoreboard messed everything up! I got stuck with th-that... *sadist*! No one said I'd have to deal with *that*, and no one said that my family would be in danger!"

"The possibility of losing our loved ones in such a profession comes with the territory; it is why we wanted the best people—*you* knew this could turn bad very quickly, but you also knew how important it is for my plan to succeed, which is why you even signed up to begin with. You— just as many of us— were tired of having to hide under rocks, treated worse than rabid animals, whenever we got captured—"

"And I was..."

"And you were," Jordan repeated. "You know my plan will succeed; it is already snowballing, so why would you attempt to ruin it?"

Bernice pursed her lips when the sting of tears came to her eyes. She stared at the top of the desk, needing to sniff but willed herself not to. The tickle of dripping fluid ran down her nose, and Bernice finally had to do it to keep the liquid in her nose from draining out.

"I *am* sorry about your sister, Bernice."

"This wouldn't have happened if Travis hadn't suggestion that bloody Scoreboard!" Bernice shrieked out, letting the tears flow. "We agreed! You promised me the Malfoy Pure! I knew what he was capable of— a complete snothead, but he's not like *him*! Physical abuse I was prepared for, but Jordan, what that man does for fun is *sick*! He makes the Dark Lord appear as safe as Play-Doh! He brutally raped her, tortured her until she could fight no more, making me watch the entire time, and then—" Bernice choked on a sob. She used the sleeve of her dress to wipe her face like a young child would. "He made me clean up the mess... I couldn't even tell that she was my sister...!"

"You can not blame Travis for such a brilliant idea; the Scoreboard equally matched us to them, and karma will catch up to Zabini—"

"No," Bernice said firmly. "I want him dead, I want him dead *now!* And I *am* going to be the one who does it!"

Jordan walked around the desk to Bernice and set a hand to her shoulder, squeezing it. "He is to be kept alive, Bernice. He is part of the plan. And when his usefulness has been fulfilled, you are not going to be the one to deal with him. Am I clear?"

Bernice shook her head. "But I want to be the one—"

Jordan tightened her hold on Bernice. "This is not a request, Bernice. This is an order. You will dismiss this idea of revenge now."

"How can I?! After all that he has done?!"

"You have incredible control and power; you can do it. Although, if you don't wish to waste such energy, I can assist you, but before I help, there's a matter we must address first: the aborted baby of the future. Zabini was right about the Dark Lord, he can't find out; he must continue to believe that everyone is obedient and fearful of him. No loyal subject of his would be stupid enough to kill the baby."

"Can't we just say it was a miscarriage?"

Jordan shook her head. "No, my sister, Pureblood and Muggleborn pregnancies aren't supposed to have any carrying and birthing issues, remember; he has to continue believe to this. Besides, our side needs the Halfbloods too."

"Then what are you proposing?" Bernice asked suspiciously, not liking the thoughtful look on Jordan's face.

"When magic fails us, we always turn to how the Muggles address similar issues."

"I don't understand what you're saying..."

"That's okay, honey, I think I've got the answer. You have no need to concern yourself with this dilemma any longer."

Jordan placed a finger under Bernice's chin, tilting her head up. "Look into my eyes, sweet sister. Think hard about him, and without speaking, tell me what he did to you. Tell me once more..."

Bernice did what her leader requested, feeling a little lightheaded. Her eyes were getting heavy with sleep.

"That's it, Bernice..." Jordan's voice sounded so near, yet so far away. "You're doing great... Just a little bit more..."

/

"If you're really Harry, you'll give me a wand, and let me out of this room."

"I can't," the man who claimed he was Harry-disguised-as-Fred told Hermione with a frown (she honestly wasn't quite convinced who this man really was, since the story of Sirius fooling the Dark Lord into thinking he was Harry didn't seem plausible). "They say you have turned—"

"Turned? What's that supposed to mean?"

"That you are serving Voldemort because you are being controlled by a spell."

"I'm not *serving* him!" Hermione lifted up the sleeve to her dress. "Do you see the Dark Mark there; I don't."

"Okay, the correct term they used was 'consumed'," he said quietly.

Hermione pressed her lips together, unable to deny the accusation. She knew she was consumed by the spell, but fighting it had been so exhausting, and Draco was much more pleasant to her now that she allowed the spell to take over her emotions involving him.

Hermione had been starting to think she could control *him*— in a roundabout way. Draco *had* changed so much with just a flip of a switch. She had been able to talk him into letting her use a library, one he had said was *theirs*.

"The others sadly don't trust you. We're all trying to come up with a way to break the spell, so you won't have to be locked up in here until fall, which is when the cure to it will become available."

"But I don't want it broken! I like being married to Draco." Hermione crossed her arms. "And besides, *Harry* would trust me. *He* wouldn't keep me locked up over some ridiculous *spell*."

"In normal cases, yes, but they say this marriage spell is very powerful, and I agree with them; your thoughts about Malfoy *are* obviously being influenced by the spell. Ordinary, you wouldn't be saying you *like* Malfoy, and you definitely wouldn't want to be *married* to him. Your usual self would not defend a *murderer*. That's before the..." he paused, sighing. "It's a good thing that I don't know exactly where he is, cause I'm not all too sure I'd have the self-control to not strangle him myself, not after what I heard he's done to you..."

"He did what he had to do," Hermione defended her husband.

"He didn't have to beat you!"

"He was upset that he got stuck with me for his wife!"

"That just shows how much of an arse he is! And don't forget, he killed Dumbledore—"

"But Dumbledore was going to die already—"

"That doesn't excuse Malfoy from murdering him! And being upset doesn't give him the authority to pound someone's face until it resembles mincemeat!"

"Alright, then, *Harry*, what if... what if you were given an ultimatum: kill someone that you really don't care about or else have your entire family *tortured to death*; what would you do then?"

"I'd find someway to save everyone."

Hermione tossed her hands up. "But what if that's not possible?! The Dark Lord can track Death Eaters through the Dark Mark, they can't just run and *hide*—" Her eyes widened and she gasped.

"We're not safe here...!"

"The M.U has assured us that no one can be tracked under this camp. We're well hidden under the concealing charms they have here—one of them is like some enhanced Fidelius Charm, from what I understand."

"When the Dark Lord realizes that Draco and I are gone, he will come looking for us. He'll think I've ran off again, and that Draco's gone off searching for me. The punishment last time was enough to make me not want to ever run away again; I really don't wish to see a repeat of it, or worse!"

"They said you are safe here, Hermione" he insisted. "They said that we're all safe here. Even some of us from the Rebel Force agree: Neville's been talking to a woman named Bernice—"

"Blaise's wife?"

Harry stiffened. "She's not really his wife, and you're not really Malfoy's—"

"I am so!"

"Did *you* say *any* vows?"

"We were *assigned* together!"

"That only makes you... magically bound *partners*, not a real *married* couple— do you even love him?"

Hermione traced her finger around the plain ring Draco had placed on her when he had 'claimed' her that day in Holding.

"Well, no," she admitted in a mumble. "But maybe I'll learn to love him. He's pretty intelligent. I can talk about things with him, and he actually understands what I say. Neither of us wanted to be forced together. We just did what we had to do."

"I understand how you can think that, but your opinion about him will change when the spell is removed."

"I won't allow it," she said firmly. "Draco's my husband—"

"Mione, *please*, don't do this. You're extremely confused right now, the spell is forbidding you to think for your own."

"I am loyal to my husband." Her tone did not change.

"And *he's* a Death Eater! You don't actually mean those words, I know it!"

She snapped her head to the side with attitude, becoming annoyed with whomever this guy really was. "I will do whatever I have to for Draco, just as he will do whatever he has to for *me*. I've no other *choice* in the matter, to which your *friends* obviously know this already, else they wouldn't be so concerned with having the spell lifted!" Hermione's eyebrows then raised up tauntingly. "Perhaps you're going about this all the wrong way."

"I'm confused..." 'Harry' said with narrow eyes. "What's that supposed to mean?"

She shrugged, not caring that he didn't understand. "Figure it out; I'm just the *enemy*, supporting her Death Eater husband; why listen to me at all?"

After he left, Hermione went back to figuring out a way to escape, searching the place once more for anything that could assist her with the task.

Her eyes set on the shower curtain in the bathroom, and as they raised up toward the top of it, Hermione got an idea that she was *sure* was going to work.

/

"Hey, Bernice, wait up!"

The woman turned around to see Longbottom and a redheaded man hurrying up toward her. Anymore, she didn't have to listen to him, now that her mission as a Mudblood wife was pretty much through, but she was curious to know what he wanted of her.

The only reason there were Pures being allowed at the camp was because they had a common enemy; they all wanted the Dark Lord's reign to cease. Jordan still warned the M.U members not to trust the Pures completely, but Bernice had learned that some weren't so bad.

Longbottom being one of them. He and a few Pures belonging to Dumbledore's Army (now renamed to The Rebel Force, since the name was Taboo) had fought against the Dark Lord already, and several of their parents had too (under a different group name called The Order), many of them having been casualties.

He had helped her cope with being a bride to her abusive Pure husband. Longbottom had been playing the Dark Lord and his followers like an instrument, telling them that he feared he would end up like his parents if he had continued to fight against them, finally giving up. Bernice admired his story telling abilities.

In reality, he was forming together an even bigger army, secretly training and preparing them all for battle. An army which had gotten a good amount of people that even Jordan couldn't refuse to band together, more than doubling the numbers of those who were against the Dark Lord's ruling.

"The Rebel Force has finally requested an alliance with us," Jordan informed the organization during their previous secret meetings. "They have proven themselves to be against the Dark Lord and have helped many of our own. We would be stupid not to combine our resources. Together, we can take that son of a *bitch* down. This *has* been part of my plan since the beginning."

Jordan seemed to say that with every turn of event. Bernice was starting to believe that she said that whenever something went wrong to prevent chaos from happening. Bernice gave her credit though, it *did* work to keep everyone calm during a crisis. But she wondered if perhaps they were putting too much faith in Jordan. She didn't dare express these thoughts out loud; Jordan had too much support. And Bernice *did* want to see the Dark Lord fall, willing to do *anything* to make it happen.

"I was wondering if you know what happened to Malfoy," Longbottom inquired when they approached Bernice.

"Why would his status matter to you in the slightest?"

"I just got through talking with Hermione, and she said something that was maybe..." Fred Weasley sighed, defeated and exhausted. "I honestly don't know what she meant by it, but now I just want to see the bloody bastard."

"Jordan says he is to be spared—for now; he is forbidden to have any visitors."

"Maybe she'll make an exception!" Weasley said quickly when Bernice turned away from the Pures to continue to the mess hall for dinner.

Bernice twirled around. "And *why* would she do that?"

Weasley forced a toothy smile. "I tend to be *the* exception when it comes to most... *rules*."

"Fine," Bernice said, gesturing them to follow her. "She's eating; don't be surprised if she cops an attitude when you interrupt her meal!"

Ten minutes later, Bernice was grumbling as she escorted Weasley to the tent that Malfoy had been placed in. Jordan had ordered her to supervise the visit, allowing Weasley thirty minutes with Malfoy—so long as he didn't lay a hand (or spell) on him.

Weasley was right about him being the exception; no one besides a select few was allowed to converse with the prisoners. It annoyed Bernice, since she had just gotten in trouble herself for entering a prisoner's room. But she was more upset that she was missing dinner for this! Apparently, the visit couldn't wait as it involved Granger, and (according to Weasley) this visit could help Granger's decision of which side she was going to be a part of.

Bernice didn't understand how that was even possible, since she was under a spell that the Dark Lord had created. It only made sense for her to choose *His* side, right?

She muttered under her breath, making sure the redhead Pure knew what she thought of this chaperone job she had been given.

"I really am thankful for your help," Weasley spoke quietly as Bernice showed a rarely-given permission form to the guys who were on guard at the moment, ensuring Malfoy didn't escape.

"And I want to personally thank you for making me miss my dinner," Bernice snapped. "This better work, Pure."

The man looked away, seemingly uncomfortable by her tone.

He deserved it. The food would be cold by the time she got back. Cold mashed potatoes were the pits, and reheating them was not the same, not the same at all.

"Please!" the pathetic cry of the Malfoy Pure cried out as soon as they stepped in. "I don't know anything more—I told you everything! Please..." he sniviled—his back was turned to them, and he was trying so hard to twist his head around to see who had come for a 'visit'. "I just want to go home!"

"Merlin, you sound like such a *child*!" Bernice rolled her eyes.

"Malfoy," Weasley greeted in a low tone from behind the man. Bernice could see that he had balled up his fists. She elbowed him gently, giving him a reminder that he couldn't harm Malfoy.

Weasley took a visual deep breath, closing his eyes for a moment. "I just got through with talking to Hermione..." he began.

"If I find out that any of you have hurt her, you'll be *dead*—"

"Because only *you* can knock her around?!"

Malfoy didn't say anything for a few seconds. He hung his head down low, struggling to free himself from the binds around his wrists. "That was before..."

"Before that bullshit, brainwashing spell?!"

"I keep telling you people!" Malfoy cried out. "I don't hate her anymore! Yes, the spell helped, and deep down, I hate that she's a Mud—erm, that she's... not *pure*, but... I also know—deep within—that she is... one of a kind, incredibly special—"

"It's just the spell talking—" Bernice interrupted, making sure that Weasley wouldn't buy into this junk of a story.

"No!" Malfoy insisted. "Well, at *first*, yes, but the spell doesn't *create* feelings, it doesn't make them go away, it just... keeps you from acting upon the *aggressive*, most *strongest* ones. It allows you to overlook your spouse's imperfections. I still know they are there, but it makes me not care about them."

"What about when the spell breaks?" Weasley asked. "What then?"

Malfoy shrugged, clueless on what to answer with. "I don't think it can be broken..."

"For every spell that exists, there is a counter to it," Bernice quoted Jordan. "We will break the spell, and we will dispose of those who have wronged us when the time comes."

"But I've done *nothing* of my own choosing!"

"Surely you have done *something*? One doesn't simply become the Dark Lord's most loyal servant by just *existing*!" Bernice argued.

"I did what I had to do! But I didn't *enjoy* it, didn't suggest any of it!"

"Maybe not the sins, but you definitely bathed yourself in the power that was rewarded for your crimes," Weasley growled.

"It was all I was taught to ever do... Please...! Just let us go... I've done all I could for you, if the Dark Lord finds out that I'm not where I should be, he'll kill me...and... *her*..."

"Sounds like quite the predicament," Weasley noted sarcastically. Bernice followed him as he walked around Malfoy so he could see his face.

She set her jaw, noticing coin sized patches of skin had been removed from several locations of Malfoy's half naked body. Weasley looked like he was about to be sick, and his eyes even softened, sympathizing with the Pure.

"I've been through much worse," Malfoy muttered, looking away, slightly embarrassed.
"Don't look at me like that..."

"Why didn't they just take his hair?!" Weasley demanded, addressing Bernice. "They didn't need to do *that*!"

She lifted her shoulder up in a shrug. "M.U. doesn't take kindly to those who do us wrong. I hear he's still lucky to still have his penis— Charles had threatened to cut it off and use it as a dildo—" Here, Bernice gave Draco a cold stare down, "—and *not* for his *own* use."

The blond man's eyes widened, and his Adam's apple bobbed nervously.

"Luckily for you, Jordan's just a *wee* bit more humane than some of us; personally, I feel that specific idea for punishment is completely fitting."

"That is one thing that I deny—I do not get aroused when forcing myself on someone—"

"But you *did* do it to her, didn't you?" Weasley immediately pounced, following that statement.

"I— Well... not exactly," Malfoy stumbled over his words. "The physical abuse—at first, when she was so incredibly stubborn—but not sexual, no... I like my women... *willing*... definitely not *crying*." Malfoy shuddered in disgust. "Or... screaming... in some cases." His eyes went out of focus. "I protected her as best as I could from emotional abuse, but Gryffindors are born leaders, hardly ever submissive. I admit, I could have treated her better—and I do now, now that she's accepted the spell and her position as my wife, and not

fighting me every minute that we're together— but... well you know," Malfoy said, looking at Bernice. "I could have been a whole *lot* worse. I am *certainly not* Blaise."

Even though the most horrid of memories of Blaise had been erased by Jordan, Bernice still knew that she had been assaulted by the man, both physically and emotionally: Jordan had told her of it and also informed her that the abuse had been so bad that the memories of it had to be extracted in order for her to move forward. So Bernice didn't remember what the details were, but she was well aware that Blaise Zabini was the worst excuse for a man to walk on the Earth.

Bernice nodded at Malfoy's words. Though memories of Blaise Zabini were gone, it was still scary to think that one person could cause so much damage.

"Why do you follow him: Voldemort?" Weasley asked, breaking an awkward moment of silence.

Malfoy winced as if someone had slapped him across the face. "Don't call him that—"

"I will call him whatever I want— if you don't like the killing and don't like the torturing— your *name* already has *power*, so it can't be *that*— so if you don't like *anything* he has to offer —"

"Actually, I quite like the marriage spell—"

"*Malfoy*," Weasley growled in warning. "*Answer. The. Question.*"

Malfoy looked down. "I'm scared of dying... I'm not brave like some people, nor careless like the people who stand up against him. I don't want to *die*. And until recently, I wasn't very happy with my life, but I did all I could to keep breathing, to show him that I'm worth living — he kills people just for fun, after all, and don't think that I haven't been spared from his brutality!"

Weasley paced the floor a few steps, thinking. He stopped, looking dead serious, directly at Malfoy. "Voldemort is going down," he said persistently. "He *will* lose—"

Malfoy shook his head. "No, he's inhuman now, he can't die."

"There are ways to contain a beast, even if he is immortal," Bernice spoke up.

"Do you really care about her?" Weasley asked.

"My wife?"

"I mean *Hermione*— *don't* call her that in front of me."

Malfoy gave it a thought. "Yes... I think I do... all I've been doing is wondering if she's okay — that means something, doesn't it?" he asked uncertainly. "I've been trying to break out of here just to find her and take her home, where she'll be safe and away from you nutty people!"

"Voldemort's not immortal; he's still capable of dying."

"You're delusional, the Dark Lord can never fall, not since Potter—"

"Harry Potter's still alive..."

Malfoy laughed. "What spell did you get conked with?!"

Weasley reached into the neck of his shirt, pulling out a necklace with a white, smooth rock. He rolled it around his fingers a couple of times before pulling it up and over his head.

Both Bernice and Malfoy gasped out as the man transformed from Fred Weasley to Harry Potter right before their eyes. Red hair darkening into near black and messy strands. Height shortening. Eyes lightened before turning into that beautiful, enchanting colour of emerald green that they were once known for.

"Pot-Potter?! How in Merlin's— but you— I saw Him— He killed you...!"

"We need her, Malfoy," Harry Potter spoke in a firm, serious voice, "and before we can have *her*, we need *you*. You only get this one chance to decide, which shall it be: would you rather help us defeat the monster who has been the cause of every nightmare you have had since you were a child; or would you rather continue to have these people cut pieces from you, bit by bit, until you are nothing but scarce meat on bones?"

Mind Games

"Wait! Wait!" Draco screeched, clamping his eyes shut. "You don't know everything—I protected her!"

He sucked in a breath, wincing at the stinging pain at his dick. *Merlin, what is with people and wanting to fuck his cock up?! Is it some fucked up craze?!*

"Fine," the man said. Draco opened his eyes, shocked that he was even listening to his pleas. The stranger rose back up to his feet from where he had been kneeling between Draco's legs. "Humour me, *Pure*; how did you protect her by using her face as your punching bag?!"

Draco blinked. He stopped himself from heaving a sigh of relief. The threat of castration wasn't over though. Not yet.

"I had to pretend I hated her," he explained. "The Dark Lord expected me to be upset with her — he gave her to me and told me to..." He looked away, letting out a shaky sob. "He wanted us to make a *baby*," Draco whispered in horror. "I didn't want to hurt her, but I couldn't tell him that!"

The man lunged at him, making Draco jump. His hands clasped around Draco's forearms, his fingers painfully digging in. "And why *not*?! You're too much of a *coward*!?"

The man's horrible breath clouded Draco's face, making him cough and force down a gag. "He would have *killed* her if I had refused her!"

"What's her life matter at all to you?" the man retorted with a sneer. "She's just a *Mudblood*!"

Draco looked him dead in the eye. He swallowed hard. "Do you have any idea how many lives have been taken before my eyes?" he asked. "The torture; the murders; the blood; severed body parts; screams; *laughter*?"

