

Squirm

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/8432656) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/8432656>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence , Rape/Non-Con
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationship:	Hermione Granger/Draco Malfoy
Characters:	Hermione Granger , Draco Malfoy
Additional Tags:	Dark , Dark Draco Malfoy , Horror , Halloween , Rape/Non-con Elements , Scary , Male Solo , Obsession , Secrets , Mystery , Lemon , Office Sex , Murder , Violence , graphic vio , Non-Consensual Oral Sex
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2016-10-31 Completed: 2017-03-20 Words: 60,598 Chapters: 28/28

Squirm

by [MrBenzedrine89](#)

Summary

Written for Halloween, 2016. Dramione. Rated M for non-con themes, as well as implied horror. TRIGGER WARNING. Draco Malfoy falls into a strange obsession with Hermione Granger. But it's a risk -he holds a dark, sinister secret, and if he becomes too close, she just might find out what it is. Dark Fic. COMPLETE. **WINNER: Best WIP 2017 Winter Dramione Awards**

Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

Official as of 01-31-2017 ****WINNER: Best WIP 2017 Winter Dramione Awards****

Hey, all! I wanted to give yall something horrific for Halloween. I will probably expand this bit of drabble later, when I have the time. But, here we are!

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter, and I do not plan to make a profit from this story.

Rated: M for non-con themes, as well as implied horror.

Written for Halloween, 2016.

Title: Squirm

Pairing: Draco/Hermione

Summary: Horror drabble written for Halloween, 2016. Will expand. Dramione. Rated M for non-con themes, as well as implied horror. Draco Malfoy has Hermione Granger bound to a table. Fear to follow.

TRIGGER WARNING: non-con theme. If that is a trigger for you, please click the back button. :) I do not want to upset anyone. But, if you're in the mood for a short horror, have fun!

~A.

 **Image may contain: 1 person, text**

 **Image may contain: coffee cup and text**

I've never been one inclined to speak to my victims -at least, not on a personal level. But tonight, her oversized earth-toned eyes, filled with tears, glisten back at me with such tenacity, I'm moved to words as she struggles against her wrist bindings. They're simple silk straps, tethered tight around her wrists, but the way she wriggles against them stirs a primal need in me to establish dominance. Hermione Granger has never been -will never be - submissive.

"Struggle all you like. I dare say I rather enjoy watching you squirm, mudblood."

She inhales through her nose, poised to answer, but she soon realizes it's all for naught; not only is there a silencing spell placed inside that gloriously slender throat, but a simple, silk

strip of cloth also graces between those lush lips. It's aesthetically pleasing, somehow, to know what sort of position she's in. Soon, she figures it out, too. Her eyes skitter down the metal operating table she's bound to, captured by a leather strap across her shoulders and the dip in her stomach. Her legs thrash, free to the world and to me. Big mistake, however, because it only exposes what lies beneath that tantalizing skirt. No panties. Those were removed long ago, before we ever made it to this room.

Granger flails frantically, more tears spilling down her dirty, dirty cheeks. I smirk, taking my time, allowing her to watch my slender fingers trail over the array of various medical equipments I possess. Ones with blades, ones with needles, ones that look seemingly safe but are anything of the sort. It dawns on her what I plan to do when I pick up my personal favorite -a serrated knife with a crescent-shaped, white-bone handle just as sharp as the blade.

"Shh." I flash her a wink, taunting her even though I know damn well she hasn't made a sound. "Easy there, love. We're just getting started."

~Will expand.

Leave a thought?

A.

Borderline

Hello! Told everyone I would expand! Okay, so, I'm going to go ahead and say this now: This is a DARK FIC. Draco is dark, the story is dark, there are probably TRIGGERS involved, including elements of obsession, non-con, and murder. If these are things you are not interested in, by all means, please, feel free to check out some of my lighter fictions! But I am a versatile author, and I plan to write all genres of Dramione, including the darker aspects. We're going to get a bit of background from the first blurb, and I will continuously expand on this world as I go.

So, if dark fics are your fancy, please, enjoy the slow burn of Squirm.

~A.

Every night, for the past four years, it's been the same dream. I'm not entirely sure when my obsession -and I know that's what it is -with her began, but I do know how it will end. In her demise. I tell myself there's nothing wrong with me; it's just a side effect of the War. The War is why I fantasize about bloodshed. The War is why I have this itch I can never quite scratch, lying just beneath the surface of my psyche. The War is why, on days like today, I stare vacantly down at my desk, watching my fingers twitch around my quill in an effort to write some boring dissertation asked of me because -well, I'm a Malfoy. And not only am I a Malfoy, but I'm an intelligent wizard.

She has no idea what she does to me. I doubt she even regards my existence other than the cordial greetings forced upon her by society. But the last time we spoke, it felt *more* than cordial. Perhaps it's wishful thinking.

Still, as I trail the ink over the parchment, my thoughts only rest on her and the next time we will meet.

It usually starts like a prickle in my ears, somewhere between my physical and mental status. Usually when things are much too loud. Like these boring Ministry functions I'm forced to attend because of who I am and what power I possess in the wizarding world. It's true, most of my exterior resonates with 'rebuilding' and 'taking time for the orphans of war' -but on the inside, I could give a shite less. On the inside, I'm just as rotten and decrepit as the apple I am, fallen from the tree of purebloods. People tire me, and these functions even more so. As the growing rounds of applause vibrate in my ears, I'm reminded how I will never be normal. It's the only way I know I'm truly sane -being aware of the tortuous pulsing in my head and knowing no one else feels this way.

If I thought everyone else did, *then* I would think myself mad.

I'm simply different. Much in the way I've always been. Though, in my youth, I was much more innocent.

Not now.

Now, I smile and give pleasantries and pretend that I don't want to slit every throat here for forcing me out of my warm den, where I could be reading or writing or studying. Anything but this trivial nonsense. Don't they know War is inevitable? No matter how we salvage the broken bits from previous wars, a new one will always take its place. There's no point in pretending one day the world will end in peace. Only pieces.

How I wish I could help it along.

There's a child crying somewhere off in the distance, and it sickens me to no end. Who would have the audacity to bring their sniveling brat to a high-end charity featuring orphans of War. No, the irony isn't lost to me. But still... would someone shut that insufferable child up?

My fingers dig tighter around my tumbler of scotch, and I try to pretend I won't shatter it, given the chance. Think pleasant thoughts. Who am I kidding? I don't believe in pleasant.

"Shh, sweetie. It's alright. Why are you crying?"

That voice... it's familiar.

"Mummy! Can't find Mummy!"

"Here, why don't we go find her?"

The crying has stopped. Oh, it's music to my ears, as well as my psyche. I turn around, looking for the source of my appreciation and find it -or rather, *her*. She's dressed in a long, streamline cocktail dress, curls spilling down her shoulders like a swirling waterfall. Her soft features melt as she speaks words of encouragement to the child, and, despite my obvious detests, I find myself moving towards them.

Children are particularly sensitive to auras. Perhaps that's why this child's eyes go the size of small saucers as she takes in the daunting sight of my gate as I approach. She reaches up, pudgy fingers grasping into the brown curls of my desire's object. That's when the woman turns her face towards me, and I find myself torn between what I want and what I know is no good for me.

"Ah. Malfoy." Hermione Granger stares evenly at me from her crouched position next to the snot-nosed brat. "Perfect timing. This poor dear -what's your name, sweetheart?"

"M-Marigold," the child replies, wiping the sleeve of her dress under her nose.

"Marigold seems to have lost her parents. Could you make an announcement?"

My tongue gets the better of me, as it usually does. "I'm not some house elf. Make the announcement yourself."

Her eyebrows furrow together, and she pushes herself up to stand. "Forgive me. For a moment, I thought you matured since your time at Hogwarts. I appear to have been mistaken."

"As you usually are," I quip back, taking a sip from my drink. The glare I receive in return is nothing short of captivating. Why is it I can only find beauty in the deploring? And if there's one person who detests me more than anyone, it's her. And even though I know I'll regret it, I find myself adding, "I'll have a word with Kingsley. You'll watch the grubby fingers, yes?"

Her face gives way to something new - appreciation. "Thank you, Draco."

And just like that, I'm lost. I find myself strolling across the hall like some lost puppy, and, after flagging down the Minister, Granger and I are able to locate the child's parents and return her safely to her coven of inattentive caregivers. Honestly, who loses a child and doesn't seek to find them immediately after?