The man tried standing up, but Draco had taken his speech as a way to gain control of him, holding him in place with his unblinking eyes so he could not move.

The man was weak minded. He wasn't even trying to break Draco's curse. He probably was incapable of it or didn't know how. Either way, Draco didn't care.

He plunged into the man's mind, learning who he was, why he was here, and of what group he was part of.

So, Mudbloods are forming a rebellion; wouldn't the Dark Lord love to hear about this...

"Where's Hermione?!" Draco demanded to the imbecile.

"I don't know; in one of the new tents, I would presume—close by," he automatically answered.

"Find her, and when you do, return back to me immediately. You will think that it is your leader who has told you to tell me my wife's location, and you will not remember any of this."

"I will not..." the man's voice was distant.

"Now... pick up those bloody tools of yours and take from me what has been commanded of you—but skip over the butchering of my cock, I've no time for *games*, Mudblood."

He waited hours for the stranger to return, and during that time, Draco developed a plan to get he and his wife away from these Mudblood freaks. But for now, until he knew where Hermione was, he'd have to play the victim: he was a great fighter, but even Draco knew he couldn't fight against a hundred people on his own.

He perked up when he heard the door open, but heard two pairs of footsteps, and not one.

"Please!" Draco cried out, not knowing who it could be this time. He wouldn't be able to control *two* people without a wand. He struggled against his binds, purposely trying to make it look like he couldn't escape. "I don't know anything more—I told you everything!
Please..."

"Merlin, you sound like such a *child*!"

Draco knew that voice: Blaise's wife... She was *with* this group of people...?

Then that meant Blaise was somewhere around here too...

A man growled his name. Draco couldn't place the voice of him, though he sounded faintly familiar.

Silence followed. Draco dared not to say anything, though he had discovered from their friend with the butcher knives that he was not to be fatally harmed, but they *could* get a little violent with him should he not cooperate with them. But they already knew he would sing like a canary as Draco had told the man things that were supposedly secrets that could get him into major trouble with his Lord—of course that was really all hogwash, he hadn't told them much of anything of importance, but these Mudbloods knew no different.

"I just got through with talking to Hermione..."

Draco stiffened. "If I find out that any of you have hurt her, you'll be *dead*—"

"Because only *you* can knock her around?!"

The man who spoke with his wife must have been a friend of hers because anyone else would have called her Granger.

Draco had to show remorse, and he couldn't lie about the hitting, not if the man had spoken with Hermione about it. The topic of his abuse had probably been brought up. His wife no doubt had defended him, the spell would make her do it, but her friends would not agree with the excuses she would make for his abuse.

He hung his head down low, trying to look as regrettable as he could manage.

"That was before..."

"Before that bullshit, *brainwashing* spell?!"

"I keep telling you people!" Draco burst out.

It was going to take him a bit to convince these people to think he had actually changed. What did he have to lose? Until he could escape, he'd have to make them believe that he was no longer the monster they thought he was.

"I don't hate her anymore!"

/

Sympathy set in the Weasley's eyes when he saw the sores on Draco's body (it was one of the twins, Draco didn't know which).

"I've been through worse," Draco muttered, playing up with the pity.

It worked with Weasley. Draco grew excited, though he knew not to show it, and continued up his act. Maybe Weasley could get the entire camp to sympathize with him, and he could be set free. Then he could alert the Dark Lord of the rebellion, and they could put a damper to the plans that the Mudbloods have been working on.

Bernie didn't have any pity with Draco though, having been put through enough abuse herself, though Draco didn't have anything to do with *that*. But Draco was able to string her in when Weasley confronted him of the raping that he had been ordered to do. He pointed out to the woman that he could have a done *whole* lot worse, mentioning her own rapist.

Got you there, he thought triumphantly when she nodded to his statement after thinking it over.

/

They really thought they could take the Dark Lord...

Sure, they seemed to have a big army, but the Dark Lord was powerful, and much more frightening than a hundred Mudbloods and their blood-traitoring friends.

They were crazy to think they could go through yet *another* war with the Dark Lord. Especially since he was immortal now.

"You're delusional, the Dark Lord can never fall, not since Potter—"

"Harry Potter's still alive..."

Draco lost all control at this point. He laughed hysterically. "What spell did you get conked with?!"

Harry Potter, alive?! Wasn't Potter's entire fan club there when he had died? Did they not see what had happened?

Draco couldn't remember who was all there. All he could remember was the devastation that hit the crowd when Potter's body fell limp to the Dark Lord's curse. So many people—Draco himself—had hoped that Potter would actually pull through.

But deep down, even pass the surface of numbness that came from the resulting end of the war, Draco had known that a 17-year-old man had no chance against the Dark Lord. Which was why he had stuck to the Dark side the entire time: it was the winning side, and his life mattered too much to sacrifice himself for nothing.

And then Weasley transformed...

Harry Potter was really still alive?!

Draco couldn't believe it; he couldn't think straight, he couldn't even *talk* straight!

"Pot-Potter?! How in Merlin's—but you—I saw Him—He killed you...!"

"We need her, Malfoy..."

/

Potter's *resurrection* sent Draco's thoughts to spiral out of control. Bernie had been just as surprised as Draco was to find out that he was actually alive. Draco wondered how many (or few) people knew that Potter was still amongst the breathing. A feeling of importance flooded through him. He guessed he was one of a few who knew the truth.

Potter wouldn't tell Draco how he survived the killing curse, but it didn't matter to Draco anyway. He was more shocked that The-Boy-Who-Lived was personally asking for his help. It was just to get Hermione on their side since she was loyal to her husband, but it still felt strange—in a good way.

And of course Draco immediately offered to side with him—anything to make Potter go away so he could think. And thinking he *definitely* needed to do. Draco wasn't sure if he wanted to go with his former plan now. Not the extension of it at least—escaping from this primitive location was an absolute *must*: he *needed* to get back to the Manor before the Dark Lord realized they were gone.

So when the stranger with the knives returned, telling him where Hermione was, he attacked the man, and bound him with his own wand—his original plan had been to kill him, but he had reconsidered the idea now that Potter was in the mix of things.

He then cast a few spells on himself, changing his appearance to look like a different person altogether, transfiguring his wrinkled, dirty slacks into some sort of overall jumpsuit that only a Muggle would be caught dead wearing.

With his hair now long and jet black, Draco figured his disguise was good enough to walk around in. There were so many people, they would likely not notice him.

Draco went over to the window, learning it wasn't made of glass, but instead a spell. The sun was starting to set. He wasn't paying attention to that though.

His eyes bore into the tent that his wife was being held captive in.

I'm coming, my dear Hermione. We'll be home before you know it.

/

Hermione had positioned herself by the door, listening for any life outside of it, but there had been no noise since the imposter Harry/Fred had left her. Her eyes shifted toward the clock. It was just minutes before 8:30, the time she had been told when she should expect her meal. Her stomach was growling, which had been voicing its annoyance as soon as she made her post at the door an hour before where she waited for someone to step through. She held the curtain rod firmly in her sweaty hands, growing nervous with every second that passed.

Surely this was going to work...

But what if it wasn't heavy enough?

She'd only need to startle them with it long enough to steal their wand.

"What are you going to do with that?"

The curtain rod slipped from her hands and made a dull thud when it hit the carpeting at the floor. She cocked her head toward the voice, widening her eyes at the man standing by the window.

"Who are you?!" she demanded, picking the rod back up quickly, arming herself.

"Oh, right..." the man waved his wand and his black hair turned blond, shortening considerably. Then half of his clothing disappeared, revealing her husband.

"What have they done to you?!" she shrieked, noticing that he had blood-seeping sores all over the exposed part of his body.

"I've no time to explain!" he said in a rush. "They're coming to kill you! I barely managed an escape myself! We've got to get out of here, Hermione, these people are *nuts*!"

He extended out his arm, gesturing for her to take it, but the door was being unlocked next to her.

"There they are now!" Draco whispered, joining her side, a wand held firmly in his hand.

The imposter Harry/Fred stepped in who was currently walking around 100% as Harry.
"Hermione—"

Draco and Hermione both attacked him: Draco sent a spell, and Hermione swung the curtain rod. The imposter was able to block Draco's spell with a tray of food, but the curtain rod to the back of his knees made him lose his balance. He fell forward.

Two people came barging in to help the imposter, and Draco stopped them with two, quick freezing spells.

"Grab a wand, wife," Draco ordered, pointing his wand at the imposter. "You'll more than likely need it."

"Hermione, don't do this; Malfoy, you said—"

Draco silenced the man. "I don't know who this man is, but he is an arsehole for using your *dead* friend as a way to fool you."

Hermione narrowed her eyes at the man, thinking the same. "You *are* very cruel," she added emotionally with tears in her eyes.

"Let's get out of here!" Draco said hurriedly when sirens started going off. He helped her climb out of the window.

"Hey!" someone shouted, spotting them once they were outside. "Guys, they're over here!"

Hermione took off running.

"The parameter!" Draco called after her, shooting off spells behind them. "If we can get out of the warding, we can then apparate away from here!"

Hermione stupefied a woman who appeared in her path. She pointed the wand out ahead of her, calling out, "The edge!" A spell flew out of the wand, and Hermione rushed to follow it.

There were lots of shouts now as people attempted to stop them. Hermione and Draco weren't fast enough, easily becoming surrounded by numerous of witches and wizards, throwing spells their way in order to recapture them.

Hermione was pulled backward against Draco's chest, and a blue see-through orb encased around them, blocking off incoming spells.

"What do we do?" Hermione asked, facing her husband. Her eyes caught sight of one of the sores on his cheek making her frown.

"The imposter and his friends did this to me," he told her, panting. "I couldn't let them do it to you too..."

Hermione's eyes filled with tears. The real Harry would *never* inflict such pain.

"Granger!" a woman shouted.

Hermione turned to see a red headed woman, dressed in black leather, stalking her way to them.

"Any ideas, wife?" Draco asked, his grey eyes unmoving from the approaching woman.

"We're not going to harm you..." the woman called out coaxingly.

"Hermione!"

"Neville!" Hermione gasped, recognizing the voice.

Draco cast a blinding light out around them, stopping her from being able to look for her friend in the crowd. He gripped her shoulders firmly. "Listen to me, these people are not your friends; understand?"

Hermione felt the pressure of an invasion inside her head. She groaned uncomfortably.

"Stop," she pleaded him.

Draco ignored her request, plunging deeper into her mind. *You must realize how terrible these people are...* Draco's voice echoed throughout her head.

An image of a knife cutting into Draco's skin entered her mind right then, paring his skin as if it were an apple.

"We'll get rid of you, bit by bit!" Harry sneered while Draco cried out in pure agony.

"And when we're finished with you, we'll start on your wife!" Neville added excitedly.

Hermione blinked rapidly as he released her from his legilimency spell, feeling a flood of dizziness rush throughout her head.

"You see?" her husband asked, gently rubbing his hands up and down her shoulders. "They are not your real friends. They are fakes who are trying to traumatize and torture you!"

Hermione nodded. "Let's get out of here," she breathed bravely. "I know how to do it, you'll need to lift the shield, but keep on the blinding spell; they won't see what happens that way, it'll confuse them even more after our departure."

He removed his shielding spell, doing as she said, trusting her. Hermione had incredible talent when it came to escaping.

She clutched his hand tightly, a determined look on her face, and pointed the wand right to the sky. "*Ascendio!*"

Their bodies were jerked up into the sky, and as soon as they felt the real desert climate, Draco apparated them away.

They hugged after landing outside the gates of Malfoy Manor, chests heaving from exhaustion, hearts pounding in relief.

"We did it," Hermione whispered, pulling away to smile at him. She then healed his wounds, not able to stand the sight of them any longer.

Draco looked down at his arm where one had been. He brushed his fingers over the now smooth spot.

"Just barely," he admitted, distracted by his thoughts.

"Can I keep the wand?" she asked hopefully, clutching it to her chest, ready to put up a fight if he forbade it of her.

"Hmm?" Draco hadn't heard her.

"Please let me keep the wand; I feel I've earned it."

"Oh..." He looked at her with piercing eyes. Then he nodded. "You may keep it," he decided and then turned toward the gates which instantly flew open when he did it. Draco stalked through them, saying nothing more.

"What are you going to do now?" Hermione asked, racing after him. An excited happiness paraded through her for finally being allowed to carry a wand like a *real* witch.

"I'm going to send an owl."

"Oh, right. To the Dark Lord. He should know of this—"

She halted her walking, startled when he flew around, a threatening look on his face. "The Dark Lord shall *not* hear about this!" he hissed.

"But—"

He rose his wand at her, and not even a second later, Hermione's vision was clouded with a whiteness. She suddenly felt extremely tired.

/

"Thought I told you to come alone?"

"What the *fuck* was that, Malfoy?!" Potter snapped, spittle flying out of his mouth. "Why did you tell her that I was an imposter?! Why did you take her from a safe place, and why did you escape— everyone's so *furious*, myself included!"

"We'll talk another time then," Draco casually offered, backing up with his wand held out. In the Muggle alley they had met up in, Draco could see Potter had two others with him. They hid horribly. A foot was seen poking out from behind a rubbish tin, and there was a woman looking out of a window two stories up in the apartment building they stood right outside of.

"Let me know when you want to talk *alone*."

"*Blast* you, Malfoy!" Potter growled in frustration. He walked up to Draco, stopping just in front of him. "It wasn't *my* idea to bring extra people," he muttered.

"Maybe you'd win more battles if you actually made your own decisions instead of doing what everyone else says for you to do."

"As if *you* have room to talk?!"

"Your side preaches freedom, the Dark Lord has offered no such thing."

Draco held out his hand in a form of a handshake. "Since you ruined my trust in you, perhaps, if you still wish for Hermione to be on your side in the upcoming war, you should enlist some trust in *me*."

"Potter!" someone called out; a warning for him to walk away while he still could.

Potter fidgeted, clearly at a loss of what he should do.

"Your move, Potter," Draco dared him, smirking at his uneasiness, finding a delight in watching him squirm under the pressure.

Best Not To Lie

Hermione rose up from the bed and tried to wet her mouth. She groaned at the pain of a headache (which was what had woken her up in the first place). It was five in the evening. Apparently, she had needed a nap, but she didn't remember laying down. Hermione couldn't remember any of that day actually, not even what she had for breakfast.

She did recall what happened the day before though, dancing with Draco at Blaise's (he had insisted that she call him by his first name), spending the day there and drinking too much.

Drinking?

Hermione didn't drink often. She had terrible hangovers when she did, and no potions could cure her of the nausea she would get afterward.

She wandered into the bathroom of her suite, needing to use the toilet, trying to remember anything else.

Draco laughed in her memory while they danced to a faster paced song that made her dizzy. His laughter was hard and incredibly deep. Hermione had never heard him laugh such freely. She supposed he must have been drinking too—but then if that was the case, why didn't she remember the smell of alcohol on his breath? The stench that followed drinking was also why she didn't like to drink. It was an awful smell and would make her gag after a full night of it, churning her sick, upset stomach which made her throw everything all up.

"Oh, Mistress, you're awake!" Bobby announced, appearing at the doorway.

Hermione moaned: the high-pitched, squeaky voice of the creature went straight to her throbbing, irritated nerves, increasing the agony. "Would you *please* call me by my name?"

"Bobby is not allowed, ma'am, I'm sorry.

"Mistress had a fun time at Blaise Zabini's party," the elf continued, conjuring up a potion with a snap of her fingers, "and came home very happy and laughing. Master said you drank too much and needed some rest. Bobby and the other house-elves were ordered not to wake you. Master Draco says to give you this when you wake. Master says it'll take care of the side effects of your overindulgence."

Hermione squinted her eyes and held a hand up to her head, wincing at the sharp pain. "Thank you, Bobby," she said as the elf stepped up her to give her the potion. She took it only to be polite, knowing the potion wouldn't cure the 'side effects of her overindulgence'. "And where is my thoughtful husband this evening?"

"Master says to tell you that he will likely not be back before dinner, and Mistress is to eat without him."

"Where did he go?"

"Bobby did not ask; it is no concern to this house-elf."

"Alright," Hermione grumbled out.

"Is my mistress not going to drink her potion?"

Hermione, to prevent from offending her given house-elf (and any possibility of getting Bobby into trouble with Draco), downed the potion in one, quick swallow. She held her breath, bracing herself for the shudder her body was going to involuntarily do from the back flavour of it. The potion had a small amount of pumpkin vinegar in it, and while her taste buds didn't mind so much, her stomach and throat did, often trying to force whatever she had just taken back up with it.

Nothing happened though, mildly puzzling her. But she realized why that could be: she hadn't had a sick stomach. Her head had been a little light, pounding in excruciating pain (this discomfort was now cured after consuming the potion), but her stomach had been perfectly fine before taking it.

That's strange, she thought. I have never been intoxicated without it affecting my stomach...

Then she remembered the dry mouth feeling she had when she woke up. Hermione pursed her lips, gripping the vial tightly, adding all the clues together; Draco's abnormal laugh and his breath lacking smell in her memory— along with her other symptoms— could only mean one thing.

Her husband was lying to her.

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"You *can* sit down," Draco offered. He sat in his own chair, feet propped up on an ottoman. A house-elf named Creet held out a platter of sandwiches to him, to which he took half of one.

Potter remained standing, his wand firmly in his hand. "Where are we?" he repeated the question in a growl. Draco supposed Potter was upset by the abrupt apparition spell he had cast once Potter had taken his hand. Potter was obviously truly desperate for Hermione to be on the 'light' side of the war.

"Somewhere far away from any unnecessary acquaintances," Draco answered discreetly and took a bite of his sandwich. "Put your wand away, you won't be needing it."

"I feel safer with it equipped, thank you," Potter retorted.

Draco shrugged. "You're welcome to the food too—"

"Tell me what you want, Malfoy. What must I do to ensure that my friend doesn't end up on the wrong side of this bloody mess?! And how can I know for certain that I can trust you?"

"For one, I haven't summoned my Master," Draco pointed out. "He would *veritably* love to learn that you're still alive. Especially since your mere existence is costing him his much wanted immortality."

"Who's to say he isn't already on his way?!"

"He *could* be, yes. You made a thick-headed move, Potter; this could very well be a trap. My, you are fucked now, having to completely trust me with your life."

Potter cautiously looked around the small living room they were in, perhaps looking for an escape should he need it. "This is a... *Muggle's* home...!" he exclaimed when he caught sight of a device known as a telly box.

"How observant of you. I commend you for noticing."

"I can't believe Draco Malfoy is sitting in a Muggle's home!"

"Actually, it no longer belongs to a *Muggle*. It's mine and has been in my family for about twenty years. My family has always been well prepared, easily able to slip through cracks if need to be. Now is no different."

The two wizards shared a look before Potter finally relaxed a little and sat down. He did not put away his wand though.

"I have a few conditions that must be followed should we join your side."

Potter's eyes narrowed. "Of course you do, and they are?"

"They are fairly small, considering the risk involved."

"Would you just spit it out already, Malfoy."

"Well, the first would be full immunity when this is all over— *if* you win."

"Yes, that's probably not going to happen. Partial immunity, but definitely not full."

"*Complete immunity*," Draco emphasized with a drone. "Else there's no deal."

"Not after all you've done— you *killed* Dumbledore, you... you..." Potter's eyes blazed with fury for a second, but he immediately calmed down, taking a deep breath and closing his eyes for a moment. "They will not forget your crimes. Frankly, neither will I."

"You know I didn't have a choice—"

"We *all* have *choices*!" Potter snapped. "You made yours clear that you were willing to murder a man to save your own skin! A man who offered to protect you—"

"That same promise worked well for your parents, didn't it?"

Potter's hand that held his wand tightened around it. His lips pressed together. His green eyes darkened. "If you want this meeting to continue, Malfoy, you *will* refrain from mentioning my parents. They are not to be used in a joke."

"I'm just trying to say that Dumbledore had an awful track history of protecting people."

"What're your other conditions?" Potter's voice lowered, changing the subject.

"When your side has won, Hermione is to remain my wife."

"No."

"Yes."

"Absolutely not!" Potter flew up from his seat. "Not after all she's been through! Not after all you've done to her! She's *not* to be used as a bargaining tool! And certainly not just so you can fulfill some *sick* fantasy of *owning* her!"

"You think I want to own her?"

Potter sent Draco a doubtful look. "As if you really, *truthfully* care about her!"

"Why would you think that? She's my *wife*—"

"Not for long! When I kill *him*, all the marriage spells that he forced upon everyone will be broken! *Especially* yours!"

"Hermione and I will be inseparable," Draco argued calmly. "You will not be able to divide us. In fact, it might be hazardous to attempt to do so; you saw what we did at that camp—this is why your side wants her, this is why you want *us*. I'm not stupid, Potter, you fear that my wife will take his Mark, and if she does, your side will have zero chance to succeed in this war. Hermione and I are the most strongest, smartest, and youngest in magic there current is. Whichever side gets us both will be the most likely to win. Maybe you'll pull off killing the Dark Lord without us, but you still have his followers to worry about. Sick, demented people like Blaise who love their little enslaved wives and will fight to keep them."

Potter stiffened, a grim look planted itself to his face. He looked at the floor; he was blaming himself for this.

"Why do you even want her?" he spoke after a few moments of silence, sighing, clearly at a loss of what he should do.

"Unless there's some magnificent miracle, by the time the war is over, I'm fairly certain our first child will be on his way, if not already born. I grew up with a typical family, I want my own children to have that also. Besides, why put her through the stress of a custody battle when I would win since I'm the father—old-fashioned wizard laws, you know, it would take years to get them changed. They *certainly* wouldn't be top priority after a war."

"Fine," Potter agreed quietly, defeated. "But only *if* Hermione *willingly* and *freely* agrees to your proposal to remain as your wife, and *only* if she's kept unharmed. If she's harmed at all, and if I find out *you* have hurt her again, Malfoy, all deals are off, and you best know some good hiding spots, because I'll come looking for you, your *master* will be the least of your worries."

"That sounds more than fair."

"Anything else?"

"Two more things," Draco added with a drawl. "She can't know about this; her occlumency is not strong enough against the Dark Lord, it's actually rather weak, which is surprising, since she seems strong in just about everything else I can think of. It would best for her if she was kept in the dark about this."

"That's understandable," Potter muttered, unhappy with the supplied information. "And the last condition?"

"Neither my wife nor I are to be expected to fight for you. We have a reputation with my Master to uphold, if he caught us attacking his own people, we would likely never be seen again, and if by any chance that we were, it would be a gruesome sight, one that I assure you that you would prefer not to see."

Potter nodded, though Draco could tell he was not liking what he was hearing. His face turned a little pale.

"I really have no choice but to meet your requests."

"Precisely." Draco took out his wand and cast a spell.

"What was that?"

"I have sent for an additional person to be involved," Draco informed. "We shall make sure our deal is not broken."

"And just who may that be?" Potter started squirming again, feeling uncomfortable.

"Relax, if I was going to turn you in, you would be dead already."

"Why *are* you deflecting anyway?"

"Harry Potter, The-Boy-Who-Lived..." Draco drawled out, half smirking. "You escaped death how many times now? I dare say, I actually have some faith in you this time, Potter. And..." he paused for effect, picking at his nails. "If you lose, nothing changes in my life. I'm not worried either way, but Malfoys tend to play both sides of the coins. Yours just happens to be the one I want most."

"I don't get it; I thought you liked your current life—should you obey *him*?"

Draco stared at Potter blankly, debating on telling his rival the truth. "If I had refused to take the Mark, my mother would have been slaughtered in the most brutal way you can ever imagine."

"I see..."

"That's not even the worst part of it," Draco told him flatly, suppressing his bitterness.

"What could be worse than that?"

"I'll spare you the details," he said, standing up when there was a knock on the door. "Our neutral friend has arrived."

"Friend?" Potter asked, slightly confused. He was even more confused once the door was opened, revealing Astoria.

"Hello," she greeted carefully as Creet offered her a drink. Besides that, she said nothing. Potter avoided her eyes.

"Hello, Tori," Draco gestured her to sit. "We need a witness."

"What's happening here?" Potter asked, now in immense confusion.

"You know that Mudblood who was at the camp and was ordered to take chunks from my body and castrate me? Well, he was very informative, or rather his *mind* was. I learned quite a few secrets. And then I just *connected* some dots." Here, he looked pointedly at Astoria who gave him a pathetic smile. "It seems my friend here is a sympathizer and has probably been on your side for years. It would certainly explain her secret lover."

Astoria let out a nervous laugh, knowing that Draco wasn't going to turn her into the Dark Lord, but uncomfortable with the situation just the same. "It's true..."

"Before or after I turned you down?"

Her face dropped. "After, of course, Draco! I'm no *whore*!"

"Just checking," he added quickly, clearing his throat. "Sorry."

"This little confession session is great, but I have quite a few people who are probably having kittens right now. I've been gone long enough, Malfoy—what's she doing here?"

"She's going to witness our Unbreakable Vows."

"Unbreakable—" Potter stopped, fully realizing what Draco wanted. He gave it a good thought before he nodded. "Okay then. I can handle that. It would certainly ensure your half of the agreement."

"Good luck trying to win her heart, Malfoy," Potter muttered sarcastically after the vows were said, and he had been told he could finally leave.

"We'll meet again in a week," Draco announced.

"I do not doubt that Jordan will want to speak with you soon," Potter warned him.

"I'm not sure if I'll be up to talking with her or not."

"I heard what they did to you," Astoria said once Potter was gone, eyeing him over.

"I've been through worse just in training alone," Draco told her.

"I know, but it's still... *awful*."

Draco shrugged, wanting the topic to drop. "It's part of war."

"Are you really on Harry's side?" she asked uncertainly.

Draco snorted. "I'm on *my* side, Astoria. Whomever is going to protect me the most is who I'm more loyal to. For the moment, that seems to be Potter's side."

"What if that changes?"

He lifted up a shoulder. "Then I guess it changes. I didn't make a vow that said I wouldn't fight against them. All I promised was that *she* wouldn't fight against them— she'll not fight at all if she's pregnant, the Dark Lord wouldn't take that risk."

Astoria's eyes widened, realizing what he said was the truth.

Draco chuckled. "Aren't I brilliant? All I have to do is keep Hermione out of harm's way, which is what I intended to do anyway."

"You're incredibly brilliant. I only hope that the side that protects you the best is the good one."

"Neither side is good, Tori," Draco told her truthfully. "If you torture people, relishing over their screams of pain, that does not make you a good person. It makes you a twisted piece of shite."

"I'll take your word for it, since you know first handedly what it's like to be both the predator and the victim."

Without coming out and saying it, she was accusing him of being a hypocrite.

"It's no fun being either one, I promise you," he said, easily ignoring his friend's little stab at him. "I just want it all to stop, and that can only start with the fall of the Dark Lord."

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At the Manor, Draco found his wife in the library surrounded by a mountain of books, nothing he hadn't expected to come home to. He tilted his head at the sight of her, narrowing his eyes, staring at her as he stood at the door. Hermione was twirling a curl of hair around her finger.

A *curl*.

Sometime while he was out, her hair had been changed back to its original state: wild, messy, and unlady-like.

Anger started to simmer from deep within Draco. He didn't doubt that she had gone through the trouble to regrow her hair all over again, eliminating the work he had done on it.

With his fists clenched to his sides, he smoothly walked over to her, not wishing to startle Hermione before he could address her about what she had done.

She shouldn't have been able to do it. The spell should have stopped her before she could even start the act of defiance, but there she sat, not a strand of straightness in her bird nest of hair.

"You changed your hair back," he confronted his wife coldly, allowing her the awareness that he was definitely unhappy about it.

"Yes, I did," she answered, her body stiffened, but she did not look up at him, eyes still on a page of the book she was reading. "I decided that I'd rather keep my natural hair."

"But *I* decided that I like it the other way, and that was why you changed it. For me, your *husband*."

"It's *my* hair and having it straight doesn't suit me."

"I expect you to look at me while you speak to me," he ordered, malice thick in his tone.

She deliberately flipped the page to her book, ignoring his demand.

Draco looked at his wife in complete awe, unable to believe that she would do such a thing and ignore his demand! It was almost like he had been thrown back in time when she was disobedient and disrespectful— *ungrateful!*

What happened to his devoted wife?! Had the spell wore off...?

No. She wouldn't be here if that was the case, she would have made an escape. So then what was it? Why was she trying (and succeeding) to piss him off?

Draco pulled a chair out from under the table she was sitting at and sat in it, stacking some of the books that were blocking his view of her on top of another pile. He studied her for a moment, contemplating on how he should address her with this issue, gingerly picking out his words to say instead of spewing what he really wanted to say.

What the fuck is your problem, bitch?!

"What have I done to upset you, my wife?" he finally purred his delicately chosen words, setting his hands onto the table and folding them. He stole a glance at what she was reading and was a little surprised to learn that she was reading about a curse that created a fire with no flames.

"You invaded my mind," Hermione answered. "You wiped a memory— *my* memory, and then you lied about what happened, and either you lied to the house-elves, or you made them lie to me. All of which is *unacceptable* to me." She finally brought her eyes up from the book, giving him the most darkest look he had ever gotten from her.

Draco stirred in his seat as his wife continued to hold that look, piercing him with it. Her brown eyes were clouded with fury, promising him hell should he say the wrong thing.

How had she discovered what he had done? Draco thought he had covered his tracks easily. How could she even *know* what he did?

"What did you take from me?" Hermione asked in a voice that told him that she would only expect the truth, and nothing else.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Draco said, deciding that it was best to deny doing it at all. He stood up. "And I don't appreciate this accusation. Before anything else is said, maybe we should give ourselves a moment to think." He turned around, putting his back to her and reached for his wand.

The chair Hermione sat in made a dragging sound against the floor as she stood up. He flung his wand out, casting a spell to stun her, but the streak of yellow went sailing off, blocked from a spell she had used.

They stood in silence, eyes narrowed up, neither wanting to make the next move, neither wanting to put their guard down.

"I trusted you," she whispered, sounding bitter.

"I told you, Hermione, I didn't do anything—"

She swung her arm in a circle, throwing him up into the air and back several feet where he crashed to the floor. Draco clenched his teeth. His thigh throbbed in pain from the impact of the landing. He wordlessly tossed a disarming spell at her, but Hermione stepped out of its path.

She clutched her wand in anger, taking slow, dramatic steps toward him. He cast another spell in desperation to stop her from attacking him further; Draco feared she'd do worse with her next spell. But Hermione flicked her wand, seeing the spell coming, and redirected it back toward him. He hastily blocked it and made it disappear.

"Hermione," Draco spoke softly. "There's no reason to get hostile now, dear."

"Do not lie to me!" she screeched, making him jump at the sudden high-pitched voice she had. His body began to shake as she stepped closer to him. He had never seen her so upset before, and they had a rough past month together for him to know how dangerous she could be if she wanted.

Hermione shot another spell at him. It was the Crucio curse...!

Draco rolled out of the curse's path and scrambled to his feet, sending another spell in an attempt to cease her attacks.

After that, it was an outright war between them. Spells flew with high speed back and forth; Hermione feverishly screamed out during her fit, and Draco tried his best to either get her to stop on her own or by the force of his magic.

The both of them grew sweaty and tired, but Hermione was out of control, and Draco had no idea why. It couldn't be because she was that mad about him lying to her and wiping out

some memories. Something else was wrong. Extremely wrong.

"You've got it all wrong!" he insisted for the dozenth time, stumbling around a book shelf just in time to miss another curse. "You just got drunk, that's why you can't remember anything!"

Through a crack, he watched her approach, determination in her steps. He took a deep breath, considering his options. He couldn't harm her because of the Vow he had made with Potter, but he needed to do something that would protect him and something that would also make her reason.

Draco quickly cast a spell on his shoes that allowed him to walk without the sound of footsteps occurring. He slipped around the bookcase he had been hiding behind and circled around it, coming up behind her.

Hermione whirled on her heel, facing him, and Draco caught hold of the arm of the hand that she held her wand in, successfully disarming her this time. She tried fighting him, swinging a fist to the side of his head, but he blocked it and snatched her wrist.

Now with both arms caught, Hermione could only kick at him, delivering sharp, bruising blunts to his shins, and her kicks were getting higher up.

Using all his weight, with a grunt, Draco pushed her up against the end of a bookshelf, pinning her to it with his body. Hermione protested both in words and action, fighting him, deranged as ever.

"Stop it," he ordered, panting from the ordeal he had just been put through. "I'm sorry. You were right, I did lie to you."

All at once, she halted her movement and looked at him softly; most of her anger was gone. He had hoped for this exact reaction, taking a guess on what had caused her to go off the deep end.

Without another word, Draco pressed his lips to hers, tasting her sweet mouth with his tongue, attempting to distract her only for a little more longer, wanting her to forget everything that just happened between them.

He let out a yelp, crumbling to the ground in a heap, clutching his manhood into the cups of his hands.

"You think you can kiss me and all would be forgiven?" she shrieked, kicking him a second time. "Well, think again, *husband!*"

The Failed Order

Hermione went down to the kitchen, too upset to be around Draco. If she stuck around him long, she was probably going to hurt him severely, and though he had royally peeved her off, she didn't want to really hurt her husband.

As soon as she sat down with an irritated huff, a house-elf that worked in the kitchen (his name being Switch) came up to her.

"Mistress would like anything?"

"A plate of lemon biscuits and a cup of tea, please," she muttered, fingering her wand.

Her outburst in the library had been unnecessary and childish, and all done for nothing—Draco still hadn't told her what memory he had wiped nor why.

The nerve of him to kiss her after he had finally confessed he did in fact lie to her (not that she thought he was even remotely innocent in the first place)! Hermione had been stunned that he had actually admitted to doing it and also apologize for it. An apology that had sounded so secure. So *real*.

She dunked a biscuit into her tea to wet it before popping it into her mouth.

If he hadn't of kissed her, she would have probably forgave him right then and there, having found his honesty promising, given who he was.

But *no!* The bloody *arse* just *had* to take her moment of weakness as a way to control her!

Oh, yes, she knew *exactly* what he was trying to pull, but it didn't work!

Bloody, evil cockroach! I'll hex his bollocks off if he tries that again!

Why the kiss didn't work, Hermione wasn't sure. She may have been too upset with him, and the spell couldn't reach her magical core to take over feelings. She really didn't know the reason, but whatever it was, she was happy for it. Otherwise, knowing Draco, he would have shagged her right there in the library once he had her turned into a pile of mush.

Damn spell, she thought bitterly. She had been searching for a way to cancel it, but the only answer she was finding was if the person who cast it removed it themselves or died.

No chance of either one of those happening.

She left the kitchen after rinsing her saucer and cup in the sink and aimlessly roamed the Manor, thinking. Finally, Hermione stopped at a room she came across, deciding that she was going to refuse to sleep in her suite out of pure spite.

Hermione's heart thudded with anticipation, thinking about what would happen when Draco found her. Strangely enough, she actually enjoyed their little fight earlier. Especially his soft

pleas, begging her to stop.

Yes, she quite liked that the best.

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All Draco could ask himself is how she knew; how had Hermione known he had erased a memory from her...?

Since she didn't know *which* memory it was, he had been successful with the task, so it made no sense that she knew he had done it.

His house-elves didn't know the actual story either, so none of them could have told her.

He didn't understand it, but the damage was done. Now he just needed to fix things and learn what tipped her off, because there was going to be more memories he would need to wipe. Draco had no doubt about that.

He discovered that Hermione hadn't returned to her room. They still had to do what the Dark Lord commanded of them, but Draco was hoping that her steam had faded away some, it being two hours since she left him on the floor of the library, moaning in pain.

Draco, being lazy, asked Bobby where she was, and Bobby informed him that she was in the North Wing.

"But she does not sleep, Master," Bobby announced. "Mistress paces the carpet."

Draco took a moment, contemplating what he should say and do. He had from now until the war ended to get her to trust him. He wasn't sure how he could do that, especially since he had already ruined what little trust she had in him.

He momentarily closed his eyes and made a silent prayer to the Gods above who were willing to listen to him. Then Draco knocked on the door.

"Wife?" he called out, refraining from entering the room without her permission.

The door opened magically, her having cast a spell to allow him in. He did not step forward, seeing her glare that was focused on him.

He stood with his hands opened, slightly raised so that Hermione could see that he was unarmed.

"And just what do you want?" Hermione tapped her wand against the underside of her wrist. He got the impression that she knew precisely what he was here for.

"I came to explain myself."

An eyebrow rose up in doubt. "Nothing more?"

Draco shook his head.

"Fine, but only if I can hold your wand for 'safe keeping', after last time, I'm not too interested in taking *risks* involving you."

He pursed his lips, not liking the thought of being wandless around her. "Past experiences warn me that that's a bad idea," he drawled out.

"Don't you *trust* me, darling?" Hermione mocked in innocence. "It is not I who lied, or have you forgotten so soon?"

"What if... we both put our wands away?" he proposed. "Then there's no chance of something going stale."

Hermione gave it a thought. "What if you're here for vengeance?"

Draco rolled his eyes. "I'm not going to *hurt* you, Hermione. Abuse, be it mental, magical, or physical, is quite... *pointless* when it comes to you."

"And what do you think *would* be effective on me then?"

He shrugged slightly and leaned up against the doorway. "I was thinking... understanding... respect, and perhaps... tender care?"

Hermione lowered her arms from where she had been rubbing the tip of her wand against her wrist. She gave him a considering look. "Sounds like an incredible start to catch my attention..."

He stepped forward. Just one step though. He had to be patient with her.

"You forgot honesty though," she told him bitterly.

He stood in place, not daring to move another inch until he felt Hermione would permit it. "I'll work on that too," he promised. "Anything you want, wife, and I'll do it. I owe you, and I *will* make it up to you."

Hermione folded her arms across her chest. "Prove to me that I can trust you."

Draco slowly inhaled a long, deep breath. He closed his eyes, in near disbelief of what he was about to do. "Alright, I will," he said deeply, extending his arms all the way out to the sides, parallel to his shoulders. "You may temporarily possess my wand through the duration of our talk."

Hermione cautiously approached him, likely thinking he was going to attack her as she reached into his suit to fetch it out. He did not move though. Instead, he relished in how sweet her scent was. It lingered even after she backed away.

Hermione now held both his and her wands in one hand. She pointed them at a desk chair. "You can sit there."

Draco reluctantly obeyed, currently having to play her little game for the time being. When he was seated, she sat herself on the bed, facing him. "What memory did you take?"

He went straight to the explanation. "We skipped a night of sex, and because of that, The Dark Lord immediately punished us the following morning—yesterday morning."

Hermione stiffened. "What did he do?" Her voice had softened in fright.

"What do you think he did?" he flatly asked.

"So you were..." She tilted her head. "You were protecting my mental stability..."

"Indeed."

"Tell me what happened..."

"He was chunking me up into pieces..."

Hermione's face paled. "Ch-Chunk?"

He nodded. "Threatened to make you eat them if you made a sound while you watched."

She covered her mouth and closed her eyes, trying to keep herself from throwing up.

"Did-Did he torture me too...?" she asked shakily.

"He did not. He's not going to harm you—not yet anyway."

"Because of the..." Hermione looked away, touching a hand to her stomach.

"The children of the future are detrimental to His plan."

"And just what *is* His plan?"

Draco gave her a serious look and swung his left leg over his right, crossing the two. "What do you think, wife? What do you suppose an immortal Dark Lord intends to do in the future, a future where our population has forcibly been multiplied?"

"Make them all into Death Eaters...?"

Draco leaned forward with a blank face. "Which would eventually lead to *World domination...*" he whispered darkly. He sat back up, slightly smiling. "Our blood will probably help lead a country one day."

"No..." Hermione shook her head. "No, please, I *can't* let that happen!"

"You've no choice. It's inevitable—now tell me how you knew that I have been playing inside your head."

Hermione didn't answer him. She probably hadn't even heard him. Her eyes were dazed, staring off in space, badly affected by the news of what the Dark Lord was planning.

"Hermione?" He sharply clapped his hands, making her blink back into focus.

"Yes, my husband?" she asked, sounding a bit too hollow for his liking.

"May I stand now and have my wand back?"

She nodded, semi-distracted with her thoughts, and held out his wand, to which he quickly snatched from her.

"Imperio," he muttered, sending her into a trance to fetch his much needed answer.

"In rare cases, a person who has been subjected to the Obliviate or Legilimens charms can have small reactions to the spells," she said when he ordered from her the information that she held. "These reactions can be a sore throat, a headache, feeling of dizziness, and/or itchy eyes."

"Wouldn't you just think that you had some sort of cold?"

"You replaced my memory with one that did not exist."