I end up roaming the hallways of the Ministry shortly after, too disgusted by my obedience to a frizzy-haired, insufferable know-it-all to notice she's followed me. That is, until her voice catches in my ears, rendering chills down to my bones.

"Malfoy, can I have a moment?"

I turn on my heels, giving her a wicked smirk. "Clock's ticking."

"I... I, erm..." She tucks a lock of hair behind her ears, smiling genuinely. "What I said back there. It was out of line."

I'm unaccustomed to these types of meetings -usually, I blatantly ignore those I despise. I'm out of my element entirely, so I simply give a firm nod and nurse my drink before I change the subject. It's better if I do. There's no need to focus on one slip up I've made in showing kindness. "What brings you here tonight? Appearances or business?"

"Ron." Her face reddens slightly. "He's retiring from the Auror Division. We almost didn't come, but thought it would be nice to show our respects to the Ministry, all the same. Besides, war heroes and all..." Her voice trails off, and she eyes a portrait, whose subject has left its frame for the time being.

"So, appearances then."

"I suppose that's one way of putting it." Her chocolate eyes glisten intently in my direction. "Yourself?"

"Both," I answer, nonchalant.

She nods. "Could have guessed that, I imagine." Granger takes her time, gathering whatever point she thinks of making to me. "You don't need to be so hard."

I can't help it -my brain goes other places, and my smirk widens. "Excuse me?"

Her face rushes with blood, and she sputters out, "I-I mean... your *personality*." And dare I imagine it, she cracks a smile. "It's alright to relax. You're too stiff."

"Stiff?" I raise a suggestive eyebrow.

"Oh, you know what I mean!" She laughs into her hand. "Anyway, I imagine we'll be seeing each other a bit more. That's why I wanted to speak to you tonight. I've been assigned to handle the writing of some of your legal contracts for Malfoy Incorporated."

"Have you?"

"Yes."

"My condolences."

We both share idle smiles while she pats down the skirting of her dress, no doubt wiping away the claminess of her hands. Even from this distance, I can feel the heat radiating off her skin in nervousness. And she should be nervous -she has no idea why, but I do. The kind of man I've become... even though she doesn't know my secret, she can deduce I am not a man to be chatting up. Even in polite conversation.

"Well... have a good rest of the evening," she says, nodding her head. "I'll... see you around the office."

And then she's gone, like a thief in the night. She has no idea she's stolen something from me, but I can feel it: my resolve to accept who I am. *What* I am. And while I know it's fleeting, I am left with a reminder of how I could have been, had things turned out differently.

But there's far too much blood on my hands to go back now.

Just an empty void I continuously attempt to fill with blood, bodies, and a sick sense of satisfaction as I watch the life trickle out of my victims' eyes.

No, I will not entertain this silly notion of Hermione Granger a moment longer. She is as vile as the dirt beneath my shoes, just as any other of my victims.

I pray, for her sake, she stays as uninteresting as she was back at Hogwarts. Otherwise, I'll be forced to take a second look. And, as I'm very well aware, second looks can kill.

Some of you were wondering where the romance aspect falls into play. Well, it is in here. I promise. And not the non-con elements. Draco Malfoy is quite a charmer. We're going to see his inner struggle with his dark demon, as well as his want to be good. Enjoy!

Feel free to leave a review. More to come soon.

A.

Second Glance

Sorry this chapter is extremely short. The next chapter will be longer, I promise, but this was necessary to continue. More dramione interaction next chap. Also, remember: in my stories, nothing is ever quite what it seems. :D

~A.

"Mister Malfoy, a Miss Hermione Granger is here to see you."

My eyes flitter up from my desk inside my comfy office of Malfoy Incorporated as I raise an injurious eyebrow. I've had one Hell of a week, I've five minutes left on company time, and there's a bottle of scotch calling my name back at the Manor, as well as a night of... questionable activity. I knew she would come here, eventually, to discuss patents and paperwork, but I didn't expect it would be so soon.

I'm torn. There's a part of me which wants to welcome the woman who's been on my mind for the last three weeks, but... there's a large, angrier part of me that wants to throw everything off my desk and scream at my secretary to *get out*. The itch is back, and I so desperately want to scratch it. Lately, my obligations to my image have postponed my inner demons, but I can't guarantee I'll be able to hold myself back much longer.

"Show her in."

She's as lovely as she was at the Ministry function, though today she wears something far too conservative for my tastes. The women I find myself buried inside of on the weekend are loose and oh-so-willing to please a Malfoy heir. No doubt, Hermione Granger would rather I recarve the word 'Mudblood' onto her arm before she would see herself defiled by my hands. Though I can't help but wonder what sounds she makes when she screams... is there a difference between the ones of pain and her pleasure-induced cries?

"Malfoy," she says crisply, strolling comfortably up to my desk before setting a thick envelope on top of it. "How are you this evening?" It's obvious she's trying for pleasantries, but I've never been one to pretend around her. Not even in our youth.

"Well, seeing as how I'm to leave in four minutes, and your presence here begs at least twenty -I'm sure you can deduce I'm less than pleased." I give a thick smirk and lean back in my chair.

"Charming, as always," she quips and takes a seat in the provided guest chair on the opposite side of my desk. "There are a few discrepancies I wish to discuss with you."

"Oh, goody..."

"For example," she waves her wand and releases the stack of paperwork from her envelope, "You've requested a substantial amount of money be transferred to this offshore account here, but you haven't listed a reason as to its use in the company."

Less than a month here, and she's already caught on to things my staff have overlooked for two years. Perhaps I shouldn't underestimate this one. "And?"

"And," she furrows her brows, "should you be audited, your company could face some serious fines if all of its money cannot be accounted for. All I need you to do is fill out this form here," she pushes a packet of papers two inches thick into my eyeline, "and then provide the correct account information on this form here." A light pink parchment floats in my face, and I wave it away irritably.

This offshore account has a reason for being buried beneath the muck. Should anyone know what I do with this extra money, they could deduce the obvious: it isn't for the company.

"Granger," I begin, cordial as best I can be, "Malfoy Incorporated hired you on for your legal advice on patents -not on our vault accounts."

"Yes, but I-"

"-No 'buts'. You'll do well to keep your nose out of business that isn't yours." I rise to stand, gather my coat, and smirk down toward her. "Although, do keep wearing those enticing blue pumps, would you? They do wonders for your posture." I watch as her eyes glare like daggers in my direction before I take my leave. When I'm to the door, I turn around, tug the door open, and add, "Oh, you honestly don't expect me to leave you in my office, do you?"

"You're impossible," she sighs, gathering up her things. She leaves the hideously pink paperwork, along with the thick packet, on my desk all the same. As she takes a place by my side, I feel my pulse begin to quicken. How interesting she should be able to procure such a response from me. Oh, dear... I fear I have taken that second look and found the offer most appealing.

"After you," I say, gesturing out to the hallway.

"Hmph." She moves to brush past me, but my feet get ahead of my brain, and I block her off, even though I've basically kicked her out of my office.

"Don't take it personally, Granger. I treat everyone who tries to butt into my business the same way. If I favored you, how do you think it would look?"

"Like a normal human being?" she counters. "If you'll excuse me, I'm late for drinks with Ron."

Smirking, I sidestep and allow her the comforts of leaving my office, and with it, my presence.

Fuck it all. She's under my skin already. This couldn't be a worse way to end a work day. As the door clicks shut behind me, I catch a glimpse of her stepping into the elevator, frustration written over every pore in her skin.

Maybe this day wasn't a complete waste, after all.

Another life drips through my fingers as crimson spills to the floor. Another life I've taken. I could pretend it doesn't bring me great joy to know the individual in my hands is filled with immense pain, but what's the point in lying when I'm in such a euphoric high?

As I lean my hand against the wall to steady my lightheadedness, I leave a bloody print behind. I've become foolish in my transgressions as of late, and it's all because of that prissy Granger mucking up my brain. Every time I take a life, now, it isn't enough. Because it isn't *her* beneath my grip. How is it I can want to fuck someone and kiss them and kill them all at once? It shouldn't make sense, but somehow it does to me. Maybe it's because she's left a fresh copy of that annoyingly pink parchment on my desk for the past month to replace the ones I throw away. She's entirely too stubborn, and it makes me want to break her. Not physically -not really. Just her soul. To teach her a lesson in who she's dealing with.