"Stop trying to resist my curse!" Draco impatiently ordered her when he saw that she was stretching out her fingers in an abnormal way. "Answer my questions thoroughly, as if you were back at Hogwarts and boasting about your bloody knowledge! How did you know that I gave you a fake memory?!"

Hermione's eyes narrowed, she twirled her neck around, still attempting to fight his off attack.

Not until you spit the information that is needed!

"*Tell me!*" Draco demanded hastily, recasting the Imperious curse, strengthening its power.
"How did you know?!"

She went completely still, his curse out-performing her will. "The fake memory did not contain any sense of smell, indicating that it was not my own."

So that was it. He had never heard of such things, but what a brilliant way to diagnose a spell casting.

He smiled at her intelligence and knowledge, and reached out to play with a strand of her hair, absently admiring her skills.

"Tell me, Hermione, do you suffer any identifying reactions from the Forgetfulness Potion?"

"I do not."

"Excellent." He called up a house-elf to fetch him the potion.

"I want you to drink this." Draco handed her a cup of tea that had a few drops of the potion in it.

He released her from his Imperious curse as soon as she took the first swallow, then took the cup away from her when she gave him a confused look.

"Were we... *dueling*?"

"It's a new idea of foreplay," he smoothly supplied, gently pushing her onto her back, molding his body into hers, making her smile in pure arousal. "I dare say, wife, I quite enjoyed the game. We should do it again some time."

Hermione nodded, agreeing, before crashing her lips against his, reacting just as she should when their bodies made contact: hungry, needy, and incredibly slutty.

Which was precisely the way Draco wanted her.

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She walked down the dark corridor with her wand held out, tip-toeing along the way, on high alert. Her heart pounded against her chest, the sound of her racing pulse could be heard in her ears since all around her was silent.

She turned around quickly, her gut telling her that he was behind her, but her eyes searched thoroughly in the very dim light of the hall.

She saw nothing. Not even an unusual shadow.

She backed away, one slow, quiet step at a time, unable to rid herself of the feeling that he was close by.

She dared not to say a word though, else he'd for sure know her location if the feeling was incorrect at all.

Eyes never staying in one spot for long, she continued to look for him, hoping to find him before he found her first.

"So, my sweet," his voice purred behind her, making her snap around and fire an attack.

He laughed, blocking it, finding her attempt hilarious. "Did you really think you could get away?"

"No!" She couldn't let him win! She *had* to fight! She cast a series of spells, determined to overpower him, knowing that if she tried hard enough, she could manage it.

To her disappointment, he easily blocked every spell she cast, not even breaking a sweat.

"You'll have to try harder than that," he told her triumphantly, raising his wand up to retaliate.

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"It has been done, My Lord," Draco announced from his position at his Master's feet.

"How are you and your wife getting along?" the Dark Lord asked curiously, simply ignoring what was just said.

All Draco could see was darkness, it was not an uncommon thing to experience when your face was a mere half an inch from touching the floor. His knees ached against the chilly, hardness of the stone he was kneeling on. He remained there as he had been taught to; the Dark Lord would unleash a Cruciatus curse on him should he move even a twitch—something Draco had learned very quickly when he had first took the Mark.

"We have our occasional fight. It seems the marriage spell might be wearing off, My Lord, she seems... less agreeable as each day passes, though, I fix that quickly, easily confusing her."

The Dark Lord chuckled. Draco pressed his eyes shut, accustomed to that patronizing sound of His. His Master must have thought he said something stupid.

"My boy, a marriage spell?" He asked, thoroughly amused. "What is this you speak about?"

Draco was unsure if he wanted to answer this or not, but He had asked a question, so Draco had no choice.

"I apologize," he quickly started, hoping his Master would have mercy on him. "Many of us had this belief that the rings were linked to some sort of magic—"

"They do have some enchantments, yes."

Draco waited in bated breath for the Dark Lord to continue, but his Master did not further explain.

"We thought that it made ourselves more submissive to the marriage."

The Dark Lord sniggered. "You foolish children, why would I do that?"

"To avoid abuse on our wives..."

"Did you abuse your wife after you wedded her?"

Draco took a second before he grimly admitted doing so.

"Then wouldn't you think that these submissive thoughts would start just as soon as you married her—if they were in fact linked to the marriage itself?"

The Dark Lord's inquiry hit him like a brick, because He was right, Draco *would* have suppressed some of his anger as soon as he slipped that ring on Hermione's finger. But then... what explained their attraction to each other?

"I don't understand, My Lord, what is causing our attractions to our partners?"

"There are a few spells involved. Derivatives from love potions that were created by none other than those Weasley twins." He laughed softly. "I had them enhanced a little—lust

spells, nothing more. You see, once you kiss your wife for the first time, you activate the spell that is set in the rings. Your thirst to mate with her will begin after that. When you mate with her for the first time, your lust will deepen, it will continue until..." He paused for effect, a quiet chuckle escaping his mouth. "Until she's been bred."

Draco held perfectly still, though he was starting to sweat and ache all over from the uncomfortable position he was being forced to stay in. It was not the longest he had been stuck like this though.

"The effects wear off then?" Draco asked, wondering if he was understanding his Master correctly.

"Your sole purpose was to breed with her, after that, what does it matter to me if you bed her; if you want to dig around in the chambers, son, that will be up to you. Imperius her, coerce her, force her, I don't care what you want to do to satisfy your desires— so long as that child is not harmed in any way, but keep in mind, I will want Hermione to be rebred sometime in the future, so damaging your wife will be a punishable crime— but you already know this."

"Of course, My Lord," Draco acknowledged the warning, though he obviously already had planned to keep her out of harm's way.

"Go home, Draco," the Dark Lord ordered him softly. "Your wife will surely need you these next upcoming months, and I expect you, out of all my children, to take responsibility for your actions."

"Yes, My Lord. Thank you." Draco stood up in relief, his knees threatening to give out beneath him.

"Congratulations," he heard his Master say just as he stepped into the Floo.

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Draco sat down on the sofa in his tea room, gesturing for his guests to take a seat.

"Where's your lovely wife, mate?"

Gritting his teeth for a moment, slightly annoyed that the man had such a fixation on Hermione, Draco answered as casual as he could muster. "In the garden."

Draco eyed the dark man who had sores all over his body, but Blaise did not bring that up. He didn't even seem bothered by them.

Bernice sat next to the man, quiet as usual. Her cheek sported a fresh-looking bruise.

Draco assessed the two in immense confusion, though hiding his puzzlement with a displayed smirk, thinking on what he could say about their appearances.

How could they let Blaise escape? Draco thought dumbfoundedly, and at the same time, fail to protect one of their own...?

"So have you been trying out new forms of foreplay too?" Draco asked. Blaise was very much like the Dark Lord when it came to sexual fantasies.

Masochism immensely disgusted Draco.

"Not quite," Blaise answered, setting a hand on Bernice's thigh, tracing patterns with his fingers. Then he stood up, announcing that he had to make a trip to the loo.

"*Why* is he here?!" Draco hissed to Bernice once Blaise was well out of the room and Draco had cast a spell to keep the following conversation from being overheard.

"He... He escaped..."

"*How*?!"

"I don't know..." she answered pathetically, tears filling her eyes. "The same way you did, we're guessing— there was a body lying dead in his room."

A body... Draco thought on her words. "Like Avada Kedavra dead?"

She nodded in answer. Draco pursed his lips. Blaise could *not* wandlessly cast Avada Kedavra, and even if he could, he *wouldn't*. Draco would have thought that Bernice should know this by now.

He curled the fingers of one hand into a fist and flew up from his seat, pointing his wand.

"At least if you're going to lie to me, try and get your facts straight!" he snarled threateningly. He had severe trouble with stopping himself from cursing her, *killing* her!

What stopped him, he did not know, because they were trying to play him, and that was *not* something that anyone would normally get away with.

"You tell me what *exactly* is going on, or I will take it from you, and I assure you, that I won't be nice about it!"

"Jordan sent us here," she started, eyeing his wand, sinking herself more into the back of the chair she was sitting in. "She ordered him to attack Hermione, as a way to break the Vow you made with Harry."

"Oh, I see, you filthy Mudbloods arranged to have Potter make a deal with me, wanting to make sure Hermione wouldn't go against your side, and now that you have that deal, you can easily have me killed because I failed to protect her, and it'll all look like a mere accident, and then you'll *swish* Hermione away, thinking she would let it all go, unnoticed, just like that?"

"Well, not exactly that, but yes, in a summary..."

"I ought to *kill* you," Draco growled, snatching her up by the hair and taking her wand from the inside of the arm of her dress. He hauled her out of the room, making his way to gardens where Hermione was at.

Bernice fought him, punching at his chest until he paralyzed her so she couldn't move.

"Idiot Mudbloods," he cursed, freezing the man who was posing as Blaise and had been in pursuit to find his wife and hurt her. "Before you make such *brilliant* plans, I advise you to research your *enemies* more *thoroughly*."

"I had no *choice*," Bernice stammered as he threw her toward her comrade.

"Bernice..." the man using Blaise body warned her. "Don't..."

"No, *you* don't get to talk!" Draco said, sending the man to his knees and silencing him. "You should just be happy that I fucking saved your arse! How *dare* you even think about hurting her!"

"Draco...?" Hermione came walking up, confusion on her face.

"Go inside," he ordered of her, glaring his eyes at a shaking Bernice.

"But—"

"I don't intend to kill them, Hermione, but if you do not go *now*, I will brutally end their lives while you watch!"

Hermione stiffened, looking at each one of their 'guests' before she slowly made her way back to the building.

"Jordan, she's no different than him, I must warn you," Bernice whispered to Draco. "She's going to kill you all when your usefulness has been fulfilled."

"I already figured this," Draco snapped. "We'll deal with the Dark Lord, then take care of your *saint* of a leader."

"You can't, Draco, she's too powerful...!"

"One problem at a time," he said, forcing himself to be calm, Bernice's frantic state was slowly getting to him. He attempted to ease her. "You don't know everything—"

"She's been at this for years, since before Voldemort—"

"Don't say his *bloody* name!" Draco shouted, shaking his wand at her in sudden anger. "Damn you people are a lot of idiots! *Never* say his name. *Never*."

"Just a slip," she said shakily.

"That *slip* could be the death of you one day; *remember* that."

"What I meant to say is that she's been waiting to make her attack, playing *him* like a fiddle, getting him to trust *her*—"

"The Dark Lord doesn't trust anyone."

"If she wins, things are going to get worse for *everyone*. She plans to wipe out a *whole* lot of people, especially the Purebloods, and she'll use you to do it— she's already doing it!"

"Huh? How?"

"Half of you already can't reproduce," she explained vaguely, making Draco lower his wand, adding together all of the pieces.

Everything made so much more sense now. He was baffled; shocked; *amazed*.

"So what can we do then?" he asked Bernice, clearly at a loss.

"All we can do is pray, pray that we can work together long enough to get rid of *both* of them."

He studied the woman before him. She was taking a great risk for supplying such information and going against her leader. But the more Draco thought about it, the more he realized that she was doing no different than he was.

Which made him also wonder if she was telling him the complete truth, or was she playing mind games on him like he had done with them.

Time will reveal all, his mind told him as he pocketed his wand.

"Tell Jordan that the next time she sends someone to assault a member of the Manor, I will be forced to allow fate to run its course."

The Transition

"What did they do?" Hermione immediately asked, pouncing on Draco as soon as he approached the exterior steps at the back of Malfoy Manor.

"Blaise had intended to let his lust for you go a little too far," Draco supplied, ushering her into the home. The news made her root in place, paling at the thought.

"But you had your wand pointed at Bernie," Hermione said once he had pushed her inside.

"She prefers to be called *Bernice*," Draco corrected her, rubbing his head, stress apparent on his face.

Hermione set her hands on her hips. "Well, *excuse* me then— why did you have your wand pointed at *Bernice*? That poor woman is probably innocent."

"I'm not going to talk about this right now," he told her and started to ascend a case of steps.

"Draco!" Hermione called after him, anger in her voice. "I want you to tell me right now what was going on out there!"

Draco stopped and turned around to face her with narrowed eyes. "You don't want to know, *trust* me. And you better drop the subject before I confuddle your mind to make you forget about it altogether! All you need to know is that I allowed them to leave the premises unharmed, that *alone* should make you happy."

Hermione huffed impatiently, watching her husband turn back around to walk off to his office where he spent most of his days locked up in.

"Sometimes I hate you so much!" she yelled at him, furious.

"As if I haven't heard that one before!" he retorted. A slam of a door followed soon after.

Hermione sunk down, sitting on a step, letting out an emotional sob. She felt helpless at times, feeling that, no matter what she did, she had such trouble in making Draco happy. But then, in the next moment, her mind would ask her why she should care if he was happy or not: he was cruel and evil, having done things that were unforgivable.

She wasn't certain he was *that* cruel though. Else he wouldn't treat his house-elves like did. He was fairly kind to them, and most of the time, he thanked them for their service.

Hermione never once heard him raise his voice to any of them. Neither had she seen him raise a hand to them. He never threatened them, and sometimes, he even joked with Stoney (his personal one).

But he threatened *her*. He had hit *her* (though, admittedly, he hadn't done it in a while). He ordered her around more rudely than Hermione had ever seen him do to the house-elves.

Why did he treat her worse than his elves? Why were they treated better? Was she not trying enough to please him? What did he want from her?

"Why aren't you nicer to me?" Hermione asked when they were eating dinner, sitting at an oversized table. "You treat the house-elves with much more respect."

He gave her a blank look and delicately spooned a bit of soup into his mouth, swallowing before he answered. "Perhaps if you bowed in my presence like they do—"

Hermione stood up from her chair, tears in her eyes. "You're such an arse!" She shrieked, insulted that he would even say that!

"It was a joke, get yourself a bloody sense of humour!"

"I didn't find it funny!"

Draco scoffed. "Obviously not."

"I just can't stand you anymore!" She whirled around, stalking out of the dining area and up to her suite where she threw herself onto the bed, screaming into a pillow.

Why did he hate her so much?!

Because you hate him too, a voice inside her head pointed out to her.

Well, she didn't *want* to hate him anymore! If she was going to be forced to live with him for the remainder of her life, she'd *like* it if they could get along better!

Though she tried not to, Hermione cried herself to sleep that night, completely frustrated with Draco.

"Hermione?" The sound of his voice woke her up hours later. "Are you awake?"

"Get out," she muttered, still incredibly upset with him. "I don't want to talk to you!"

Draco ignored her 'request' and turned on a light, making her eyes squint from the abundance of brightness. He sat on the bed and heaved a sigh.

Hermione chose to ignore him, she wasn't going to listen to anything he said!

"The spell is wearing off..."

Unless it's that!

She bolted up into a sitting position, a thousand questions rolling around her head. "Wearing off? How? Why? Is that why you are showing your hate for me again? Has the marriage been annulled? Has he changed his mind?" Hermione gasped in immense fear. "Am I going to be killed now?"

Draco sat, looking at her, letting her spew out question after question until she stopped and realized that he wasn't going to say anything until she did. "Sorry..." she mumbled.

"No, you're *not* going to be killed," he began to explain quietly, seriousness in his tone. "It is wearing off because you are pregnant."

Hermione clutched her stomach after hearing the word 'pregnant'. She shook her head. It wasn't possible— how could it be possible?!

"No," she denied it. "No, I'm not..."

"Yes, you are," Draco insisted. "The test showed positive two days ago."

"*Test*, what test?!"

With a simple wave of his hand, Draco summoned up two bottles, a blue and a yellow one. "The pregnancy test," he informed her, also conjuring up two cotton swabs.

Hermione envied his wandless magic abilities. She was currently studying a few spells, wanting to master the art like he had.

"Open," Draco ordered a moment later, holding a cotton swab up to her lips. She obeyed, wanting to see for herself what the test would say. He gently stuck two into her mouth, one at a time, unintentionally tickling her with them before dropping each into a separate bottle.

The blue one glowed; vibrant and deep. Hermione knew then and there that what Draco had said was true. Even in the Magical world, blue meant pregnant.

She didn't tell Draco that she had been casting infertility spells on herself everyday and night for the past two weeks, having found the spell in a book—a type of birth control. Hermione didn't know how it had happened, but it did.

She pulled her knees up to her chest, dazing off, scared of the future, specifically of her child's future as a Death Eater. How could she stop it from happening? Draco said she couldn't, but there had to be a way! She couldn't stand the thought of her child becoming a monster like the rest of them were!

Hermione began sobbing, hopelessness taking over her. "I don't want this!" she sobbed. "I don't! Why can't you monsters just leave me alone?!"

"It'll be alright." Draco took her hand, giving it a tender squeeze. "He won't be a Death Eater..."

Hermione's head snapped up from where it had been buried in her knees, her face wet and red from crying. "What did you just say?"

"We won't let our son become a Death Eater."

She tilted her head at the tiny smile he was giving her. "*We?*"

Draco leaned forward, grazing his lips against the temple of her head. "We," he emphasized. "You and I."

Hermione wiped her eyes dry, no longer over-emotional, but she was not yet convinced on what he was saying. "But what about the Dark Lord?"

He set a hand up to her cheek, stroking it softly with a thumb. "Do not concern yourself with Him, wife. I'm here to protect you, and as long as you trust me and do everything I say, we'll all be fine. Things can very well change in seventeen years."

"Have you gone mental?!" Hermione whispered, truly worried that he had. "You surely can't believe—" Draco stopped her from going further, connecting their lips together. There was a battle going on in Hermione's mind as she couldn't decide to either fight him off or kiss him back. She didn't have to do either though because he broke the kiss off on his own.

"You're my family now, and like it or not, Malfoys stick together. What else have you got to lose, Hermione? I promise to do everything I can to keep you and our child safe from harm. It's my duty as your husband, and it's my duty as a father."

"Alright," she whispered after thinking it over, resting her chin onto her knees. "I believe you."

She must be crazy, because she actually *did* believe him. And it annoyed her that she didn't know why. It wasn't like he had a good history of being trustworthy.

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"I'm tired of being asked that question."

"Maybe if you answered it, people would stop asking it."

Draco took a sip of his tea and flipped a biscuit through his fingers. He couldn't answer the bloody question because he didn't *know* what the answer was. He *should* have killed them, he would have had every *right* to, but he had let them walk, without so much as a Crucio casting.

"It is a crime to murder magical blood at the current moment."

"Don't think I don't know the law, Malfoy," Potter said crossing his arms. "I may not be a part of the actual society of *You-Know-Who's*, but I know what is and isn't against the law—in *his* eyes, he would have seen that Zabini was trying to mess with a married woman, and you would have had every right to protect—" He stopped himself, inhaling a quivering breath. His eyes closed for a moment. Draco was noticing that Potter did that a lot. "According to law, you have a right to protect what's *yours*," Potter continued, bitterness layered his voice. "This includes your family." Potter then looked away, turning toward a window of the living room they stood in. "So that's not the real answer."

"I'm *supposed* to be on your bloody side now, what would the others think if I had killed them?! Unlike *some* people, Potter, I *can* actually control my deepest of urges!"

"Unless it has anything to do with Hermione," Potter growled accusingly.

"Or *maybe* the anger directed at her at the time was because I had just been put through years of abuse myself, including three weeks of constant day and night dueling matches *right* before I was 'given' her! I hardly was allowed to rest when He announced my fate— my holiday time after *four* years *is* this bloody marriage! I worked my arse off all these years, trying to mold myself a secure life, hoping that if I did everything He wanted, He would reward me with what I finally wanted! Oh, He rewarded me alright; made me marry the *one* person that reminded me *everyday* that I spent at Hogwarts that my blood meant very little! If a *Mudblood* can outperform me, what is the point in my *purity*?" Draco's breathing had increased to match his angry, throbbing pulse.

"You know all about the Scoreboard," he said, after taking a slow sip of his tea, attempting to calm himself. "She's still above me. *The Mudblood is still above me.* Yet, when we duel— yes we duel, Potter, nothing harmful, all for *fun*, if you know what I mean— I always win. Why is that? *Why* do I *always* win, if *she's* the best?"

Potter stared at him for a few seconds, not knowing how to respond. "There's different kinds of magic," he considered reasonably. "Maybe you're better at dueling."

"Placements on the Scoreboard are determined on how well you duel," Draco argued.

Potter took a thoughtful bite of a biscuit. "There's different types of duels too," he said after he swallowed. "You might be better when it comes to practice."

"Meaning she's better at the *real* ones? That makes no bloody sense, do you realize the *shite* Death Eaters go through just in *practice* duels?!"

Potter shrugged carelessly. "Your Master, who is prejudiced against Muggleborns, thought she was the best out of *every* Pureblood who had been put through the Program; he must have seen something that *you do not have*."

"*What* though?"

"Ever thought of just asking him?"

"Of course I have!"

Draco scoffed when Potter gave him a look that said, 'So, why haven't you?'

"He'd think I was second guessing His authority; you *don't* second guess His authority."

"It will forever be a mystery then."

"She's doing well with the thought of bearing my son," Draco said smugly, abruptly changing the subject just to poke at him.

"We'll just see how she feels about you when this is all over."

"Prepare for disappointment, Potter, she *will* be mine."

"Go pinch yourself, Malfoy."

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She struggled against the bindings, panting in frustration. "No!"

"I win again," Draco announced arrogantly, tracing his wand along Hermione's cheek.

"Never!" Her eyes narrowed in determination as she tried breaking out of the chains that were pinning her wrists and ankles to the wall.

Draco swatted her forehead with the tip of his wand. "Now, wife, you know the rules of the game—"

"You can't always win!" she spat, struggling. "I have to win too!"

He pressed his body against hers, smirking when she paused all movement, well aware of his hardness. "Perhaps next time then," he whispered, placing a feathery kiss to the nape of her neck. "But for now, you know the rules, Hermione: surrender to your superior."

"You've not won yet!" she contended.

"Now, now, *Gryffindor*, you're not being fair. I got you pinned to the wall without a wand; our rules *state* that I have won— shall I draw up them up; must I prove it in wording to you? Wouldn't you be furious with me if I tried the 'that's not fair' card?"

Hermione relaxed some, defeated, knowing he was speaking the truth. "You *always* win though... How is that possible?"

"You'll just have to try harder next time," Draco said encouragingly, hiking up the hem of her dress, inching his fingers along the smooth skin of her inner thigh. "Are you going to let me have my prize or not?" he asked smugly, sliding his fingers down the slit of her folds.

Hermione shuddered, nodding. "Fair is fair," she announced as he canceled his binding spells and wrapped her legs around his hips.

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"Get off!" Hermione shrieked, attempting to throw Draco off her. The colour of her face had changed from a lusting pink to a sickly green so suddenly that Draco was stunned for a second. "Get off me, dammit!" she screamed this time, swallowing a gasp of air.

He hauled off her, watching as she rolled away from him, hurling her guts out off of the side of the bed. Hermione panted a few times before the hideous sounds of throwing up filled the room once again.

She moaned, pressing the back of her hand to her clammy head. Her stomach and throat burned in pain.

"Are you alright?!" Draco asked, scooting up next to her, setting a hand on her back.

She swallowed down the terrible flavour of vomit and stewed potatoes. Grunting, she nodded to Draco. "I just feel a little sick."

"I'll call a Healer!" Draco leaped out of the bed, stumbling around the room to find his wand. "Where's it?!" he demanded, somewhat hysterically. "Where's my wand?!"

Hermione stretched her arm to the floor, groaning. "Here." She held it out. "Fell off the bed when we were wrestling."

He snatched it, eyeing her over before exiting the room, calling out to Bobby to look over her while he made the call.

"It's nothing to worry about," Hermione told Bobby, guilty that she hadn't thought of it before her husband rushed out to Floo a Healer. "I'm positive that it's just morning sickness."

"Morning sickness?!" Draco snapped a while later when the Healer confirmed Hermione's thoughts. "It's eleven at night, it can't be *morning* sickness!"

The Healer shrunk back at Draco's threatening tone, standing in a corner, shaking.

"Lord Malfoy," he started in a surprisingly stable voice, "It is just a generic term, the Lady shall only need a bit of rest and some additional potions to replace what she has lost."

"He's right, Draco," Hermione told him from her location at the bed. She went to get out of it to comfort him, but Draco stopped her quickly.

"Stay!" he barked. "The Healer said to rest!" He then had Stoney fetch the potions from his stock that the Healer made a list of to give Hermione.

"So it's the baby then?" Draco asked, timidly climbing back into bed after the Healer had left.

"My body is in the process of adjusting to his presence, yes."

"So this is my fault..." he mused quietly. "I did this to you..."

Hermione let out a snort, causing her head to react with a sharp pain. "You've done a whole lot worse to me, Draco!"

Draco shifted his eyes from his hand that he had been holding up to her face. "Things are different now."

"Are they really?" she asked doubtfully. "Are you really willing to accept me as your wife for as long as we both live?"

"We've no choice, remember?"

"What if you *did* have a choice though? What if, suddenly tomorrow, you were given the option to get rid of me and marry a *real* witch; would you do it?"

"No." His answer was immediate without any thought.

Hermione raised her eyebrows, shocked with how quickly he had said it.

"I think we make an excellent team, that is, when we work together. We are the best couple there is, and I think, together, we can do anything."

"You're starting to frighten me a little," Hermione admitted, warily.

He smiled, light shining deep in his eyes. "I'm sorry for hurting you before, I was under a lot of stress, and I didn't understand what the Dark Lord was doing. But now I do, and I can see why he forced us together." Draco leaned toward her and kissed her gently on the lips. "I want to keep you forever and ever."

Hermione couldn't help but to smile, finding his words quite touching. And he had never apologized to her before, which showed a lot.

Maybe he was right... Perhaps he had just been through a lot of stress and had let his emotions take control.

She thought back of the things he had done to help her: he had given her potions to cure her starvation; had Snape come in to tend to the itchy breakout that happened after wearing the collar; he had cooked her a meal after she had been recaptured; he had warmed her up with a spell on the broom ride back to Europe after she had escaped; Draco had done something to her mind when Voldemort made him rape her, making her feel pleasure instead of pain; and lately, he was trying to be less of an arse, actually showing some compassion, something she didn't think he even had.

"I want our son to grow up in a happy home," he announced one afternoon when they were having lunch.

"With a Dark Lord in power? How could he be happy?"

"We will try our best to give him everything we possibly can."

None of this excused his awful actions of the past, but she gave the man some credit; he was doing the best he could to make their situation tolerable. And he was doing a fine job of it. Everyday she spent with him, she was learning that he wasn't *all* bad. It appeared that he just wanted a normal, peaceful life. One that unfortunately would have to involve her.

Perhaps the idea of being a father was changing him. If that was the case, Hermione didn't mind at all. This Draco was much more easier to get along with.

The Sanctuary

AN: Damn, I had forgotten that I have a chapter already written for this story, I am so sorry. I was focusing 100% on LTBNC(wanting to complete SOMETHING), and now that it's finished, I can focus on this one again. YAY!. It SHOULD be done relatively fast-- depending on how my personal life goes.

"I didn't agree to attend any meetings," Draco grumbled when Potter answered to his knock on the door, and he stepped into the three story house that he had been 'invited' to. "My job as a 'participant' to your little hero group was made clear."

"We're trying to gather everyone together, we have some urgent news—"

"Are we talking your third party group, or Jordan's little Mudblood club?"

Potter sighed exasperatedly, rolling his eyes. "Rebel Forces— and stop saying that bloody word!"

"Oh, is that the name now? Dumbledore's Army didn't cut it?"

"*Malfoy*," Potter growled in a warning. "The only reason you're here is because quite a few people believe you're valuable enough to have around. I *don't* like you, but for the time being, we have to be on the same side, so *please* just follow me, and control your cruel *jokes*!"

"Fine." Draco waved his hand ahead of them. "Lead the way."

Potter lead him up to the second floor and to a door that opened into a large meeting room. Dozens of people were already there, and before Draco could take a step further, his eyes settled on a man who was dressed in black just like he was. He had trouble hiding his surprise; his eyes widened, and Draco's jaw about dropped. Regaining his smooth, Slytherin cool, he made his way to an empty seat, ignoring the abundance of eyes that watched him sit down next to Severus.

"I did not expect to see you here," Draco muttered to him, shifting his eyes from person to person, learning just who all was involved in Potter's hero group.

"It is your deflection that surprises me. I was hoping you would, and once I learned about the vow you took with Potter, I realized how dedicated you must be to the cause."

"And how dedicated are *you*?"

"I've been training Potter for his fate for three years now."

Draco shifted his eyes from Remus Lupin who was eyeing over a pad of paper to Severus and attempted to read through the signature mask he displayed on his face.

"He's that ignorant student you've been occasionally mentioning, isn't he? The one you complain about often."

"The very same."

"You set *Potter's* hair on fire?!" Draco gasped in amazement, remembering the story.

"He's been pretty... *respectful* after that," Severus said with a tiny smirk. "I wish I had done it long ago."

Draco found himself grinning at the thought of Potter being bald. *Serves that bloke right!*

Astoria came in with Longbottom closely behind. She sat two seats from Draco, giving him a small wave, and Longbottom took the chair next to her, focusing heavily on Potter.

Potter was up at the front of the room with a pregnant Bernice, and the two were thumbing through papers, occasionally pointing at them. Potter then nodded to her and addressed the room.

It was packed with people now. Draco recognized a few. Most were Gryffindors of course, but he surprisingly noticed some Slytherins scattered around the room.

Potter cleared his throat. "Two hours ago, Jordan sent us a message. Many of you have received it yourself, and some of you haven't, either that is because she doesn't know about you, or she doesn't exactly trust you."

Draco hadn't received the said message, but what could he say, Jordan wanted him dead.

"She's decided on the date of when she wants to attack, and it's very soon—"

"How soon?" a man who Draco didn't know asked.

"In a month... December 15th."

Several people started making protests.

"I can't fight! Sue is going to be having the baby around then!"

"My daughter is due in December!"

Draco sat back watching the people go crazy, Potter having little success in calming them down. It made perfect sense to attack the Dark Lord around that time—most of His Death Eaters would be too concerned with the births of their upcoming children. Of course the Dark Lord would make them fight anyway, but the added stress would cause some distraction.

My, you are a brilliant hag, Jordan.

"Please!" Bernice shrieked out, panicstricken, "We need to find a safe place that will home twenty-four pregnant women!" Bernice's brown eyes were wide. "Because she's going to go after them and any child born to these women as soon as the battle starts."

The crowd got louder with that. Many uprooted from their seats, shouting. A horrible feeling hit Draco's stomach as he realized just how twisted the Mudblood hag was.

Draco stood up and raised his wand above his head, casting a spell that silenced everyone.

"I've got an idea," he said quickly, not liking the dirty looks he was getting. "If you'll all be quiet long enough to listen, I'll lift the spell."

Several people glanced at each other before they retook their seats, miraculously willing to hear Draco out.

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What do you suppose he'll be like?" Hermione asked, looking up at the dark ceiling above Draco's bed where they were laying. Her hand was touching the large bump at her belly, and his was covering hers.

Draco eyed her over, watching her eyes move back and forth in worry. He often told her not to, but Hermione did so everyday.

"I just have this awful feeling..."

"You're paranoid— rightfully so, given all you been through."

"I can't bare the thought of something happening to him, Draco."

"Me neither, but he'll be fine. We'll be fine. Everything will be alright."

"You can't know that for sure."

"Perhaps I do know for sure, and you just don't understand why."

"He'll be passionate," Draco said. "He'll be smart and studible, thoughtful and powerful. He'll be everything that everyone will want in a son. He'll be popular, and if he's anything like you, he won't even realize it. He'll be great. Just like us."

"Will he...have a *good* soul?"

Draco swallowed at the uncomfortable tightness forming in his throat. He leaned closer to Hermione, pressing his lips to her cheek and threading her fingers with his. "Being good is highly over rated," he told her his honest opinion. "Good people do bad things, and bad people do good things."

Hermione shifted her eyes from the ceiling to look at him. "Even Blaise?"

He sat up with a sigh, rubbing his eyes, conflicted with how he wanted to answer that question.

"I don't think Blaise has a soul anymore, but I wouldn't blame him if he didn't."

"Why not?" she asked, joining him in a sitting position.

"After you have been through what we have, you sort of... *die* a little each day."

"Is that why you don't want our son to be a Death Eater?"

"One reason, yes." Draco pushed her back down onto her back and forced himself to smile for her benefit. "Let's talk about something else now," he suggested.

"Like what?" Hermione snuggled under his body, getting herself settled for the night.

"How's your garden piece coming along?"

"It's almost done," she answered, playing with a hair on his chest. "You want to see it?"

Draco shook his head. "Not until it's finished."

"You know, I still wonder why the Dark Lord insists that we have sex when I'm already pregnant," she inquired when Draco unbuckled his belt to prepare for the said activity. "It makes little sense."

"Who knows with him, sweetheart," Draco said, stopping a smirk from spreading to his lips. "For now, we must follow through."

"I'm just so tired..."

He paused the process of removing his pants. "Everything alright?" he asked, suddenly wondering if they shouldn't be shagging while she was this far along in the pregnancy.

Could he hurt the baby...?

"You know what," he started, ignoring Hermione's claims of being fine. "I'll talk to Him, if He is made aware that our acts of pleasure could hurt the baby—"

"Don't!" she shrieked, panicking. "I really am fine!"

He gave her an intense look before taking her mouth with his, his kiss full of fierce passion.

"No more sex," he announced firmly. "Not until the baby's here."

"But—"

Draco stopped her, shoving a finger up to her lips. "I *will* get his permission. Trust me."

"Okay," she whispered fearfully, watching him hop out of the bed and replace his shirt to go see his Master.

"I'll be back in a few, wife." And then he was gone.

Draco apparated to another piece of property owned by him, planning to stay in the 'abandoned' home for a while, waiting as time passed. He poured himself a glass of firewhiskey, savouring its bitter, burning flavour before calling up Stoney to have Bobby check on Hermione.

"Mistress is scared, Master. Mistress is walking around in circles with shaking legs."

Draco nodded, pleased with the news. She was starting to seriously care about him.

Good.

"Thank you, Stoney."

Now, he thought as he positioned himself in front of a bathroom mirror with his wand in his hand, *time to do some damage*.

He returned back forty-two minutes later, sporting a gash at his side, his face looking like he had been in a brawl with a troll.

"Draco!" Hermione immediately ran to him as he stumbled in. She fussed over the damage, inspecting it.

"We don't have to have sex until the birth of our son," he said proudly, softly smiling as she healed his wounds.

"That was very foolish!" she scolded. "Don't ever do that again!" Hermione wrapped her arms around him, sighing. "I was so *worried* that you would never come back!"

"I'll always come back for you, Hermione," he told her, squeezing her possessively into a hug. "Always."

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"What's going on?" Hermione asked, confused to see a bunch of people scurrying around. The noise of them had woken her up. She had never before seen so many people in the Manor. Usually it only had a handful of occupants.

One pregnant woman passed her, breathing hard, struggling to walk as a man escorted her to wherever their destination was. She appeared to be in labour.

"Do we even have enough Healers to accommodate all these women?!" Hermione heard Draco demand over the chaos. Hermione's eyes widened as she realized what he meant by that. It was like she had walked into the maternity ward of a Muggle hospital!

"I thought you said there were only twenty-four?!" Draco barked at a passing Bernice who was helping a screaming woman.

"We can't take any chances," Bernice hastily said, not even giving the man a look.

"Stoney!" Draco snarled out in obvious irritation.

"Master." The elf bowed immediately upon his apparition.

"Get the other elves, hurry! We have more rituals to perform!"

"Draco...?" Hermione addressed him slowly in confusion, watching the people around her.

"Not now, Hermione!"

She followed him up a staircase, him muttering incoherent words the entire time.

"Go lay down," Draco ordered when he saw that she had tagged behind him.

"Can't I help with anything?"

"No, you need to not overwork yourself. There's plenty of hands. Someone mentioned that there is a dozen medics coming to assist."

"Why are all these people here, and why didn't you tell me anything about this beforehand?"

Draco sighed, rubbing his forehead. "Short notice, alright? Now, please *leave*, I have a meeting to attend; you're not invited."

Hermione huffed after he had gently shoved her out of the room and closed the door, shutting himself into it.

She did what she could do and decided to help her pregnant guests out, all the while seeing if she could get any answers from anyone of the reason why they were here.

She only got snippets of information. Some people wouldn't tell her a thing, others were too busy trying to get settled, and then of course, there was the handful of women who were in so much pain, their screams of agony made Hermione pale.

That's going to be me in a few days, she thought, touching a hand to her belly, suddenly fearing the pain that was unavoidable in her near future.

She was able to piece the tiny bits of information together, working it quietly in her mind as she helped the elves deliver towels and other things to those in need. And it came to her as Bobby gently pulled Hermione into a furnished chair to sit, the elf noticing that she had not had a rest in a while: the women were being sheltered here. Draco sent for all these women to be protected; protected from some evil person—who she was sure was named Jordan.

And where did Voldemort fit into all this? Had Draco been ordered to open his home to the mothers who would be having quite a handful of expected future Death Eaters?

And what had Draco meant by rituals? Hermione asked Bobby about the rituals, but all the elf did was nervously look away and wring her fingers. "Bobby doesn't think Mistress is supposed to know. It is Master's charm."

Just as she was about to go lay down for a rest (long after Bobby had practically begged it of her), Hermione saw a familiar face and nearly cried at the sight of Luna who was walking toward her in a corridor.

"Luna!" she choked out, hurrying to the woman as soon as she seen her.

"Hi, Hermione." Luna carefully hugged her, noticing Hermione's protruding belly. "How are you fairing? Malfoy is alright, isn't he? Not too bad once you get to know him?"

"I'm alright. How about you?" Hermione inspected her old Ravenclaw friend, forgetting to answer the questions that had been asked. Luna looked in well enough shape, as beautiful and as spacy as Hermione had always known her to be.

Luna smiled lightly and gave a small shrug. "It could always be worse."

"Did they force you to marry a Death Eater too?" Hermione asked horrified, wondering which one she got, shuddering as a list of horrible men came to her immediate mind.

"No," her friend said quietly. "Before the whole marriage law crisis, I was advised by a friend to marry as soon as I could, and so I did."

"To whom?"

"Oh, you wouldn't know him; it doesn't much matter, we're married by convenience only."

"But at least he's not a Death Eater," Hermione stated firmly.

"Oh, he is!"

"He... is...? You *chose* to marry a *Death Eater*?"

Luna chuckled quietly. "Everything is never so black and white, Hermione. I hope you can learn that eventually."

Would you like to meet Juno?" she asked, changing the subject.

"Juno?"

"My daughter!" Luna laughed with a snort.

"You have a *daughter*...?"

"Oh, Hermione! You cannot be surprised now! Look around you! Almost every eligible woman is expecting!"

"Alright, alright!" Hermione pressed the palm of a hand to her forehead, slightly dizzy from all she had learned that day. "Sure," she said, forcing a tired smile. "I'd love to meet Juno."

Draco came to bed late that night, stirring a restlessly sleeping Hermione awake. She sat up, watching him in the moonlight, his face lacking emotion. He looked frightening that way; the

rays of the moon made him look like a creature of the night— even with his near-white hair.

"Are you alright?" Hermione asked, casting a spell to turn on a light since the natural one was starting to creep her out a little too much.

He settled himself into bed next to her, eyes glued to the ceiling. "Go to sleep," he hushed her quietly.

"She's planning to take the babies, isn't she— Jordan is wanting all of the newborn children."

Hermione continued to watch him, his face especially, waiting for him to display any sort of emotion. But he didn't. He had become a master at hiding his feelings so well since his youth. Hermione envied him for having such an ability.

"What's happening?!" Hermione demanded hastily. "Why won't anyone tell me?! They know! I know they know! Why is it being kept from me?! Tell me, Draco!" She shook at his body, desperate for answers. "Please tell me she's not going to take our son from us?!"

"She is going to try."

His voice was so hollow, Hermione stopped all movement. The hairs on the back of her neck rose straight up. His tone scared her, his passive expression scared her, and the thought of some crazed woman kidnapping a bunch of pregnant women and infants was incredibly frightening too!

"Why?! And what about the Dark Lord, does he know about this? Shouldn't he be upset? Doesn't he consider these children his?! Is he trying to stop her?!"

"You'll start training tomorrow," Draco announced, ignoring her questions.

Hermione's mind stumbled over his words. "Training...?"

"Good night, wife. Sleep while you can."

He did not speak anymore after that, seemingly shutting her out as soon as he had said it.

Frustrated, Hermione turned away from him, upset that he hadn't given her any answers, and by not doing so, he had put more questions into her head.

Why wouldn't he tell her what was going on?