I leave the body on the table and make my way up the steps of the dungeons. I'll clean the mess up later. Right now, I need a hot shower and to find someone to take my mind off the fact I want someone I cannot have.

Feel free to leave your thoughts.

~A.

Conversation

I have to say, I didn't expect such a big turn out for this story, and I'm pleasantly surprised. I love the theories (which I cannot confirm nor deny), and I ask everyone to keep them coming.

~A.

Added A/N: My 'keish/' 'quiche' mess up has a lot of people raising eyebrows. Let me say, it was all my fault, and me being lazy, saying 'Oh, I'll go back and look up how to spell it later' and then... well.. not doing it. It is fixed. My apologies.

Tonight's kill is neater than it's felt in months. I seem to have more focus and control over the situation, which makes the dull ringing in my ears lessen. I've found a steady cadence in the repetition of it all. The most tedious part is the cleanup, but even it can't deter me from my consequential buzz sifting around in my brain like a swarm of satisfied honey bees. There's always a small sliver of my heart which aches, and I'm unsure if it's due to a manifesting guilt or a heart condition I have yet discover. Either way, I try to ignore it as I sluff off my attire and step into the warm cascade of shower water. Crimson instantly spills down between my toes before making its way down the drain. I bring my shaking fingers up to my face, eyeing my discolored nail beds, flaked with dried blood.

Last night was different than normal. Maybe it's why I feel so complete tonight. She will never know what she does to me, but her knowledge on the subject doesn't stop the onslaught of endorphins rushing to my brain at her very thought.

I can't help when my hand slips between my legs and grips my cock in earnest. All I can see is her stubborn brown eyes and pouty lips. All I can hear is her voice filled with merit. I allow my mind to wander to the night before, and how she brings clarity to my ever blurry world.

It's not the first time I find myself wandering the streets of Diagon Alley. As a boy, this was a casual pastime to sate my growing curiosity of the world outside my parents' comfy mansion. When I grew older, I became less fascinated with the people and more with the architecture. People came and go like ants in lines, mindless drones to contribute to the hill. But I've always found the scenic routes most appealing, so I absolve myself of the lunchtime rushes in search of quiet nuances. I find if I tuck myself in dark alleyways to pass between the loud, as it tends to set me off.

It's also where I happen to run into *her* again.

She stands at the entryway of the quaint path, a hoard of books stacked ten high in her arms. It's obvious she's taken this way for the same reason I have -to avoid the bustle. She sighs, looking for a break in the crowd in which to take her leave, but the current of witches and wizards on the streets will have none of it. The imbecilic prats are preparing for Christmas,

which sits only a fortnight away. A chill bewitches the air today, causing a shiver to skitter down her spine.

I stand behind her at a crossroad. I could simply turn the other way, ignore her, and pretend she doesn't exist at work, like I normally do, or... or I could speak to her. Either one seems detrimental to my health, so I take the selfish route.

"Doing a bit of light reading for the holidays?"

Her back stiffens, and Hermione Granger turns around to face me, eyebrows set in curiosity. "Gifts, actually. One for each of my friends." She swallows a lump in her throat, drawing my attention to her slender neck, covered by a burgundy scarf, no doubt handmade. "Still enjoy skulking in dark alleys, I see. And I thought you might have grown out of it."

"You know what they say about old habits," I reply, making quick work of my smirk. I do note the subtle reddening of her cheeks, but I chalk it up to the weather. It most certainly wouldn't have anything to do with me. Reaching for the book on the top of her stack, I read the title, "Twenty-One Ways to Improve Your Cooking Skills With Magic."

"For Harry," she says instantly, "He nearly burnt the kitchen down two months ago trying to make a quiche for Ginny." We stare each other down for a few moments before she adds, "Not that you care. Please, put the book back on the pile and I'll be on my way."

But I'm having too much fun. I snatch the next one and pile it on the first. "Bubbling His Cauldron." My smirk turns to an all-out grin, despite my best efforts to remain neutral.

"Ginny."

Before she can protest, I begin to steal each one with quick movements, giving them a once over. Her reddened cheeks turn all out crimson when I take my guesses. I hold up a copy of 'One Hundred and One Plants of Eastern Europe'- "Let's see... Longbottom."

"Malfoy, this is highly unprofessional."

"Yes... it would be if we were *working*. As it is-" The next book in my hands is '*Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*' -"Loony Lovegood, I imagine? Assuming you still keep up with school chums." I then eye her over. "Yes, you seem the type."

"It's not for Luna," she says, attempting to grab it back, but she isn't quick enough to counter my speed. It's so entirely glorious knowing how I could ruin her entire day if I wanted. Hell, I could ruin her life. I could always leave her a bloody corpse under the mistletoe to meet her when she returned home. Preferably Weasley's lifeless husk. Even if it goes against what I stand for.

"Weasley? I'm quite sure we might be able to ascertain his species from this book. Bless his mother for taking him in..."

She narrows her eyes and jerks the book from my hand. I let her.

"For your information, it is *not* for Ron." She snatches all of her books from my clutches and restacks them in her arms. "None of them are, actually."

That all too familiar lurker of curiosity rears its ugly head, peering over my shoulder and whispering in my ear, 'Prod her.'

"Yes, I suppose he'll be receiving something a bit more *intimate*. Care to share with the class?"

And just like that, I've stoked the aggravation out of her as if she was a cauldron of bubbling potion about to spill over. "Oh, *yes*. I plan to spoil him with *loads* of *sex* for Christmas. Sex everywhere! On the countertops! On the roof! No surface is safe. -Is that what you'd like to hear, you depraved worm?"

"Only if it's true," I quip. "And don't skimp the details."

"Oh, for Heaven's..." She rolls her eyes and turns away from me, towards the street. "You're absolutely incorrigible!"

"Buy Weasley a dictionary for Christmas!" I leer back at her. "I bet he doesn't even know the meaning of the word!"

I think that's it -we've said our peace, and we'll go about our daily lives as if we were never a part of one another's. But then she stops just short of the street, looks over her shoulder, and says, "I hope, for your sake, one day you'll grow out of your childishness. Happy Christmas, Malfoy."

And just like that, she's wriggled inside my chest like an infectious disease taking hold of my body. My ears flood with my pulse. I've forgotten how to breathe. Something worse than fluid fills my lungs -it's a sense of *regret* for being such an arse.

"Granger!"

She turns around.

I take a step forward. "I... You, too. Happy Christmas."

Something like a smile, but much more ethereal, crosses her lips, and she nods. "Thank you."

And then she melts into the throng of Christmas shoppers. My body follows, despite my mind commanding it to do otherwise, but I stop just short of the streets as the overwhelming sounds of a baby's shrill cry pierces my ears. I cover them automatically, trying to drown out the thick prickle inside my eardrums like someone is jamming nails into my brain. I step back from the street and retreat into the alleyway again, defeated because my demons are calling to me again, as well as that insufferable itch of impulse that will, inevitably, need to be scratched.

Fuck, I can't get her out of my head no matter what I do. This will be the third time tonight I've stroked myself, hoping for relief. There's a want in me to know what she is doing at this

very moment and no way to find out. It's infuriating, and I coax my length with my fingers, pretending it's her lovely, insubordinate mouth. I imagine the struggle -because there's no way in Hell she would suck me off without a fight. In my mind, she gags on my cock and glares up at me with tears in her eyes. I smirk, thinking of how lovely she would look with saliva dripping down her chin. Thinking of her bound with her arms behind her back, on her knees, tits exposed -it makes me *ravenous*. *Hungry*. Merlin, what I would give to feel that soft, wet tongue on my sack.

"Fuck..."

Just a bit more. I can feel the buildup in my lower abdomen, and I know I'm so close to coming. I'm sent over the edge when I think of spilling my cum down her throat mercilessly while she sobs. I'm not sure why she needs to be angry and upset with me in my mind. It might be my way with coping, knowing she will never see me the way I see her.

The water turns lukewarm as I catch my breath, a heat spread over my cheeks.

After drying, dressing, and dishonoring all of my pureblood roots by fantasizing about a mudblood, I find myself wandering the halls aimlessly. Most of the paintings don't dare look me in the eyes anymore. They're much too fearful of what I might do. The last time one attempted to approach me after witnessing my evil deeds, I slashed it to shreds. Now, they cower in fear. Wonderful. As they should. I've crossed over that line of humanity long ago into the unknown. All that's left to do is wait for my penance, one day.