Training...? What kind of training? What for? Why *now*? Was it too late to start now?

She sincerely hoped not! Whatever it was, it sounded like she would need it, and much too soon!

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"Ow!" Hermione shrieked, pulling her hands away from Draco after a harsh, sharp pain stabbed her head. "That hurt!"

Draco was sitting, facing her, his concentration had been cut off with her outcry. He reached out, snatching her hands and putting them back into the position they had been in: palms up, with his own palms on top of hers. "It's going to hurt a lot worse if you don't master this."

"*Why* are we doing this?" she asked for the hundredth time that day.

"Because."

"That's not an answer!" Hermione went to get out of bed where she had been sitting at the headboard, but Draco stopped her with a spell, keeping her in place.

"If you don't learn this, and if that bloody hag is successful, who knows what will happen to you and our son," he said seriously.

Hermione stopped herself from sighing, choosing to be patient with him, especially since he was finally willing to talk about what was going on. "What's this exactly *do*? Isn't this Dark magic? Won't this hurt the baby?"

"It's mental anguish, nothing physical, so it will not harm the baby. Prolong abuse could cause harm to your mind, but not if you can build up a good defense against it first."

"So, this is Jordan's spell choice? She tortures people with it?"

"No..." Draco sighed and slouched his shoulders a little, a flash of hopelessness went across his face before he turned away and sat at the side of the bed.

"It's the most productive method of creating a defense against any magic that attacks the mind. Unfortunately, it causes quite a bit of stress to the mind itself, but we've little choice... I've been abusing your lack of ability of defending yourself against such magic for personal gain. It is my fault... You're my wife, I should have been helping you all this time, not *hurting* you..."

Draco wasn't looking at her, he was picking at his hands. A foot tapped nervously.

"And because of my arrogance... you and our son could be placed in imminent danger..." He grunted, disgusted with himself. "Some husband I am... I was supposed to be protecting you, I *promised* you that I would..." His voice faded, and he ducked his head down low, sniffing quietly, pressing his fingers to his eyes.

Hermione scooted up to him with difficulty, being she was large with child, and set a hand to his shoulder. "We all make mistakes," she told him. "We have to, it helps us learn, and by experiencing the repercussions of poor choices, we learn to become better at making the right ones. Don't worry about what you have done in the *past*, worry about what you can do *now* to keep from making the same mistakes again."

"I'll die if I lose you," he whispered. "Even if I have to kill myself— life's not worth living..."

Hermione didn't know what to say, too stunned by his words. After all that he had done to allegedly stay amongst the breathing, he just told her that he couldn't live without her. That he'd actually *kill* himself if she was no longer around.

Did he really care about her that much? They had been married for almost ten months now, and while they had had a terribly rocky start, during the past few months, they have learned to understand each other; to depend on each other; to *care* for each other.

But did they care *that* much?

Well, apparently *Draco* did...

"Then we best get back to my training," she said, her voice cracking, emotionally affected by what he had just said to her.

Hermione wasn't sure if she matched his feelings exactly, but it felt nice having someone greatly care about her once again.

The Littlest Traitor

Hermione's barriers were getting stronger with every practice. Draco now had trouble breaking through them. He admired that she had such a fast learning skill; it had taken him three weeks to get as far as she had in just four days. She was truly amazing.

"Are you okay?" she asked in deep concern when he had yelled out from the severe, sharp pain she had dealt to him upon his latest attack to her mind. Draco was currently holding his head in both of his hands with his eyes pressed shut, trying to recover from her defensive attack.

He groaned and leaned over the edge of the bed to hurl, but thankfully, nothing came out.

"Yes," he barely managed, hoarse from weakness.

"I don't want to do this anymore," Hermione announced in a whisper, slightly traumatized over what she had just done. "Must I?"

He took a deep, shaky breath and nodded. "If you're attacked, your attacker won't give you a break, we must continue..."

"But I'm hurting you!"

"I'll be fine. I'm more than prepared for the attack. I've done this before."

Just not with someone so strong...

But they had to continue. Hermione *had* to perfect this. Her life might end up depending on it, and he was damned if he would let her die because of him.

It sickened him that his family was in terrible danger all because he had failed to train her sooner. Instead, it had been more important for him to mess with her, as if she were some *toy* of his.

She would be fine though. Draco was sure of it. She was strong and full of incredible power, and once she mastered this art, she'd be untouchable.

He just had to hold on long enough for her to complete the training, and Draco knew from experience that it wasn't over. It was far from it.

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"Draco!"

Hermione's voice sounded like it was at a far distance away from him, echoing as if they were in a dark, hollow tunnel. But she wasn't far away from him at all. She was next to him, crying out his name over and over, pleading for him to respond to her.

His eyes were shut. He could see nothing but darkness. He couldn't think of anything besides her frantic calling of his name and the harsh tapping of her hands to his chest—efforts to get him to respond.

The pain was gone now, though the spell had made an impact to his mind. He was momentarily stuck in a void, not even trying to get out, knowing it was pointless to bother.

Then he could hear her no more, and the feeling of her body against his was no longer present. Draco assumed at this point that she had left his side to get him some help.

"All you can do is wait for the effects to wear off," Severus said a while later.

"He's bleeding...!"

"That tends to happen after getting blasted with a powerful defensive spell, true legumins know how strong their opponent's defenses are, and if they *are* strong, we tread extremely carefully."

"Are you saying he can no longer enter my mind—without this happening?"

"If you implant the spell into your mind at . just the proper time, the spell could defend you from just about any attack against your mind and will..."

"Such as... the *Imperius* curse?"

There was silence that followed Hermione's question, giving Draco the idea that his godfather had given his wife a simple nod.

Draco was exhausted, having practiced with her for over a week, but he believed that he could rest now. He didn't think she could learn anything more from him on the subject. The powerful Mudblood witch had yet again outperformed him.

But he wasn't angry this time. No, he was proud; he was relieved. Because of her fast learning skills, his son and wife both would have a fighting chance against Jordan should the hag ever manage to gain the upper hand. And he didn't doubt that she would. Draco took Bernice's warnings to heart. She knew Jordan better than anyone he knew, she knew everything that woman was capable of; she told him plenty of things about Jordan that made his skin crawl. Bernice hadn't been exaggerating when she compared Jordan to the Dark Lord.

Frankly, Draco would choose to deal with the Dark Lord over Jordan any day of the week.

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"Shall I read you another?" Samuel asked Hermione, eager to show her how he had been practicing his reading.

"Sure," she answered, wiggling her swollen, fat feet. She got up from the chair she was sitting in. "Keep reading," Hermione instructed when he had stopped his tale on The Purple Kitty. "I just need to use the toilet."

"But the other kitties, who were only plain orange in colour, did not like Purple. Purple got all the attention. Purple was unique, and he was pretty. That made the rest of the litter..."

Samuel's voice faded as Hermione felt a sharp pain in her stomach. She took a deep breath, closing her eyes and biting down on her bottom lip. When the pain was over, she had realized that she had wet herself.

Groaning, Hermione began to remove her pants. "Bobby?" she called for the house-elf.

The house-elf appeared in an instant. "My mistress..." The house-elf immediately summoned up a change of clothes, noticing Hermione's dilemma.

"I'm sorry," Hermione said pitifully, near tears.

"Bobby knows that Mistress is having trouble, yes, she does. Bobby cares lots about my Mistress. Mistress shall not worry, Bobby loves helping." The house-elf picked up Hermione's soiled clothes, pausing in a bent down position as Hermione gratefully thanked her.

"Mistress?"

"Hmm?"

"Bobby does not think this is urine... I thinks Mistress broke her water bag."

Hermione stepped back to see what Bobby had meant, and when she did, she felt a gush of fluid rush out of her.

Bobby was right, she was in labour.

"Go get Draco— and a mediwitch!" Hermione choked out as another sharp pain came upon her. She clutched her stomach, forcing herself to breathe steadily like she had been taught to do.

"Okay, baby," she spoke weakly after the contraction was over. "Okay, you're ready to come out." She wrapped a towel around her, not even bothering to put on the clothing that Bobby had summoned up for her to wear—they would have to come off anyway. "And I'm ready for it too!"

Hermione waddled out into the bedroom of her suite, with Samuel there, still reading as he followed right behind her.

"Hermione," he inquired when he had looked up. "What happened to your pants?"

"Sweetheart, the baby is coming, and I need you to go play with the other children now. This is not something—" She let out a welp.

Samuel's eyes widened. He was not a stranger to women in labour, having been around it for the past two weeks, but he truly adored Hermione and didn't want her to be in pain. "Hold my hand," he offered with what he had recently witnessed other people do.

Hermione about cried at the gesture. She touched the boy's cheek lovingly. "You are so sweet," she said through a pant. "But you are too young to coach me, okay? Someday, you will have a wife for you to help, but this is a job for Draco."

Samuel stood up straighter, poking his chest out. "I shall make sure he is here then!"

Hermione laughed. "You do that, but first—!" She stopped him just before he ran out. "Would you mind passing me my wand, please?"

Samuel sprinted across the room to where her wand had been set and fetched it for her."

"Anything else?" he asked, looking at her in deep concern.

"That's it. Thank you, you're such a big boy."

He flashed her a proud smile before running out of the room in a hurry, shouting, "Lord Malfoy, Lord Malfoy! The baby is coming! The baby is coming!"

"Draco isn't here," Luna announced a while later. "We've sent him a message though."

"Where could he possibly be at a time like this?!" Hermione cried out in pain and frustration. "He wanted this bloody baby, he best get his arse in here and get it out!"

Luna smiled sympathetically and sponged the sweat off Hermione's forehead. "He'll be here as soon as he can."

"Draco should be doing this!" Hermione groaned three hours later, draped over Luna and her mediwizard, Austin Jones. "He should be the one helping me walk!"

"He's been very busy lately," Austin said calmly.

"But it can't be more important than this!" she insisted. Then she screamed. The pain was getting worse. More fierce. "I want my husband!" she pleaded through heavy breathing. "I want to strangle him...! Please go get him...!"

"Oh, yes, I experienced odd behavior when I was in labour with Juno too! Richard was too afraid to come into the room! I vowed to remove his bollocks with a very dull knife."

If Hermione wasn't in excruciating agony, she would have laughed and been surprised that Luna would be anything besides the kind, cool woman that she knew.

"Luna, this isn't about you," she snapped, irritability. "Now if Draco doesn't want to help me, I'll just get this beast out myself!"

Luna and Austin gripped Hermione firmly, wrestling with her to stop her from damaging herself and the baby.

"Jeez, I hope Malfoy gets here soon!" Austin said with a grunt.

Luna gave him a hopeful smile.

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Draco stood, watching his master walk around his lair. He and two others waited for Him to speak, having been summoned, but the Dark Lord had not yet said anything.

"Something is brewing..." He finally spoke

None of them added anything, keeping silent, expecting Him to explain what He had meant.

"I overheard something today; a pretty, little whisper in the halls." He gave each man a long, piercing look, finishing at Draco.

Draco wrinkled his eyebrows, showing confusion. "What have you heard, My Lord? What could a student possibly say to pique your interest?"

The Dark Lord continued to stare him down, making Draco feel like a worm on a fish hook.

"It appears that there is a band of Mudbloods planning an attack. Right here at this very school, but that is not all." He finally looked away, and Draco felt like he was able to breathe again. The Dark Lord chuckled. "The most interesting thing about this is the additional information I got from that student. After thorough investigation, it appears that Harry Potter is still alive."

"How can that be, My Lord?" Severus asked. "You killed him."

"Yes, at first I asked myself that same question, but lately, I've been feeling strange. I did not understand these feelings until today. It all makes perfect sense now though, I felt the same exact way right before I rose into power in '97. He is alive, and he is with them. He is part of their plan."

The Dark Lord delicately took His wand off the desk in front of Him, eyeing it over. "There's one other rumour," He hissed out slowly, studying his wand like it was the most interesting thing on Earth. "I had to verify it myself because I simply could not believe it. Alas, it is true... It seems that a certain child of mine has turned against me."

Draco's hands began to sweat. His forehead felt clammy. There was an itch at the back of his neck, but he dared not to move. Any sudden motion would automatically pin him as guilty.

"My first thought was to kill him, oh but his blood is so precious to me. Traitor or not, he must perform dutifully. But he shall have to be severely punished, my children must know not to defy me. Isn't that right, Draco?"

Solid white eyes bored into Draco's, and his head instantly filled with pressure, painful pressure of the worst headache he had ever had. Draco yelled out, tumbling to the ground, holding his hands up to his ears, trying to relieve the agony.

"Expelliarmus!" Blaise shouted next to him, and all pain to Draco's head stopped.

Draco groaned, pressing his eyes shut in an effort to regain his senses.

"How dare you!" The Dark Lord demanded. "You have a death wish, boy!"

Draco opened his eyes to see Blaise blocking spell after spell that the Dark Lord was wandlessly casting. Draco never knew Blaise was so good at defending.

"You have been practicing!" The Dark Lord complimented.

Draco saw the Dark Lord's wand under the desk, and he made to crawl to it. Severus watched from the side, his wand held out, shielding himself from their master's curses.

"I'm impressed, Blaise, but you're not good enough. No one can out power me! Lower your wand, and I shall go easy on you, my boy!"

Draco snatched the wand up from the floor and stood up. A fuzzy sensation traveled from his hand and to the pit of his stomach. He felt like... he was on some sort of drug. He felt like he could do anything in the world.

"Malfoy!" Blaise called for his attention.

Draco looked over to his friend, giving him a slight grin, an effect of the high he was on. He wondered why Blaise called him by his surname instead of his first.

"Watch out!" Blaise shouted.

The Dark Lord, seeing that Draco had possession of his wand, went and lunged after him. "Give me that, Draco."

Draco jumped back, startled, and as he did, a spell flew out of the wand, striking the Dark Lord right in the chest. He flew back into the wall behind Him, collapsing into a heap.

The Dark Lord's wand was then removed from Draco's hand, and it sailed right to Blaise who had disarmed him.

Blaise didn't even give Draco a glance, he pointed the stolen wand at the Dark Lord, watching Him struggle to get back on His feet.

"No, Blaise, don't!" Draco warned him, his self-preservation senses returning to him. Their Master was already angry enough, to attack him would only upset him further.

"You foolish children!" the Dark Lord spat. "You give me no choice! I'll have to do without you!" He went to raise his hand up to send an assault to Draco but was stopped by a spell.

"This is for my parents," Blaise said firmly, making the Dark Lord hiss in pain. "And this is for Sirius!" Another spell shot out of the wand, hitting the Dark Lord. Blaise attacked him over and over, weakening with every spell. Draco had never seen his master in such a state before, hunkered down in ball, defenseless. It was much like what His victims would look like in a torture session—Draco had been in that same position many of times.

As Blaise continued to attack Him, his skin grew lighter in colour, he shrunk a little in size, and Blaise's hair shortened, his voice got higher, until he wasn't even Blaise at all.

"And this," Potter said as tears cascaded down his cheeks, "is for Ron and Hermione!"

Then there was a flash of a burning, red light, and Draco's skin felt like it was on fire. He crawled as far away from it as he could, though it did him no good, it was just as hot on the opposite side of the room.

When the light was gone, the pain also went away. Draco stood up to assess the situation, somewhat dumbfounded on what had just happened, and how fast it had been done.

Potter had fallen to his knees, staring at where the Dark Lord had been at. The Dark Lord was no longer anything but a pile of dusty, dull ashes.

Severus was frozen against the wall, eyes wide as a doe.

And just like that, the Dark Lord was gone. Draco hadn't felt so free in years. It literally felt like someone had just released him from a mile long stretch of chains.

He looked down at his arm, seeing that the Dark Mark had already faded some. His pulse was still thrashing against his veins, but he was able to feel somewhat relieved just the same.

He was no longer a servant, now able to make decisions without the threat of getting brutally tortured and murdered.

And it felt absolutely amazing.

/

Hermione was getting tired. It had been five hours since her labour started, and she was barely even dilated.

"Where's Luna?" she demanded, having asked her for some chips of ice a while ago.

"In the kitchens," the Healer who was currently attending her said.

"Would you like something for the pain?"

"Not if it'll hurt my baby," Hermione told him, though she was contemplating it just the same.

"This one won't, My Lady," he assured her. "It'll go straight to the irritated nerves of your brain and numb them."

Hermione drew her head back, whimpering. "Okay!" she finally decided out of desperation. "Please make the pain stop!"

"There you go." He tapped her arm soothingly after she had drank what he had given her, seeing her relax.

Hermione sighed in absolute comfort. She smiled. "That's much better, thank you, Healer Danroj!"

"I couldn't bare to see you in such pain— not after all you have been through."

Hermione's eyes started to grow heavy. She yawned, noticing that the Healer was watching her every movement.

"What's wrong?" she asked, worriedly.

The Healer smiled softly. "Nothing at all, My Lady."

There was a crash outside of the room, and shouts followed it. With difficulty, Hermione sat up. "What's going on?!"

"Just lay back, and let the potion take over," he instructed without answering her question.

But the shouts grew louder. And there were screams. Hermione made to get out of the bed only to learn that she couldn't move her legs. "What—" She stopped, terrified of the grin that the man was displaying.

"Come now, everything is alright. No need to worry."

Hermione went to grab her wand, but the Healer beat her to it. "Oh, no you don't. You settle down and behave yourself," he ordered her without so much as a raise to his voice.

"What do you want?" Hermione asked as a flood of fear inched through her.

The Healer did not answer. Instead he placed a hand to Hermione's belly, caressing it.

"Help!" she screamed. "Someone help me, please!"

The door burst open, and Samuel ran in. He stopped in his tracks with wide eyes, fear frozen to his face.

"Hello again, little one." The Healer addressed the boy. He didn't give Samuel any time to respond, hitting him with a spell that he had casted wandlessly.

"No!" Hermione cried. "What did you do to him?! Please tell me you didn't—"

"*Relax...*" the Healer hushed her. "I've only put him into a slumber. That child is quite a handful, and I cannot not allow him hinder my plans."

"Now," he said, magically silencing her from saying anything more. "Let's find a more private place to have this baby, shall we? A war zone is no place for a child to take his first breath in."

/

"She has her!" Draco insisted. "I know she has her! You need to take me to her, *now!*"

Bernice helplessly shook her head. "You have to be invited before you can go to her headquarters."

"Then *invite* me!" he snarled.

"You must be invited by *her*, and her only."

Draco drug a hand through his hair. "So she has my wife and my unborn son, and I can't do anything about it?! How the hell did she even get in here?! My wards are ancient, and no one has been able to break them!"

"They're not broken," Longbottom informed, applying a leaf to a woman's knee. "They are perfectly intact."

"So it was someone from the inside who attacked us?!"

No one said anything to that, unable to speak against it.

"I'm *never* saving another one of your necks again!" Draco growled.

"Draco..." Bernice went to follow him but he spun around with an ugly look on his face.

"I'm warning you now: *don't*. If anything happens to my wife in the hands of that hag, you best not ever set foot in my sight again." The warning was dark, and it was serious.

"Now, now, *Lord Malfoy*," a woman spoke up. "You are misdirecting your anger."

Jordan began descending down from a case of stairs that Draco had intended to go up. He stiffened at the sight of her, extracting his wand, and shooting off a curse. "I'll kill you! Where is she?! What have you done to my wife?!"

Jordan chuckled after blocking an abundance of his attacks with a simple hand wave. "It is not their fault, they did everything accordingly, in which I shall have to handle them fittingly." She didn't have to look at anyone specific, but her statement made a few people nervously shift their stances behind Draco.

"You put blind faith in your servants, Draco, you mustn't do that."

"Blind faith? What do you mean?"

"T'wus me," a squeaky voice said. A body appeared between Draco and Jordan. "I'm sorry Master, but I love my Mistress, and Bobby is afraid of the deal you made. Bobby is afraid you will trick my Mistress. Bobby wants Mistress to be happy!"

"And you thought this *hag* would allow her happiness?! You foolish beast, I ought to—"

Draco's wand flew out of his hand, and Jordan caught it with a smirk. "Time to move forward. Bobby, let the others in."

Draco watched in horror as dozens of people started apparating into his Manor, taking over. A battle broke out instantly, glowing lights from spells could be seen, and screams and shouts erupted the room. Someone jumped onto Draco with the entire weight of their body, intending to tackle him to the ground.

"Thank you, Hanson, I'll handle Malfoy from here," Jordan told the man who was struggling with detaining Draco. She gripped a handful of Draco's hair, yanking his head back. The tip of her wand seared into the skin of his neck.