Eventually, I make my way to the den, pour myself a glass of absinth, and prepare for an evening of dark brooding. That is, until my floo flares to life, and a parcel is tossed through the green flames and onto the floor. I raise an eyebrow, strolling over to whatever has just shot out of my fireplace. The flames douse out immediately, severing the connection.

It's a gift, swathed in ridiculous wrapping paper donned with snowflakes. On it is a note.

'Don't open until Christmas'

Smirking, I disobey immediately, ripping at the paper until I reveal its contents. A book. 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.' I open the front cover to find an inscription written.

'Thought you would appreciate this first publishing as much as myself. Wishing you a merry happy. ~Hermione'

Please leave your thoughts. Shall update soon. :3

~A.

Oh, also forgot to mention, I'm uploading some of my original works to fictionpress.

If you'd like to check it out, link his here (just take out the *s)

***www.fictionpress.com/s/*3296627/3/*A-Dandy-World**

A Dandy World

Summary:The world Freckles once knew no longer exists. Instead, the dead call the shots, and humans kill each other in fits of uncontrollable bloodlust called "Rage". Lace up your boots and strap in for a horrific adventure, because you never know who to trust in such A Dandy World.

Rated: Fiction M - English - Horror/Suspense

New Year's Impulse



Thank you for all the kind words. It, truly, means the world to me. If you'd like, follow me on facebook (MrBenzedrine) for updates, sneak peeks of chapters, and better communication! Handle is MrBenzedrine89. Look me up on Tumblr as well! My info is on my author's page, and my door is always open.

~A.

New Year's Eve brings about a need for the new. It sparks a life inside of simple minded folk who want for nothing more than a fresh start to their transgressions in hopes that, one day, they will atone for their mistakes. Luckily, I am not simple, so I have no need to think myself above my sins. However, for posterity's sake, I still scribble a hope down on a slip of eggshell colored parchment and throw it into the flames; it's a tradition passed down from Malfoy to Malfoy. I sit alone in my parlor this year. I've opted out of the foolish parties this evening. I've nothing to celebrate. My life -my hopes and dreams are shattered beyond repair.

A chime bellows off in the distance, alerting me someone has arrived on the property, outside the gate.

"Mipsy," I shout and wait as a small, hobbled house elf appears in the doorway. "Find out who is at the gate, would you? And then turn them away."

"Right away, Master Malfoy. Mipsy is on it." The elf pops away, leaving me to my own devices. I can't seem to see the hands in front of my face; I'm entirely too sloshed. So, when the elf returns, cowering before me, I can't help but snap.

"*What?*"

"A Miss Granger is at the gate, sir. She tells Mipsy she won't leave until she speaks with Master Malfoy."

My head perks up. "Granger, you say?"

"Y-Yes. Mipsy tries explaining to her, but Miss Granger is stubborn."

"Yes... Definitely Granger." I smirk. "Send her in."

"Yes, Master Malfoy."

My head spins from the liquor I've sipped on for most of the evening, but I still manage to catch a glimpse of the grandfather clock in the corner of the room. The time is ten till midnight. Shouldn't she be parading herself around a party in some lavish cocktail dress? Or, perhaps, at home with her darling Weasley?

I hear the front doors swing open, and the approaching of footsteps, but I pretend not to pay notice, even after she steps into the room. I stare into the flames of the fireplace, though out of the corner of my eye, I take in her beauty. She stands tall, her head held high, wearing a simple satin gown, purple with gold accents. Her hair is done up in a thick bun with strands falling around her face, framing her cheeks. Her eyebrows produce a scowl so dastardly I can feel the heat radiating off her skin from over here. I act as if she is nothing more than a throw pillow, irritating her further.

"Malfoy."

The corners of my lips pull upward, but I say nothing. I know why she is here.

"Malfoy!" she shouts again, stomping her way toward me. I allow her the privilege of blocking my view of the fire, forcing me to meet her gaze. "Answer me, you... you..."

"Foul, loathsome, evil little cockroach?" I offer, my smirk widening. I've had that memorized from the first time she called me it our third year. I'd hoped to use it against her one day, but the opportunity never presented itself. Might as well take what I can get.

"Did you..." she starts, crossing and uncrossing her arms. "Did you send this to my doorstep this evening?" She thrusts out her left arm to reveal a stunning diamond bracelet. On it sits a golden snitch charm with an amber stone.

"You're wearing it," I say, refusing to answer her question. "That must mean you like it enough."

"I thought it was from Ron," she says, glaring. "He accused me of sleeping with someone else because of this trinket."

"I'm surprised he didn't try to take the credit himself."

"I notice you're not taking credit, either."

"That's because we both know the answer. Who else could afford something like that?" I nudge my finger toward her wrist. "You're welcome."

"I... I didn't... I didn't *want* this, Malfoy."

"So, you can send me a Christmas present, and I'm to ignore my manners and not return the favor?"

"This is more than a favor," she says, waving her wrist at me. "This is too much." She reaches for the clasp with her other hand. "I can't accept it."

"Well, I don't want it. You think I'm going to wear it around *my* wrist? I'm proud of my appearance, yes, but I'm not bent."

"Why?" she asks, giving up on unclasping it. Stubborn little thing. I bought it that way, with a difficult clasp.

"Why am I not gay?"

"Why would you buy me something so expensive? We work together. We're not-"

"-I felt like being generous. As you and the rest of your friends continuously attempt to remind me, I'm less than that. Forgive me for trying to make amends." My tone is short and crisp, cutting her resolve off at the pass.

"Well..." her voice grows softer. "Even still. It's too much, Draco."

My name. She's said my name, and I'm not sure what possessed me to stand, despite my obvious drunkenness, but I do. I step closer, focusing on not stumbling. My eyes narrow. My voice comes in a rasp. "Say that again."

She looks bewildered at my request, but she doesn't step back. Bold. Ever so bold. "It's too much."

"No." I shake my head as the room spins. "We both know what part I mean."

She glances down to her decorated wrist, and then draws it to her chest, thinking. It isn't my imagination; I'm sure she can feel the spark in the air between our stances. It's like lightning bottled up in the faintest of moments, but it's there. I watch her drag her lower lip between her teeth and listen as she exhales, "Draco."

My name, said out loud by her lips, sends that lightning between us coursing through my body, and I dare one more step closer. "So... Weasley was upset?" I manage to tread another step, until I'm only a foot away from her, now. "Over such a small trinket?"

"He wasn't pleased," she whispers, and I can hear the pitter patter of both our hearts in the silence. "Even less when I told him I thought it was from you."

"Hmm." I nod, extending my hand, offering it out to her. She stares at it, untrusting, but I roll my eyes and take her wrist anyway, drawing it up to my eyeline. "Why is that, do you think?"

"He despises you."

"Oh, yes. I know *that*," I sneer, eyeing the craftsmanship of the bracelet. "I meant: why is it, do you think, your thoughts fell on me when you received such a breathtaking gift?"

I listen to the hitch in her breathing, and it's heavenly. "As you've said. Only someone like you could afford something like this."

"That's not entirely true. Potter has a fair share of galleons. So does your dear friend... what's her name? Weasley's sister?"

"Ginny."

"Ginny." I nod. "Yes. She's a professional Quidditch player now, isn't she? Surely she would gift you with something so pretty?"

"But it was you."

"Yes. It was." I lean closer, bringing her wrist up close to my lips. The alcohol makes me braver than I've ever been around her. It talks now. "My point, Granger, is that while your first instinct should have been one of your many friends, you automatically thought of me. Why is that?"

There's a deafening silence between us as she contemplates her answer. "I suppose... it's the way you look at me."

"Oh?" I raise an eyebrow. "And how do I look at you, pray tell?"

"Like... like a meal." She blinks rapidly, embarrassed at her words. Or it might be my calculating grin I form in response. Hard to tell, really. "I should go."

My grip around her wrist strengthens, and I tug it closer still, so that my breath ghosts pulsepoint. "Should you?" I press a soft kiss to her veins just below her palm.

She swallows, causing the muscles in her pretty throat to contract. "Ron will be waiting for me. I told him I would pop out for only a moment..."

"So close to New Year's countdown? And he just let you leave... Really..."

"Y-Yes..."

"Why don't I believe you?"

"Because you're paranoid. And arrogant."

"Touché." I leave another kiss, this one with a hint of tongue, just a bit lower, closer to her bracelet. "But you aren't fleeing or hexing me, and that says more than an empty promise Weasley is waiting for you."

Her eyes are half lidded, vexed at her current situation. She likes what I'm doing to her, of that I am certain. For so long now, I've found myself torn between the want to fuck, kill, or kiss this woman -tonight, kiss wins the betting pool. The clock behind us chimes midnight, and I wrap my free hand around her waist, removing the distance between us.

"Midnight," I say.

"So it is."

"You're missing a New Year's kiss with Weasley."

She purses her lips together, caught in her own lie. I make it easy on her.

"No one should go without a New Year's kiss."

And then I lean towards her, head tilted, assessing the situation. Her breathing stills, and her lips part, and it's all I need to go the distance. My mouth sets on hers, and for a moment, we are one. Her taste is something indescribable, but her tongue - oh, her tongue as it dances with mine, against its better judgement, soothes the gentle beast within my soul. I'm lost in her trance. This siren has stolen something from me, yet again, and I fear I might never get it back: loyalty.

The chime of the grandfather clock echoes around us, but it's fodder compared to the gentle sigh that escapes her lips as I pull away and pry my eyes back open. Chocolate meets steel. I find myself smirking, though I know it isn't in my best interest.

"I imagine you can see yourself out the door."

"What?" she blinks a few times, coming down from her daze. Her eyes widen at the realization of what we've done, but she isn't one to dwell on it, and she pushes it deep down, opting for a brave face, like myself. She steps back, away from me, touching her lips with her fingers. Too stunned to say anything else, she stalks her way to the archway to take her leave, pausing momentarily to turn back toward me. I stick my hands in my pockets, awaiting any further lashings for my transgressions, but all I receive instead is a glimmer of a smile.

"I... erm... "

"A thank you will suffice," I tell her. "For the gift."

And just like that, her face falls into a perturbed glare. "I never asked for it."

"But you liked it, all the same."

She tilts her chin up. Gryffindors and their pride. "Thank you."

"You're most welcome."

She turns to leave, and I add,

"See you at work."

She rests a beat before replying, "I suppose you will. Goodnight... Draco."

"Goodnight."

Feel free to leave your thoughts!

~A.

Office Visit

Another short chapter, but well worth it. Next chapter promises to be long, interesting, and a tad horrifying in spots.

Enjoy!

~A.



A new year does not equal a new me. I'm right back at work, the same as I ever was, approving or rejecting project plans like they're going out of style. The one nice thing about returning from the holiday break, however, wears blue suede pumps and a pencil skirt which leaves no curve to the imagination. We haven't spoken yet, but the day is still young, as is this

new found feeling stirring in my chest every time she walks by my office door. My office is spelled to show the outer workings of the cubicles outside my door like a one way mirror, but with magic. My employees can't see me, but I can see them. I've placed this spell in recently, after the kiss, simply so I can watch Miss Granger go to and from her daily chores. Some might call it 'stalking' -I call it keeping a fresh eye on my staff.

When she approaches my office, I'm prepared. I shuffle a few papers around on my desk, appearing to look busy as she strolls past my secretary and walks right through the door as if she owns the place. "Malfoy, I'd like a word."

I can see my secretary fidget at her desk, surprised by the young woman's outburst.

"Come in." I gesture to the chair across from me and watch as she shuts the door, taking in the scenery of the employees working their magical fingers to the bone.

"That's... new." She tilts her head, nearly fascinated. "Highly immoral."

"Keeping an eye on my business is hardly immoral."

"Have you been watching us all morning?"

More like you, I nearly say, but choose instead, "Here and there. You're all rather boring. Like butterflies flittering around a garden."

"Butterflies are quite beautiful. Hardly boring." She turns around and meets my eyes.

"The same could be said about you," I state.

"Which... brings me to the topic of the hour." Hermione Granger strolls up to the empty chair for her and takes her seat. "I take it no one can see or hear us."

"No." I smirk.

"Fantastic." She inhales a sharp breath, and I inwardly groan it's a well known fact that by no means does anything good come out of that mouth when she has decided whatever she has to say is long winded. "I wish to discuss the events of New Year's Eve, if we could." She surprises me and adds as an afterthought, "Please."

"On company time?" My smirk must be beaming for her to scowl at me the way she does.

"What we did goes against every principle you and I stand for."

"Do tell."

She sets her face to a stern lecture setting and regurgitates the same trite nonsense I've come to expect. "First and foremost, we are co-workers. What we did went against at least three company codes, as well as my own moral one."

"Which is?"

"Never get involved with a snake."

"Ooh, clever. Did the thought depraved Weasley teach you that abysmally foolish catchphrase?"

"And there's the other thing." Her hand slams down onto my table. "You've ruined what could have possibly been *the* love of my life because of your deranged notion that sending jewelry is a way to woo me."

"Wouldn't quite call it deranged," I drawl, pushing my sealed ink bottle over like it's a chess piece. "We *did* kiss."

"*You* kissed *me*."

"*You* enjoyed it. As did I." I notice her mouth open to speak, but I cut her off at the pass. "- And don't try to deny it. You might find it in everyone's best interest to bat those pretty little eyelashes and pretend your feelings for me are purely work related. But we both know it isn't true. Let's just call it what it is, shall we? You're attracted to me. I'm attracted to you."

"I am *not*."

"You're only saying that because you hope saying it will prove your breakup with Weasley wasn't a long time coming. It *was* a breakup, wasn't it?"

She *tsks*, and it's all the confirmation I need. I stand up from my desk, meander my way around it, and place myself in her personal bubble. Hovering above her, I reach down and curl a finger under her chin, tilting her head up to look at me. Her jaw tenses under my touch, but she doesn't move away. Interesting. I expected her to be feistier. Perhaps she's looking for an opportunity to hex me. I should make my intentions known.

Gliding my thumb over her bottom lip, I say, "All of this unresolved tension is bound to blow up one way or another, Granger. Maybe if we..." Am I doing this? Truly? Propositioning her in my office? All this time, I thought, given the opportunity, I would fight these urges better. "...explored these feelings further, we might prevent an explosion."

I see her fighting it. Her fingers wrap around my wrist, ready to yank me away. It's a mistake, because I move my hand across her cheek and into her hair. Fuck yes, these curls feel divine in my grasp. She gasps, but I don't let it deter me. My free hand moves to her lips, prying her mouth open to slip two of my fingers down the soft feel of her tongue. If I thought she looked shocked before, it's nothing compared to her expression now. It's somewhere between eyes as round as they can go mixed with a hint of lust.

"Merlin, you look so beautiful right now," I mutter, my breath catching. I slip my fingers down her jaw, her neck, her collarbone before I release her hair and take one step back, admiring my handiwork. I've never seen Hermione Granger look so disheveled in all her life, and I caught eyes with her once during the Battle of Hogwarts. "So what will it be, Granger?"

"A sexual harassment lawsuit I imagine," she says curtly, but she doesn't move. Not one inch.

"Shall I draw up the paperwork?"

She clears her throat. "Drinks."

"Drinks?"

"And dinner. Those will suffice." She stands, still barely coming up to my shoulders. "Friday work for you?"

"I could move some things around..."

"Wonderful." She reaches down to the briefcase she brought in with her, digs through it a moment, and produces a single, pink parchment before she slams it into my sternum. "I expect this to be finished by then. Or I *will* file that lawsuit." Her eyes are challenging -just the way I like it.

I can't suppress the smug look that paints over my features as I nod once in confirmation, calling her bluff. "Friday it is. Eight o'clock?"

Please, leave a thought!

~A.

Wine and Dine



Hello! So glad to be back in town after a WONDERFUL trip to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter with waymay in Orlando, Florida this weekend! If you'd like to see pics, find my author's page on facebook! (MrBenzedrine, handle is MrBenzedrine89)

Hope everyone loves the longer chapter. :3

~A.

Itchy. I feel entirely too itchy. This blazer, this stuffy button down, my socks, my robes - everything feels constricting. It doesn't matter that I've showered three times this evening in preparation for my night out with her. I still can't shake the feeling there's blood in my hair or dripping between my fingers. I tried to be 'good' this week, but the closer Friday approached,

the worse the infectious impulses seeped into my head like a riddle begging to be solved. Everyone knows how difficult it is to remove a song lyric from one's head once it's seeded there -and *that* is how I would describe my obsession with the demons plaguing my mind. I thought I was stronger than this, but alas...