"Bitch," he spat, hissing in pain. "I'll kill you the first chance I get!"

"You will cooperate," she told him sweetly, pressing the wand deeper into his skin. "Else your ending fate will be amplified, and trust me when I say this, *Pure*, you do not want to anger me any further than you already have."

The True Motive

"Do you think I'm going to hurt you, Hermione?"

Hermione narrowed her eyes, tugging at the ropes that prevented her limbs from moving. The paralyzing potion had worn off now, and the pains of her childbearing had returned. The woman— Jordan— had told her that she could have nothing more to help with the pain.

"I'm not going to hurt you. You and your lovely child are safe here. You are one of us, Hermione."

"Untie me then!" Hermione demanded. "If you expect me to actually believe you, untie me!"

Jordan clicked her tongue disapprovingly. "I can't do that yet, my sister. First, we must build a trust—"

"You've abducted me—" Hermione gasped out as a severe, sharp pain came from her lower region. Hermione wailed, clenching her fists. "I cannot trust you after you've done this!"

"If Draco Malfoy can do it, so can I, and I will not even raise a fist as I do it."

"He— I—"

"It's alright, Hermione," she said soothingly, getting up to sit between her legs, checking on how the labour was coming along. "I understand that you did what you had to do. But you're free now."

"You have a fine way of showing it!" Hermione snapped. She took a deep breath and screamed in pain. It felt like someone was ripping her in two!

"In due time, you will learn that we are allies, not enemies. Now your baby is ready for you to push. Are you ready? He's coming right now."

Tears streamed down Hermione face. She feared for her baby's life, not knowing why this woman had taken her away from her home.

"You're doing good, Hermione," she said coaxingly, smiling with shining eyes.

Hermione ceased all movement. She refused to have this baby. Not if this mad-woman was going to take him away.

"Why did you stop?" Jordan asked. "Are you tired?"

"I'm not doing it," Hermione said firmly. "You're not getting him. He's mine."

Jordan's lips formed a sinister grin. "Oh, sweet, Hermione, of course he's yours. Did you think I was going to take him as my own?"

"Draco said that you—"

"Draco is no longer an issue, alright?"

"Did you..." Hermione pressed her eyes closed, letting out another scream. "Did you kill my husband?!" she asked when she had the chance.

Jordan gave her a sympathetic head shake. "He's not your husband anymore. You'll never have to worry about him again."

"You can't break the marriage—" Hermione paused, looking up at the hand that was tied at the side of her head.

The ring was gone.

"The Dark Lord is dead!" Jordan informed as if she was announcing the most greatest news of all time. "His ruling is over! Now we—the Muggleborns—are in control. And we are going to change the future. And it's all going to start with this child..." Jordan placed her hands between Hermione's legs as if she was about to receive a sports ball, and Hermione's pain instantly intensified. It felt like someone was pushing and pulling at the same time, stretching that general area to the max.

"Hermione, dear, it would be easier and much less painful if you delivered this baby on your own, but if you refuse to, I'll be forced to continue assisting—"

The agony was so horrid now that Hermione just about passed out. Then it dulled some again as the pulling force lightened.

"Your decision." Jordan's voice seemed so far away. Hermione couldn't see anything, she panted, cried, sweated, whimpered. "It's time to push, I'd rather you did it on your own accord; the effects won't be as severe, especially to your baby."

"Okay," Hermione said with a quivering cry, knowing she had no choice—the baby was coming with or without her help. "I'll do it..."

With all her might, she pushed as hard as she could, wanting the pain to finally be over and done with.

She fell back in complete exhaustion when she heard the first wail of her baby. And she broke out into sobs. "Please don't take him from me!" she desperately pleaded, absolutely afraid she'd never get to hear the sound of her baby ever again.

Jordan quickly cleaned up the baby, ignoring Hermione's pleas. And finally she looked down at Hermione, a massive smile on her face. "It's a girl, Hermione! The test must have been wrong!" she announced excitedly and walked around the bed, placing the swaddled newborn onto Hermione's chest. Hermione then felt the rope at her wrists release so that she could hold her daughter.

"Congratulations," Jordan said, kissing the baby's head as Hermione cried even harder, unable to believe that she was being allowed to touch her baby. "So, what's her name?"

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"I am not understanding why you have a problem with this all of a sudden."

Bernice shifted her feet nervously, looking down at the floor of her feet. "It's no different than what the Dark Lord was doing."

"It's quite different; I'm not forcing people to be with their perfect match, where he was."

"You're still holding people against their will. You're still torturing them. And that's besides the point of what you're doing to the children."

"Taking a little blood from them is not harmful in the slightest. Performing a few tests isn't going to hurt them either."

"It's wrong though. They are perfectly healthy, so I'm not sure why you would do it."

"Bernice, you know how I work; combining wizard and Muggle science has shown to be most effective. A little blood drawing is not hurting anyone—not if it can save other children along the way."

"But I don't think you're doing it for such reasons."

The friendliness dropped from Jordan's face right then. She stood up, placing both hands onto her desk. Leaning forward, she said, "And I do not think you should discuss this any further."

"But—"

"Tell me, Bernice..." Jordan opened a drawer and reached into it. "How much do you appreciate having your tongue?" she asked, placing a sparkling, clean knife onto the desk.

Bernice couldn't take her eyes off the weapon, acknowledging the threat. "I appreciate it a lot..."

"And your lips?"

Bernice nodded.

"Then I would suggest that you keep your beloved body parts out of my business. Am I clear?"

Bernice's throat had gone dry, and it felt like it had gotten smaller in size, having difficulties in swallowing. She couldn't speak, so she nodded again.

"Perfect!" Jordan said cheerfully, her friendly demeanor returning. "Go get the Granger child, and bring her to Examination Room 12B."

Grimly, Bernice left Jordan's office and went to go do as she had been ordered.

She would need to sneak down to the cellar when Jordan was busy and talk to Longbottom—if he was conscious enough to do it.

"Ah, little Eridanus Rose," Jordan said, peering over the baby that had been set onto a cushioned table. "Horrible name. Definitely a name that the *Pure* came up with. Granger has been absolutely brainwashed into doing everything he wishes, including naming her child to follow his family's tradition. We'll document this child as Dani Rose Granger, her birth name is a mouthful that I wish not to speak."

Bernice scribbled the baby's name at the top of her blank record.

Jordan held up a syringe, snatching a hold of an arm of Dani's. "Now Dani," she spoke softly. "You'll feel a tiny, little pinch."

Dani instantly broke out into tears as the needle was pushed into her skin, and her cries intensified when Jordan started extracting a vial of her blood.

Bernice bit her lip to keep herself in control. Her stomach felt ill.

"Dock a point," Jordan said, taping a label onto the vial that she had transferred the blood into "Her pain tolerance is limited. That'll have to be fixed."

"Let's test her sustainability." Jordan put on a thick winter jacket, instructing Bernice to do the same. The temperature in the room dropped suddenly, and Dani broke out into a screaming fit in discomfort. The baby's breath could be seen with each upset exhale she made.

"She's getting too cold," Bernice advised, looking at the monitor which displayed Dani's vitals. "We should turn the heat back on."

Jordan stared at the unhappy child, expecting Dani to do something. "Not yet."

"Jordan!"

"*Not* yet!"

"You'll *kill* her!"

Jordan lifted up her arm without taking her eyes off the baby, and Bernice was thrown across the room up against a wall, gagged with a sock.

"You can do it, Dani," she whispered encouragingly. "You come from powerful blood, you will be powerful too."

Bernice screamed behind her gag, begging Jordan to stop. She cried along with the child, not wanting for it to die, not wanting to *watch* it die.

And then Dani's wailing ceased. The temperature in the room increased at an alarming rate. Bernice felt as if she was baking in the coat she was wearing.

Jordan released Bernice from her spell. "Add ten points," she announced in satisfaction, picking up the baby and cooing at her. "I knew you could do it, Dani! I'm so *proud* if you! Let's take you back to mommy now, you've more than earned it!"

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Jordan's shoes tapped against the cement floor beneath her. She crossed the dank room, stopping at Malfoy's body. His eyes spewed hate, and if his mouth wasn't sealed shut with a thick strap of leather that was magically stuck to him, he would be hurling ugly threats at her.

"For a Death Eater, you are a lively fellow. I have met lots of them in my time too; your confidence is incredibly strong." She stepped up close to him, feeling the heat of his naked body against her.

He was covered in goosebumps, shivering from the chill of the stone wall against his bare back. He had more straps of her specially manufactured leather which acted very much like the collars that the Dark Lord had put on his prisoners. They were around his wrists, pinning them above his head, around his ankles, spreading his legs shoulder-width apart, and one was around his neck.

Jordan found it appropriate for her prisoners to go through the same thing that their victims had.

She brushed her thumb over a rash that had occurred during his struggles, wiping away the hideous ooz at his neck. "You are just as stubborn as she is," Jordan told him, pushing herself away from him and walking over to a large metal trunk. "Granger's doing excellent without you, by the way. Soon she will forget all about you. I know what you did to her mind, a brilliant tactic, I must admit, but I half expected it." She pulled out a power tool from the box, checking to see if the battery still was working, and then she took out a tiny case of accessories to the tool. "I can work around what you have done though."

"I've seen it all, Draco," she continued, selectively choosing just the right accessory for the upcoming job. "I was a servant of the Dark Lord for years, studying his every move, gaining his complete trust. I knew his strengths and weaknesses. I know his *followers* strengths and weaknesses..." She turned back around and pressed the button to the tool. A grin formed to her face, widening at the delightful sound of machinery.

"Those who come from thick lines of magic fear a lot of things. Physical things. Noisy things. Sharp things. And most importantly... *Muggle* things."

Malfoy's eyes didn't grow in fear like she had hoped they would. Jordan had watched this man grow from a boy, and in just the last year, his will power had gotten stronger. No doubt, somehow it had to be because of Granger.

She curled her lip up in disgust. He actually did have feelings for the woman...!

Well, he was going to learn who was in control, and then she'd kill him when he fulfilled his usefulness to her.

She set down the hand drill, summoning up a syringe. "I need to collect some of your excretion." Jordan positioned herself for the task, slightly bending down to get a good look at his genitals. "Muggles would normally give you a magazine and a cup, but I'm not so... *generous* when it comes hateful Pures like yourself." Her eyebrows rose up and with a giggle she jammed the needle into him, making him yell behind the strap around his mouth. He thrashed his body in a hopeless attempt at breaking free.

"It's quite painful, isn't it?" Jordan set a hand onto his shoulder, softly caressing his skin with the tips of her fingers. "But I just knew you wouldn't do it on your own accord, am I right? And I'll agree with the Dark Lord here: you and Granger produce such fine examples of children. Only this time, Granger won't be put through such trauma—you on the other hand..." Jordan purposely wiggled the needle, inflicting more pain. "You quite earned it."

"Now," she said, capping of the syringe of semen and sending it off to her lab. "I need a pint of your blood." Here she picked up the drill. "You may want to close your eyes; this won't be a pretty sight."

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She now had blood from all the Muggleborns, Pures, and their newly born babies, having the exact type she needed. It took years of sucking up to the Dark Lord, knowing he would eventually succeed in His ruling, but it had taken a few more to develop her own society to overpower Him. She needed the Pure males to be paired off with the Muggleborn females all along, but Jordan had been too weak to enforce it herself. Now though, she was in complete control. She had five strong Pureblood men and four times that many powerful Muggleborn witches.

It was a good start to breeding the halfbloods she needed to survive.

The one halfblood who she was anticipating the most was the Malfoy/Granger daughter. Dani had outscored her fellow newborns who had been put through the same stress tests (one child had actually died, but with it being sired by the Goyle Pure, Jordan didn't have much faith in the child anyway).

Jordan popped off the cork to the vial of Dani's blood. "Dani, oh sweet Dani..." she murmured, sniffing it. She sipped the blood, swishing it around her mouth, giving it a taste. When she swallowed it, she felt a wave of power rush throughout her. Her muscles no longer felt so weak, and her pulse slowed, relaxing her.

Jordan took a deep, shuddering breath, finally feeling rejuvenated again. "I've been waiting for a child like you, Dani..."

Save Us, Save Us All

"Harry?" Bernice's call echoed over the foyer of Malfoy Manor. "Are you here?"

The place was immaculate, not looking like a war had just broken out four days before. The house-elves must have fixed it up as soon as Jordan won and had her prisoners carried off.

"Is the Master okay?" A tiny voice asked. It belonged to a house-elf who Bernice had trouble telling apart from another who looked identical to it. Its name was going to be Tooley or Soapy.

"No," Bernice informed as several other elves appeared around her. "He's in serious trouble. Do you know where Harry Potter is? I really need to speak with him."

She earned a unison of head shakes. "Everyone is gone. Bobby ruined everything..." one of them announced sadly.

"Is my mistress okay?"

"Physically..." Bernice answered simply. "There's still hope though, if I can gather up the rebels who Jordan thought to be useless."

She had ignored the Halfbloods completely other than when it came to winning the battle. So many had been left behind. She didn't want Halfbloods, she didn't need them for her plans. Jordan had only come for the Pures and the Muggleborns.

Bernice guessed that Jordan thought she was safe at her headquarters because no one could go there unless they had been invited. This meant that everyone she had captured couldn't be rescued.

At least not by an outsider, but there were plenty of people on the inside who could escape on their own with a little help.

"What do you want *him* for?" Severus Snape asked in a cool drawl.

"We need a new safe place."

"So you can round us all up and have her attack again?"

"That wasn't my doing. I'm against her, I swear on my child's life."

The man's eyes dropped to her large belly. "You need a safe place to home the child..." he summarized after a long thought.

Bernice nodded. "This baby is mine. I don't care if he was bred out of wedlock or for demented genocide reasons, I want him. And like hell if I'm going to let her put my son through a bunch of tests that could very much kill him!"

Severus stared at her for a few moments, taking in what she had just said. He then whipped around with a snap of his robes and began walking out of the foyer. "Keep up, witch, if you want to see your boyfriend."

Bernice's chest thudded with a bit of hope before she hurried after him. "Wait! A whale can only go so fast!"

He was decent enough to slow down for her, leading her up to Draco's office. Bernice had been here before. There was a bookcase that flipped around if the correct spell was used, opening up an entrance to a tunnel.

"The same place?" Bernice questioned warily.

"I really appreciate the lack of confidence you have for my intelligence." He was insulted.

"Sorry...?" Bernice really didn't care how he felt.

"Your hand," he instructed, putting up his palm for her to set her own on. She did as she was told, and he tapped her hand with his wand. A shape in the form of a lightening bolt appeared on the back of her hand. She took a second to admire it; no doubt it was to represent Harry.

"Now you may step in," Severus permitted, gesturing her to follow him through the tunnel.

"What if I hadn't had this mark, and I came in through here?"

"You would have dropped dead," he told her dryly.

"So if the others—"

"They wouldn't deserve to breathe if they are dumb enough to return to the same place that was used before an ambush."

"That's a terrible thing to say!"

"I never once made a promise that I speak words of silk. Perhaps that is your mistake to assume."

Bernice rolled her eyes and decided to walk the rest of the way in silence. Severus was impossible to talk with.

By experience, she knew it would be a two hour walk, but it was the only way to get to their destination.

/

"Bobby has made a horrid mistake, Mistress! Bobby only did it out of love!"

Hermione had her hands on her hips, giving the house-elf a disapprovingly look. "Bobby, if you expect to be treated like a person, you can't go ratting them out to their enemy! It's very bad! There's one thing I hate most, and that's traitors!"

"But Bobby is no traitor, Mistress!" The elf got onto her knees, begging for forgiveness.
"Bobby does it to protect you! Traitors won't do that!"

"And that was not your job!"

"Oh, Mistress, you do not know the Master like I do. He was faking a lot of the things!"

Hermione gasped out in surprise. She had never heard Draco's elves speak out against him and accuse him of such a thing. "You're mistaken!"

"His tears were not real, and neither was the bruises he said his master gave him. And Mistress...! He did other things too!"

"Like what?" she demanded, somewhat curious, somewhat annoyed with Bobby for going so far with her accusations.

"Bobby shouldn't say; it'll hurt her Mistress too much!"

"*What did he do, Bobby?*" Hermione asked slowly, needing to know.

Bobby trembled and shook her head. "Bobby can't say, cause Master needs saving! Mistress will not save Master if she knows what he has done!"

"How can I even save him?" she asked helplessly, leaning against the door, looking at her sleeping daughter. Jordan had locked her up in what looked like a hotel room, complete with a kitchen. It was full of supplies for herself and the baby.

She was no longer being tied up as Jordan said she couldn't care for a baby like that, but she still was being held prisoner.

"I don't even have a wand...!" Jordan couldn't trust her with one yet.

Yet.

That's what that crazy woman had said.

Yet.

She really expected Hermione to accept her.

Then again, maybe Hermione would... she had accepted Draco...

Hermione shook her head abruptly. That situation was different. Draco had also been a victim. He hadn't been the predator. He had been stuck in an awful predicament just like she had, and they learned to work together rather than against each other.

This was different though. Jordan was an absolute psycho. Jordan had a plan, and Hermione knew it had something to do with Rosie, and Hermione was going to protect her daughter from whatever it was. She needed to escape this place, but she had no idea how to even begin to do it.

/

"Are you *sure*?" Harry asked with worry. "This is different than anything I have ever done. I'm not too certain that I can pull this off."

"I know you can," Bernice told him, squeezing his hand. "I'll tell you everything you need to know, and then you can save them all."

He eyed her bulging belly over, thinking on her plan. "It's going to be challenging, given how big—"

Bernice scoffed. "You'll know better not to finish that sentence!"

"I believe it is a fair idea—if you trust her as much as you say." Severus had been present throughout the entire conversation the couple had been having, not quite trusting of Bernice yet, insisting that he stay. He had guilted Harry into it, stating the fact of all the lives that had been sacrificed for Harry's life.

"I do," Harry said firmly, making the woman's chest stir with emotions.

"How shall I join you?" Severus asked. "Have you thought of that?" he directed that at Bernice.

"You're not going," Harry announced.

"Excuse me; *what...?*"

"I would like you to stay here and make sure Bernice has everything she needs."

Severus blinked. Though he did not show it, Bernice assumed that he was surprised that Harry had given him an order.

"I will not, Potter!" the man finally spat. "I am not some *house elf*—"

"Right now, you're the only man around who I trust to help her," Harry cut him off seriously. "Would you? *Please*? I would have Remus do it, but Tonks is expecting their second."

Severus's mouth sat at an open gap before he shut it. He clamped his teeth together, clearly annoyed. He sent Bernice an ugly scowl and nodded slowly, accepting the responsibility that Harry had bestowed upon him.

"She better be worth it, boy," he growled lowly.

/

"Bobby, do you know where Jordan has stored my wand?"

Bobby looked up from the wiggling baby with widening eyes. "I do, Mistress! I do! Shall I go get it?!"

"Yes, please, but be quiet about it! If you really want to save us, you need to know how important this is, alright?"

The elf bowed low. "Bobby will do my best!"

Hermione paced the room with her daughter in her arms, waiting for Bobby's return. She began to worry after thirty minutes passed when the elf hadn't come back.

She sighed in relief, hearing the faint crack of Bobby's arrival with an armful of wands. "I'm sorry, Mistress, but Bobby doesn't know which one is the right one!" She looked ready to cry, feeling like a failure.

"It's okay," Hermione assured her, setting Rosie into the cot to free her hands. "You did great!" She spotted hers quickly. "Here's mine!" She used a pillowcase to store the rest in, assuming one of them may belong to Draco. Together, maybe they could free the rest of the people who were captives.

She shrunk the pillowcase, stuffing it into her shirt. "Do you know where Draco is?" Hermione suddenly asked, realizing just then that if Bobby didn't her plan could easily be fouled up.

"Oh, yes, Mistress, Bobby does!"

Hermione nodded approvingly, picking up her infant daughter. "Would you take me to him please?"

Bobby took no time at all to grab a hold of Hermione's hand and apparate to wherever her husband was being held.

Hermione gasped at the sight of Draco's condition. His head hung low from where he was being pinned to the wall with bindings. His skin she had never seen so pale before. And he was literally in the nude, shivering from the chill of the room. Draco's left thigh was also wrapped with a thick bandage that had once been white but now was soaked with fresh blood.