Tick. Tick. Tick. The clock chips away at the moments I have to spare until I'm to floo myself to her (no doubt stuffy) flat to pick her up. From there, I've arranged for a night in at the Madam Mystique, tucked away in a corner of Diagon Alley. It's flashy, but not entirely so that we'll be spotted easily. After all, she's a War hero, and I'm an ex Death Eater. I could just imagine what the papers would say if they could sink their teeth into a story before we ourselves knew all the gritty details.

Stalking to the mirror in the hall, I check my teeth and loosen the tie around my neck before fixing the knot. I'm not entirely sure why a sudden rush of adrenaline kicks my system into gear. It could have something to do with the fact I haven't been on a date in years. Women, yes. I've had women. Countless woman who throw themselves into my bed, me on top like a fitted sheet. I'm still a Malfoy, after all. Where the money goes, the muff is always sure to follow. Quite literally my father's words to me at some point in my life.

Bubo Bubo, my faithful Eagle Owl, sits on his perch as I step into the drawing room, preparing to set off. He clucks his beak in my direction, and I'm forced to greet the old sod with a pat on the head. His two tone hoot is melodic in my ear. We've been friends since I purchased him before my first year at Hogwarts. While he can no longer run errands for me, he knows he still holds a special place in my heart. He could be the only creature I've ever cared about in my life.

"How do I look, Bubo?"

He ruffles his feathers, and I flash a smirk.

"You're right. A bit stuffy. But then again, so is the woman I'm courting tonight." Bubo shifts on his perch and flaps his wings. "That's right. I said courting." His golden eyes seep directly into my soul, calling me out. "Oh, don't give me that look. To be honest, I'm not sure why I'm doing it either. She's hardly something to look at." Even as I pretend to pinch an imaginary speck of lint off my trousers, I know my words to be false. "But she sees me, Bubo. Really sees me. And she isn't afraid like the others." Bubo Bubo swishes his tail and pushes his neck out, encouraging me to pet him. As I do, I add, "But you aren't afraid of me, are you? Never have been."

As if to counter my words, Bubo pecks my hand and nips the skin between my thumb and palm. I gasp, drawing my hand back as crimson begins to spill down my wrist.

"Really, Bubo?"

He hoots wildly in response, and I fish out a wrap of gauze from the desk drawer across the way. I won't have time to fish out a healing potion, so I wrap my hand and narrow my eyes at the owl.

"You're an arsehole."

"Hooo."

"Yeah, yeah... I know... so am I." With that, I step through the floo, leaving an agitated glare in my companion's direction. "You're lucky I don't have a craving to kill owls, Bubo!"

Merlin help me, she looks absolutely breathtaking. It's a simple button up blouse, blue pencil skirt, and four inch heels, but she wears it all so well I can feel myself growing a tent in my trousers the moment she steps into the light of the fire.

"You clean up nice," she says, gathering a beaded bag off the sofa.

My mouth his arid as I counter, "I don't know if I can recall a time I've ever looked dirty before." Except in the dungeons, with blood on my hands. Except when my victims scream for mercy. Then, I look like the dirtiest man on the face of the planet. I wonder if she enjoys the color red as much as I do. Of course she would. She's a Gryffindor. "You on the other hand..." I gesture to her attire. "You look..." Ravishing. Tasty. Delightful. "Lovely."

Her eyes widen, and she steps up to me, purse slung over her shoulder. There, she places a cool hand on my forehead. "Are you feeling ill? I do believe that was a compliment."

"I'm taking you out for dinner and drinks. If complimenting you is toeing the line on pleasantness, I have terrible news for you." From inside my blazer pocket, I fish out a pink parchment scrolled up tight. "It's about to get a lot more pleasant from here on out."

A satisfied smile flitters over her features, and she plucks the scroll from my hand. "I'm impressed."

"I'm a Malfoy. We only aim to impress."

"So I've noticed." She slips the scroll into her bag -which must be bigger on the inside, because there's no way it would fit otherwise. I offer out my arm, and to my delight, she slips her arm around mine. "Just so we're clear," she says, staring me in the eyes, "This is dinner and drinks. Nothing else. Two coworkers out for a night."

My signature smirk finds its way to my lips as I tilt my head forward and brush my nose against her cheek. "Whatever you need to tell yourself, Granger."

Dinner is delightful, as well as the bottle of aged wine we share in the private, second story balcony overlooking Madam Mystique's flavorful collection of diners. We share a private table up top, away from the prying eyes of the crowd, to which I can tell she is thankful. A stage is lit up against the far wall on the first floor. It's a live performance tonight from a Celistina Warbeck cover artist, which I've recently learned tonight is one of Granger's favorite singers.

"This is wonderful, Malfoy," she says, resting her chin in her hand as she stares over the balcony at the performance stage. "I have to admit, I didn't know you could be a gentleman."

"I'd hardly describe me in that fashion," I jostle, swirling the burgundy liquid in my glass. "But..." I take a chance. "I'm glad you like it, all the same."

She takes a sip from her own glass before she asks, "Why?"

"Why what?"

"It's obvious you fancy me."

The muscles in my neck tense, and I hide behind my glass, turning my eyes on the crowd below. "Did it ever occur to you I might just want into your knickers?"

"It had," she nods. "But then we wouldn't be out where people could spot us together, would we?"

"You've caught me, then." I shrug.

"So... why?"

"Because..." I look down to my cut hand, wrapped in gauze, thinking on what I confided in Bubo. Dare I tell her? Would she laugh at me? Would it flatter her or frighten her shimmering soul? "You're not like the others."

"Others?"

"Women I've dated."

"Dated." She laughs into her napkin, raising a snarky eyebrow. "Word around the office is you don't date so much as make an affair out of sexual escapades."

"Another thing I like about you: straight to the point." I smirk. She blushes innocently, and it makes me want to knock every bit of cutlery off this table, throw her on top of it, and rip her skirt up to her hip. Instead, I run my tongue over the top row of my teeth and think on how delightful she would taste, given the chance. "I won't lie to you. The thought has crossed my mind."

"And yet here we are."

"Here we are."

"Why?"

"Because you want to be wined and dined. You want to be courted. Merlin knows Weasley didn't know how to take you on a proper date-" she scowls at me for the quip, but I trudge on, "-or designer jewelry."

"Yes. Because fancy dates and gifts are what makes a relationship important," she jostles, sarcastic.

"That. Right there." I point my finger onto the table. "You want to know why you, and not some harpy? It's your wit. Your ability to look past my cold exterior and see me for what I really am is the only reason we're here and not back in your flat, playing the horizontal tango."

It's entertaining watching her choke on her wine and spit it back into her glass. "Confident, aren't you?"

"If you looked like me, you'd be confident, too."

"Charming."

With a smirk, I reach over to her chair, tug it inches from mine, and drape a confident arm over the back of her seat. She glances at my hand, which brushes her shoulder with sensual strokes. "What happened to your hand?"

"My owl saw fit to give me a firm lecture before our date."

"Did he?"

"Jealous bastard."

She smiles, relaxing her shoulders. We stare down at the stage together, and, for once, I'm at peace. How long has it been since I've felt this way? Ages.

"So," she leans over and mutters into my ear, "It's a date?"

"Getting cold feet already? It's dinner, Granger, not a bloody proposal."

I'm jostled in the ribs in response. "Ron proposed."

My posture stiffens, but I try to contain myself. "Maybe you don't know how a date works, but talking about your ex on a first one tends to muck up the occasion."

I hear a gentle sigh, and I turn my head to meet her coffee colored irises. "I'm sorry... It's just..." She moves her wrist, which still wears my gifted bracelet, up for us to stare at. "I told him no, two months before..." She stares intently at the bracelet. "I suppose what I'm trying to say is things between Ron and I didn't end because of you. I'm just not ready for marriage."

"Sounds like you're trying to convince yourself."

She leans her head on my shoulder and sighs. "There's too much of the world to see."

"Isn't the point of seeing the world to see it with the ones you love?"

"And now it sounds like you are advocating on Ron's behalf."

I chuckle. "Hardly." Slowly, I reach my hand over the table and slip each of my fingers between hers.

"Ron didn't want to travel," she says. "He wanted to settle down. Have children."

"Pesky little things."

"I'm not ready to be a parent. And neither is he, if he would slip his head out of his bum long enough to realize."

"Are we quite done talking about Weasley for the evening?"

"I just wanted you to know where I stand."

"You're not looking for anything serious."

"Precisely."

I draw her hand up to my lips and kiss along her knuckles. "We're just having fun, Granger." Though in my heart, I know this to be false as well. She can deny it all she wants, but what we have, here, in this moment, is something much more than 'fun'. It feels like a weighted blanket after a long, dreary day. There's comfort with her skin against mine no one else has been able to offer me up until this point.

"Hermione."

"Hmm?"

"If you're going to wine and dine me, you're going to call me by my given name."

Yes, this isn't fun we're having. If only she could realize the full potential of the permissions she's allotted me in this moment. Something inside of me shifts, and my mind lays claim to the witch beside me, spellbound at her voice.

"Very well, *Hermione*."

"Thank you, Draco."

Would this table support both of our weight if I were to fuck the living daylights out of her on it?

"What's this?" Hermione holds my hand between our faces, noticing the dark patches beneath my nails. Dried blood, I realize. I must not have finished the job cleaning myself like I thought I did.

Horried, I cover up my mistake quickly. "Dried ink."

She giggles.

"What's so funny?"

"I never imagined you would allow yourself to appear unkempt in any capacity. It's humanizing."

"Sexy. The word is sexy."

And because she has no idea of the sins I wear beneath my nails, she laughs some more, leaning over to kiss my cheek. "Arrogant."

"Delightful."

"Prideful."

I tuck my head to the side, meeting her saucy stare. "Seductive."

Our noses touch. "Stubborn."

"Doable."

The dust of pink along her cheeks is nothing short of enticing, and I shorten the distance between us until her breath tickles my lips. I find myself so enthralled in her presence, I bring her laced hand with mine as I reach up and caress down her cheek in sensual strokes. My tongue darts out across her lower lip, and before I know what's hit me, she's crossed the Rubicon, setting her lips to mine.

Tonight is, most definitely, a win.

Lemons, limes, and horror to come. Hope everyone is ready.
Please leave a review if you could. :D
~A.

The Precipice

Alrighty. This chapter of Squirm contains a hard lemon, though consensual. You've been warned.

~A.

The weeks following that first date have been moving along swimmingly, if I do say so myself. My days are spent lodged in an office, but having my one-way spelled wall overlooking the bullpen beyond it more than makes up for it. When I work, I can watch her as well. Now that she is aware of my -feelings- (that's such a preposterous word) for her, I catch her, occasionally, glancing up to the sure to be opaque wall separating her from me. Sometimes, it's a faint smile. Other times, she simply leans against it as she talks to a co-worker, giggling about trite nonsense. I don't believe I've been imagining the shirts getting tighter and the skirts getting shorter. They're still tasteful, but I watch her daily, and I've noticed.

At night, I play a delicate balance between casual outings with the witch and clawing away at the fiendful itch inside my head.

On the nights I'm with her, I feel free, confident, and every evening surpasses the last in meeting my expectations. I'd like to say I've only had eyes for Granger in lieu of the whorish women who practically throw themselves at me, but -let's be honest. I'm a man. A man with needs. And, so far, the closest I've gotten to Granger's knickers is her sitting on my lap while listening to warm jazz back at her flat two weekends ago. The sexual frustration slays me, and I'm not strong enough to hold myself back from what I desire. So I've found strangers, between my times with her, to keep my bed warm. They each possess a certain quality I've come to adore in the witch who holds my rotten heart: some with curly hair, others with brown eyes, some with a know-it-all attitude, but they all share one thing in common: they're not her. And it's starting to get to me.

On the nights she reserves for herself -which is most nights, I should add- I've needed to keep myself busy, and the women, while enjoyable, just don't cut it. I find myself looking to my ledger, fingers twitching, staring at the scribbled names I've added over the years. Each one, a life I've taken. Each one, a reminder of how I'll never be what Hermione Granger sees inside.

Nostalgic, I find the first name. 'Irma Leopold.' The very first essence I snuffed out. It was an accident. A crime of passion, the courts call it. I hadn't known, then, the overwhelming power behind my hands. I thought they were used for writing, mounting a broom, and pleasing a lover. I had no idea these hands could do so much more. Strangle. Break. Put the fear of Merlin himself into my victim's eyes.

I didn't know what I was doing back then, but I have no excuses tonight. Already, I know who my victim will be before I walk out the door, wand in one pocket and my crescent knife in the other beneath my robes. If I'm to have this irritating need to be bad, then I will make sure I can only do bad to the ones who deserve it.

This is who I am. This is who I will be. Gods help Hermione Granger, because she's stuck in the back of my brain like a worm burrowing inside its host. She's a part of me now, and as such, just as part of the madness that will go down tonight, even if she has no clue. She is my inspiration. She is my muse.

Gods help Hermione Granger.

Knock, knock.

"Come in."

Hermione smiles at me as she approaches, a thick stack of bound ledgers in her arms. She shuts the door behind her and steps into my office, more chipper than I've seen her since she began that insufferable S.P.E.W. program back in Hogwarts. She sets the ledgers down on the extra chair across from my desk and claps her hands together once.

"Why are you so cheery?" I ask, skepticism in my tone.

Hermione bites her lower lip, a smile in her eyes. "Do you remember when I told you I've been working on my charity organization for house elf rehabilitation?"

Vaguely. I tend to zone out when she goes on her rants about house elf liberation, simply because I don't share the same sentiments. But she thinks I'm all for it now (a small lie to keep in her good graces) so I plant a calculated smile on my lips and say, "Well enough."

"Well, the Minister has approved my organization and carved out a new Ministry Division centered around magical creature protection and preservation!"

I'm not her redheaded buffoon of an ex, so the realization isn't lost on me, and I feel a sinking weight in my stomach. "You're quitting." Oh, fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck. Make it stop. What was Kingsley Shacklebolt thinking? Giving Hermione Granger her own wing of the Ministry? I'll never see her again. She'll be too busy liberating unicorns or protesting the wearing of niffler fur or -

"You don't sound happy for me."

I can feel it -that painful little zap in my brain, that irritating malicious intent wanting to rise to the surface and play. I choke it down, willing my eyes closed as I count backward from ten. Not here. Not now. *Control yourself*. "Congratulations," I finally manage, bitterness etched within my tone. After several moments of pause, I bring my eyes back open and reach for my quill, pretending I'm jotting down notes on my calendar instead of the black ticks of lines which fall in time with the beating of my racing heart. The scuffle of the quill tip to the paper is loud, but my thoughts are louder, and I need to drown them out.

She notices the sneer planted on my face, because she crosses her arms and frowns. "That's it?"

"Be sure to turn in a two-week notice before you're out," I mutter, controlling the pitch of my voice. "And perhaps leave a list of replacements for my secretary." My smirk crawls up my lips. "Preferably, one who is more well-endowed."

She slams her hand down on the table, startling me. "Honestly, Draco!"

I lift my head, confidence growing. Gotten under her skin, have I? Good. "Something wrong, Miss Granger?"

"*Miss Granger*, am I? I'm *Miss Granger now*?"

"I didn't know you were hard of hearing."

"Yes, well I didn't know you would act like such a cur at my promotion!"

"You expected a different reaction? This business has been flourishing with you in our legal department. Our sales are up eight percent, I finally was able to fire Agatha down on the fifth floor, and, thanks to your expertise, I won't be paying in a generous amount of taxes this year. So, if you expected me to rejoice at the news you will be leaving, you're sorely mistaken."

She stares at me, taken aback. "That sounded like a compliment."

I shrug. "Take it as you wish, Granger."

"*Hermione*."

"Surely you won't expect our little... trysts to continue? After all, you'll be at the Ministry, in your cozy office, nuzzling up to other bleeding heart sympathizers like yourself." I tear my gaze away and focus my efforts on rummaging through my drawers, searching for anything to make me look less interested in her presence.

Quietly, she takes a step forward, uncrossing her arms. "Is that what this is about? You're worried we won't see each other anymore, since we won't work together?"

I try to play it cold, pulling out a fresh bottle of black ink, even though I have one which is half full sitting on top of the desk. I sit the new with the old, admiring my handiwork. "I'd hardly describe me as worried."