"Oh, Draco..." she breathed out in horror, approaching him, getting a better look at his wound. "What has she done to you...?"

He lifted his head with a moan, and Hermione saw that his mouth was covered so he couldn't talk. She tried to remove the strap, but her efforts were useless.

"Bobby has heard that Jordan removes the bindings with blood," Bobby spoke up from behind Hermione.

"Any specific type?"

Draco made a noise, attempting to provide the answer, though Hermione didn't understand what he was trying to say.

"She uses her own blood," Bobby supplied.

Hermione thought on it a little before handing Rosie to the house elf. She took a deep breath and with a magical spell, she made a slit into her finger, wincing at the stinging pain. She then traced her injured finger along the binding around Draco's mouth, leaving behind a trail of blood.

The strap fell off, landing at the ground between them.

"Thank Merlin you're here," he struggled to said, coughing through every other word. "We must get out of here!"

Hermione hastily released him from the rest of the horrible straps, learning that they had been made of some poison. Her stomach flipped with queasiness, remembering something like this had happened to her nearly a year ago.

"You need to see Snape," she advised him, transfiguring a hammer into a set of robes for him to wear.

"We need to get the fuck out of here first—" His eyes settled on the baby after hearing her fuss.

"This is Eridanus Rose; our daughter," Hermione introduced to him, taking the child back from Bobby and holding her up for Draco. He gave her a confused look, but carefully took the baby into his arms, eyeing their daughter over. "I call her Rosie though." Hermione didn't address his confusion, hoping that having a daughter wouldn't change his mind on wanting to be the child's father.

The corner of Draco's lips pulled to the side of his face, displaying a weak grin. "I think she makes a perfect Rosie," he assessed hoarsely, emotionally affected.

"You alright?" he abruptly asked, their moment of merriment gone as reality sank back into their minds.

Hermione nodded. "She did a number on you, didn't she?" She took out the shrunken pillowcase and enlarged it. "See if your wand is in here," she instructed him.

With one hand, determined to keep a hold of Rosie, Draco shuffled through the wands until he found his own, gripping it tightly. "Let's get out of here."

They looked up just in time hear the door to the cell room shut, stiffening at the sight of the evil Jordan's presence.

"Hermione..." She pouted, disappointed. "You have been very naughty."

"Leave her alone!" Draco growled, stepping forward and letting out a yelp while doing so. He leaned to one side, favouring his injured leg.

"My, my, such bravery coming from a Slytherin. Very rare indeed." Jordan grinned. "But it will be a waste of your time, as much as I admire it." Her eyes focused back to Hermione. "What are you doing out of your room?"

"I'm going home, and I'm taking my family with me!"

Jordan laughed. "Draco is not your family, Hermione. He is nothing but a semen donor, having little use beyond that." She glanced at the man, sneering at him.

"You've upset me, my sweet sister. You must learn not to do that. You shall have to be punished." Jordan lifted up her arm, extending it straight out in front of her and curled her fingers. Rosie began to cry in a curdling scream.

"What's she doing?!" Draco panicked, pressing the child to his chest, looking up in horror. "She's hurting Rosie!"

Hermione raised her wand and sent an attack to Jordan who lazily blocked it, cackling.

"Stop it!" Hermione shouted. "Stop hurting my baby, you horrid witch!"

"You can't beat me, Hermione. Give it up. Surrendering is the only way to get me to stop."

"Leave my Mistress's baby alone!" Bobby went to attack, but Jordan swung up her free arm, easily sending Bobby crashing to the wall. The house elf was still. Hermione didn't know if she was dead or alive.

"Who's next?" Jordan asked, giggling in triumphant.

"You can't have us," Draco told her firmly. "I'll kill you before I let you destroy my family!"

"Or perhaps, I'll kill *you*."

Hermione stepped in front of her husband and child, breaking off the spell Jordan had on Rosie. "Take Rosie and Bobby home, Draco," she said quietly with a threat to her voice. "This bitch is going down."

Draco didn't get a chance to argue before spells went flying back and forth, both women fighting to the death.

Moving On

Draco backed away from the women, using his wand to block straying spells, shielding he and his daughter from harm.

They paid him no attention, intent on ending the battle with only one winner in mind. Draco had seen plenty of battles in his lifetime, but none that held such *passion*. Their form was spot on, their power was strong, and neither looked away from her opponent. Sweat formed right under their hairlines and slowly streaked down their faces; they didn't notice.

Draco didn't realize he had backed up to the door until he had bumped into it. He opened it up, making his escape, determined to keep his daughter safe from that horrible hag.

"Malfoy!"

Draco forced his eyes from the scene to see Bernice hurrying up, wand in her hand.

"Get out of here!" he demanded. "And take Rosie with you!" Draco shoved the baby into Bernice's arms, not permitting her to argue.

"Wait, what—"

"Just get the baby out of here! Jordan's about to kill Hermione!"

Draco didn't get to see the woman's eyes widen in horror. He flung a spell out, blocking a deadly attack aimed at Hermione.

Jordan went to retaliate, but Draco dodged the spell she sent flying at him.

He quickly found out that the hag was a tough opponent—quick and powerful. He was soon ripped backward right off his feet, and his head slammed into the ground. All he could hear was a ringing in his ears. His eyes grew droopy, but he willed himself not to go unconscious, knowing Hermione needed his help, knowing that if Jordan won, they'd all be dead.

Draco attempted to climb up to his knees but found that he couldn't move his legs at all. They hurt, they throbbed in absolute pain. Perhaps they were broken, whatever the reason for the pain, he did not know, he dared not to look at them, fearing the worst. He was afraid they weren't even there.

Draco breathed hard and deep, determined to end the hag's life. He was too weak though, and no matter how hard he tried, his wand would not erupt with a spell.

He lifted up his heavy head, suddenly feeling a rough vibration underneath him. What he saw confused him. Jordan was no longer fighting Hermione. Hermione was actually nowhere in sight. Instead, there was a fire-breathing dragon crashing toward a panicking Jordan whose spells appeared to have no effect on the it. Jordan was forced into a corner.

Red, orange, and yellow blurred into Draco's vision. The heat from the massive fire that the dragon discharged was unbearable. He screamed out in pain, though he could not hear himself doing it, still deaf from the blow to his head.

He was snapped up from his place at the ground and thrown over a man's shoulder. After that, Draco could no longer stay conscious, the agony being that severe.

/

"Where's Rosie?!" Hermione cried out frantically, setting Bobby down onto a bench in Malfoy Manor. "Where's my baby?!"

She had asked no one in particular, but there were several people there, having been in the process of rescuing others or being rescued.

"We can't go back," someone informed just after apparating in. "It's no longer a location, the fire has destroyed the building completely."

"Did everyone make it out?" another asked, as Hermione scanned the crowd feverishly, looking for her daughter. A group of house elves had formed around her, pestering her with questions and attempting to heal her of her wounds.

"I don't think so..."

"WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?!" Hermione screamed hysterically, tears running down her face.

"She's here," a man announced. "I've got her. She's safe, Hermione."

He emerged from the crowd, and Hermione's breathing stopped all together, seeing Harry, her dead friend holding her child.

"Who— What—"

"It's really him," Draco's voice said. He was sitting on a bench, his lower legs wrapped in bandages, and a few elves were tending to him.

Hermione remembered the gory curse that Jordan had cut him with. She was surprised to learn that his legs were still attached to his body.

"We survived," Harry said flatly, approaching Hermione and hugging her. "We survived," he whispered, repeating it to ease her mind.

She wrung her arms around him, shuddering with emotion, not exactly knowing what she was currently feeling. Everything just seemed to flood in all at once: happiness, relief, confusion, and devastation. All of it.

She broke down, crying right into the arms of the friend who she believed to have been dead for years.

It was all she could possibly do at the moment, after everything that had happened.

/

"We had a deal."

"You're free, the vow hasn't been broken, else I would be dead."

"And what about my wife?!"

Potter sighed, running a hand down his face. "She needs some time to think. She's been through a lot the last few years, and this last one was likely her worst. The deal was you could continue to be her husband *if she willingly agreed to it.*"

"Well, she's living with *you!*" Draco spat, frustrated that he hadn't seen his wife nor child for two days. He had been *forbidden* to see them. No one would tell him where they were!

"You're probably *brainwashing* her!?"

"I'm doing no such thing, and I haven't even thought to do it. She's not herself right now, many of us aren't. We're not like you, able to ignore grief like it's nothing."

"You think I don't grieve?" Draco seethed, speaking quietly through his teeth, his veins thrashing with anger. "You think I just turned my nose up when your bloody side murdered my parents in cold blood?!"

"The Rebels had nothing to do with your parents' death," Potter explained calmly.

"They were in *your* prison!"

"No, that's just what the papers said, it was actually Voldemort who set up their deaths. He knew you would fight for vengeance if you thought we had killed them."

"You're a bloody liar!"

"You think he wasn't capable of such a thing?" Potter retorted bluntly. "I was connected to his mind, Malfoy, I knew what he was planning every step of the way."

"So why did it take you *three* years to get rid of him?!"

"It nearly killed me to know what was going on with my friends and the other innocent people who were involved, but if we attacked too early, it would have been a waste. It took me a while to understand strategic thinking, and we should all be thankful that those who helped me didn't give up on me. Without their help, I would have never been able to kill him."

Draco said nothing, stewing on Potter's words. What he had said made sense, but the idea that the Dark Lord had orchestrated the death of his parents made him sick to his stomach. His knees began to wobble, and he sat down in a chair to avoid from losing his balance.

"All that I did was because of what *they* had wanted of me... My parents supported the Dark Lord's idealism, and he rewards them by murdering them... just to make *me* fight stronger?"

"You sound surprised."

"I've been... *violated*. Manipulated. I was made to believe that I was doing this all to follow the tradition of my family, only to have them taken from me by the very same side that I was on. So much for '*sticking together*'."

I'm not surprised though, I'm just angry that I didn't see it... I'm angry that I don't have my family here with me anymore, and I'm upset that I chose that side to begin with." He quickly dabbed at the corner of his eye, not wanting Potter to see the tear that had slipped its way out.

"I know you love her."

Draco looked up, studying Potter. The man wasn't facing him, but his stance was rigid.

"You wouldn't have risked your life to help her if you didn't..."

"Is that why you saved me from the fire; I helped her?"

"Partially," he answered. "But you know me..." Potter turned around, meeting his eyes. "*Saint Potter! Must save everyone! Even if they don't deserve to breathe!*" He was mocking Draco, or at least he was *trying* to.

"I do *not* sound like that!"

Potter chuckled. "You most certainly do."

/

It had seemed like forever since Hermione had felt safe and comfortable, surrounded by people she knew as a teenager. Luna, Neville, the surviving Weasleys (Arthur, George, Charlie, and Ginny), and Harry himself.

They didn't talk much, most of the time they sat in silence, and occasionally, someone would say something lighthearted to bring up the mood.

It was incredibly difficult though, given all that they had been through.

But they didn't speak about the war, having some non-verbal agreement throughout the group not to talk about it. They all knew they would have to eventually, but for the time being, they wanted a few days of not having to.

No one questioned Hermione about anything, and she didn't question them.

But she was thinking of her future, and they were thinking of theirs. After living in terror for years, they were momentarily lost of what to do.

So they did nothing.

And they did nothing for a month except comfort one another's cries, because even the men would wake up in a hysteria.

But Hermione knew this couldn't go on forever. The world was going to keep turning with or without them, and now that they were all free, it would only make sense if they at least tried to enjoy it.

Their family and friends didn't die and sacrifice their lives just for them to mope around for the rest of their lives.

"I'm going to see Draco today," she announced to the group of people who showed up for breakfast (many were so depressed that they were hardly even eating).

She got all of their attention. A lot of those who were eating were mothers like herself who had been forced to have a Death Eater's child, and were only eating for the sole purpose of keeping their babies alive.

"Would you like someone to go with you?" Bernice asked.

Hermione shook her head. "He tried saving my life, I don't think he's going to harm me."

"Just the same—"

"I'll be fine," Hermione cut off Harry, sending him a smile. "I really appreciate your concern though."

She watched Harry and Snape exchange glances, and Snape got up from the table, excusing himself.

They all went back to their meals, struggling with swallowing down the nourishment.

Several hours later, after Rosie had been bathed, fed, changed, and they each had a nap, Hermione apparated she and the baby to Malfoy Manor.

Her insides were going wild, not knowing what to expect, having ignored letter after letter from Draco, each filled with promises that he loved her, and he would never hurt her again, and that her blood status didn't matter at all to him.

She wasn't even sure what *she* wanted, but Draco pleaded to see Rosie, and she couldn't come up with a reason why he shouldn't. He was her father after all.

"D-Draco?" she called out anxiously when she had landed. Several elves surrounded her, a thing she was accustomed to, having had to deal with it for the past year. Bobby was staying with her, insisting that she had been shunned from returning to the Manor after what she had done, but the rest felt like they belonged here at the Manor with Draco.

He appeared just as soon as her call for him ended, and they silently stared at each other.

"How are your injuries?"

Draco rubbed at his arms where there once had been severe burns. They looked untouched now.

"Gone," he answered. "Though, I know not to mess with the people you care about."

"I still don't know how that happened. I don't even remember... I mean... me transforming into a *dragon*? It's not *illogical*, but I never thought that I could ever let my magic overpower me."

"At least it had a great outcome."

"A few people died...! *Innocent* people... in a fire that *I* started! That's not a great thing!"

"With how insane she was, they were probably going to die anyway."

"That doesn't make it an excuse! *I* caused people to *die*!"

Draco's eyes fell down to his feet, and nodded slowly. "Right... well, like you said, you didn't even know what was happening..."

"Well, now I do, and I'm going to seek help, because I don't ever want to do something like that again..."

"I'm going to seek help too."

"You are?" Hermione asked. "What for?"

"I want to make sure that I never hurt another person for as long as I live. I don't want to be that kind of man, I honestly never did. Besides, I'm a father now, I have to set a good example... and I... well, I'm still your husband, if you'd allow me to be."

Hermione sucked in a breath. "I'm not—I can't..."

His lips twitched. "I don't blame you, I was an awful man..."

"I just don't... *love* you. And I believe in marrying the person you love."

He nodded slowly, looking crushed. Draco blinked, and his eyes fell down to the squirming bundle in Hermione's arms.

"Would you allow me to court you then?"

"Court? As in date?"

"You *are* the mother of my child, Hermione. Maybe... Well, I was thinking if we take it slow, and have a proper relationship, perhaps you'll change your mind later on down the road...?"

"I'll think about it," Hermione decided, not at all interested in making the decision at this moment.

"And I'll patiently wait for your answer." He slowly walked up to her, eyes on the baby.
"Would you mind if I held my daughter?"

Hermione took no time at all to hold out the baby to him. "You're going to make a great father, Draco."

"I intend to do my best."

Hermione saw something black out of the corner of her eye, barely catching Snape's figure slip pass the door.

She smiled at the thought of him being sent by Harry to assure that she was safe. Though, she'd have to remind her friend that she liked her privacy.

/

"And you're *sure* Mr. Blaise is gone forever? We never have to worry about him again?"

"We're certain," Hermione assured Samuel. Unfortunate for him, he had not made it out of the fire.

Samuel smiled, tucking himself deeper in between the two women he considered his mothers. "Good, cause I like Harry Potter much better, and he even said I can call him my dad if I wanted, and I do!"

Bernice laughed softly. "We like him too!"

"And I'm still Franklin's big brother?" he asked about Bernice's son.

"You are, nothing will ever change that," Bernice said.

"Can I be Rosie's too?" he directed at Hermione.

"I would want none other."

"Do I have to decide who I live with...?"

"Not right now, no," Bernice said. "We just want to make sure you know that you get to choose when the time comes."

The boy frowned thoughtfully. "But I like you the same, and I want to live with you both."

"And for now, that is not a problem," Hermione explained. "But I can't live with Bernice and Harry forever, I'm going to get my own place eventually."

"Can I live with you both at different times; sometimes with Bernice, and sometimes with Hermione?"

Bernice hugged the boy and kissed his head. "I don't see a problem with that."

"Then it's settled!" he announced, kissing them each on their cheek. "I'll take turns!"

/

It was after Rosie had turned five before Hermione finally gave Draco a chance. Up until that day, she had been with a few men off and on. Men who Draco envied. Men who Draco *hated* seeing her with.

He and Hermione had gotten into fights over these men too. He would say something stupid, often letting his emotions escape, and it would make her angry.

"*You don't own me, Draco!*"

Her statement would instantly remind him that she was right, and he would hastily apologize for his behavior.

Draco didn't deserve Hermione, but he certainly wasn't comfortable with another man around his woman and daughter.

When Hermione had finally said it, Draco honestly thought he had misheard. He had been waiting five years for this, so he never expected her to say it anymore—though he still tried his best to 'woo' her, which was extremely challenging, since he had no idea how to do it—he never had to in his entire life.

"Excuse me; what?"

"I asked you if you still wanted to date me."

Even though he was in absolute shock, his heart began to pound with hope. "Well, yes, of course I do," he answered, trying to keep his cool. He grabbed her hand, squeezing it. "I would love to date you. I've been waiting years for you to ask me that."

"As long you take it slow," she told him firmly. "I'm not the type of girl who climbs into bed with men on the first date."

"I know," he said smiling. "We'll do everything at your pace."

She nodded and went to say something but was stopped by a high pitched squeal.

"Mumma said yes?!" Rosie had entered the room, seeing their hands linked. She ran up to them, a huge, excited smile on her face.

Draco swung Rosie up into his arms. "She did!"

The girl cheered, hugging him tightly. "No more pretend daddies!"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "I figured I had no chance with the two of you working against me!"

"We are the perfect team," Rosie said. "And now you're with us too, Mumma!"

Draco smiled, guilt written all over his face, and Hermione sighed, kissing the girl's cheek.
"You're very much like your father, you don't give up on what you want."

"I know," Rosie said in a matter-of-fact.

"And she's proud of it," Draco chimed, making Rosie nod wildly.

"Yes, I am!"

/

It had been almost a decade since Hermione last set foot at this particular location. The work was unfinished. Draco had told her that he never so much as taken a peek at what Hermione had done, keeping his promise not to until it was completed.

Hermione eyed it over, thinking of a time when her life was stuck under a dark, stormy cloud. A time when she thought she'd never be happy again.

The marriage spell she had been on had no affect on her artistic work. It was a good thing that she hadn't finished her garden piece, Draco would have been displeased with it. Or at least Draco back ten years ago would have; Draco the Death Eater.

She honestly didn't remember crafting the holographic image of herself killing the holographic image of Draco in absolute cold blood, one brutal stabbing at a time as magical blood spurt out of his wounds.

Those days were over. Shadows of their past still haunted the both of them, but each had changed, and Draco was not who he used to be. She didn't recognize him anymore as the man in her past who she had an occasional nightmare of.

Sleeping beside him was still hard to do though. She'd wake up every so often, seeing his blonde hair, thinking the worst, confused by some recent nightmare. But then he would wake up during her fit, and she would see the kindness in his eyes, and Hermione would ask him to hold her close until she fell asleep again.

It took three years of dating before she realized that she had indeed fallen for him. Maybe it was because he tried and succeeded. Perhaps it was because he made a terrific father. It may have been his devotion to her, spending everyday of his life making it up to her, wanting nothing more than her happiness. It could have been everything combined.

Whatever it was, she felt, after all the mess they had been through, they deserved each other, and she asked him to marry her only just a month ago.

Hermione raised her wand, erasing the gruesome holographic scene and began making a new one, starting with roses. First of black, to indicate their horrific past, then of yellow, for their once blossoming friendship, pink for their childish romance after they had started dating, and finally red for the love that they had made.

She bordered her garden piece with assorted berry bushes—a favourite fruit of Rosie's—and set up a swing under a weeping willow. The small family would playfully fight over the one

that Draco had made for Rosie in the immediate backyard of the Manor.

Finally, she added a small, crisp pond, adoring the aquatic sounds of the frogs, crickets, and the rare splash of a fish leaping up to catch an insect.

Her husband would cherish this garden piece, and she was happy to be able to start a tradition of happy lives in the Malfoy line.

Merlin knew there had been a bitter past in their ancestry, and thanks to both Draco and Hermione, that was going to change.

AN: I had planned on a much darker ending, but this is what came out instead.

***shrugs** I had some 'deleted scenes' I wanted to include, and now I can't find them.*

***sigh** Oh, well!*

Thanks for reading my story, I hope you enjoyed it!

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