"But you are." The little crease between her brows mirrors her concerns as she crosses the rest of the distance between us, leaning against my desk. There, she places a hand on my face, rendering me still. I find her gaze yet again, feeling my cheeks burn under the contact of her skin. "Draco..."

"Don't," I snap, narrowing my eyes. My instinct is to swat her hand away, but I hold myself back. "We both knew what this was. No attachments. No commitments. Just a bit of fun, *if* you could even call it that." I reach up and wrap my fingers around her wrist, ready to pull her away from me. But she holds her own.

"I know you're only being cruel because you care."

"Ha."

"I care, too."

My entire body seizes under the weight of her words. Thanks to them, I'm a statue, devouring her essence like the sun shining on my marble surface, heating me in places I didn't know could feel warmth.

Her hand drifts down, her wrist still in my clutches, until it rests against the part of my chest with a frantic heart beating beneath the surface. There's something palpable in the way her eyes rest in mine, like she's coming home after a grueling day. I want to be that for her, I realize. I want to be her home, no matter how pathetically inclined it makes me.

"Hermione."

My demon takes control, entranced by her warm, mocha eyes and inviting body. Before I realize what's happened, I've stood up, pressed my body against hers, scooped her up in my arms, and forced her into a frenzied kiss that slams her backside against my desk and shakes it. The elated groan to follow is nothing short of electrifying as we feed each other our lips and tongues and souls. It's debatable whether this is considered 'sexual misconduct' in the office, considering I am *technically* her boss, but she is *technically* a freelance worker. Bollocks to it, though, because she's quitting, and I'm not giving up the ghost that easily.

With one hand I turn her around and bend her over my calendar, and, with the other, I wave the lock shut to my office door. No need to have anyone stumble in on us.

There's a fire in my soul, and the only way of quenching it is taking Hermione Granger, here, in my office.

I half expect her to throw me off, but I'm met with a delicate moan as my hand pushes against the small of her spine.

"I'm going to take you in the most immodest way possible," I tell her with gravely undertones in my throat. "Right here. On my desk, while you watch your co-workers go about their meaningless existence." I, then, bunch up her skirt over the top of her glorious arse, revealing... "Fuck, Hermione. Are you wearing a garter belt?" My mouth moistens, and my prick springs to life. *Smack*. I leave a nice, red handprint on her left cheek to prove this moment.

"Mmgod, Draco" she gasps, and to my surprise brushes her delectable arse backward into my arousal. "Please."

Already, I've moved for my belt buckle. It doesn't take me long to release my cock from the confines of my trousers, and I brush the length between her silky thighs. The only thing between us now is her thin scrap of underwear, but I'll get to those soon enough. To draw out the moment, I lean over her on the desk, caressing my cock against her covered clit. One of my hands snakes under her throat, and I wrap my long flingers under her jaw, forcing her head up to look at the bullpen setting beyond my office.

"Do you want to be fucked in front of everyone, Hermione?" I ask, sexually charged. My free hand rips at the buttons of her blouse, popping a few of the top off. They scatter to the floor, revealing two creamy mounds of enticing flesh hidden beneath a cream-colored bra. I rest my chin in the crook of her neck, whispering against her cheek, "Does it make you wet to see all of your friends out there, knowing you're in here, about to be filled up with my cock?"

"Yes..." She whimpers, moving against my hand as if she wishes I were rougher. Testing the waters, I tighten my grip on her neck, and in return I receive a lavish groan. "Please, Draco..."

It's all I need to move forward with my plans. I release her throat and stand back upright before yanking her precious panties down until they meet her ankles.

There it is. My prize. The sultry lips of her bare pussy are slickened with her arousal, the aroma filling my senses and heightening my need for her. Never before has a woman caused such a need in me, but Hermione Granger has never been like other women. She's intelligent, and fiery, and beautiful to boot -not in the playwitch type of way. Her beauty is timeless, like a set of diamond cufflinks or the first snow in winter. I nearly feel I don't deserve to be behind such a stunning being, about to ram my cock inside her. *Nearly*.

"I won't be gentle," I say, not as a warning, but as a general statement. Her response is a timid sigh just before I align the tip of my prick at her entrance and - *sweet baby dragons*. Her cunt wraps tight around my shaft as I thrust into her all at once, not caring to 'take it slow' or to 'feel it out' -I know what I want, and it's for my dick to be soaked with her juices. I listen to the whimper of pain escape her throat, followed by the choked gasp. Her fingers curl over the edge of my desk, gripping tighter, and her head dips low.

"Fuck..." I sigh, loving the snug fit of her lovely cunt. I snap my hips back and forward, driving into her again, making her cry out. "Shh," I warn her, moving mercilessly inside of her while I lean forward, enveloping her small frame with my arms caging her in. "No silencing charms." Over and over again I piston into her, reveling in the way she attempts to stifle her moans by muffling her face in her shoulder.

"God... yes..." she whispers, moving her hips in time with my thrusts. "Just like that."

"Like this, Granger?" I ram harshly into her pulsing core and clamp my hand over her mouth to stifle her scream. "Little bookworm likes it rough, does she? Look at all those people out there." I leisurely give her my cock now, eyeing my employees as they shuffle paperwork at their desk and stand around the water cooler, swapping terrible jokes. "I bet they'd all love a turn at you, love. Merlin, if they could feel how wet your pussy is right now, they'd be clawing at each other for a chance. Even the women." I bite down on her shoulder, bracing my weight with one arm on the desk to keep myself balanced. Hermione squeaks into my palm. "But you aren't wet for them, are you? You're soaked for *me*. You're being fucked by *me*. This pussy belongs to *me*." I release her mouth and grab the back of her neck, shoving her forward to press her cheek against the wood. "Tell me it belongs to me."

"Ah!" She's caught off guard, that's for sure, but I don't plan on releasing her from this extremely submissive position until she's admitted what she's known for so long. "Draco... Draco, it hurts..." She tries to raise herself up, but I keep her down.

"Tell me," I demand.

"It belongs to you," she moans as I speed up, driving into her cunt like she's the last fuck I'll ever have. "Fu-uck... oh God... I'm so close..."

I release the back of her neck and smack her hard on the ass. Then, I grab her by the hair and tug her upright, onto her feet, still filled deep with my cock. One of my hand makes sure work of her clit, rubbing it in quick, tight circles while I grasp one of her tits with the other through the padding of her bra.

"You're *mine*," I say, as if forcing it into words she can hear will solidify my desires. My fingers tuck underneath her bra and find the soft skin of her nipple, already pebbled at my touch. "You belong," *to me*, "with me."

"I'm... I'm so close," she simpers, "Please, don't stop. Don't stop... oh, *Draco*...!"

Her slick walls clench around my dick in waves, signaling her release. Her mouth parts in a perfect 'O' shape, and her knees quake. My hand against her clit keeps her standing up straight, even as she rocks against my fingers in time with her orgasmic oscillations. Her sweet cunt milks me for all I'm worth, forcing my hand. I spill myself inside her, filling her up to the brim with my come, determined to make sure there isn't a single bit of Hermione Granger's sweet pussy that isn't drenched in my essence. I want her to feel my warm cum pooling into her panties when she gets back to her comfy office chair and think of me. I want her to smell our sex on her skin and know she will never be the same. I want her to crave this.

I rut against her until I'm fully spent, still not ready to untuck my cock from her inviting hole. So I pull us both back into my chair, her on top of me, my cock still buried deep within her.

"I'm thinking dinner on Saturday, followed by dancing," I whisper into her ear. "Followed by another version of this."

Her chest heaves up and down. Her eyes close, and she leans against my shoulder. "Mmm... I work on Saturday."

I chuckle, wrapping a possessive arm around her. "What asshole decided to make such a delightful creature such as yourself work on the weekend?"

"You."

"Prick. I'll have a word with him and see to it you're off."

"It's alright," she quips, tilting her head as her eyes open. A smile creeps up her lips. "I just gave him the news today I'm quitting."

After we sit there for a time, basking in the glow of our bawdy episode, Hermione insists on getting back to work. We re-dress in silence, and I particularly enjoy watching her magically fix the buttons on her blouse. She reaches up to her shoulder, no doubt where a bruise has already surfaced underneath from where I've bitten her. I *was* nice enough not to break the skin.

"So... Saturday?" I ask, walking her back to my office door. I reach around her waist to turn the lock, drawing myself deliciously close to her body. Our noses touch, and she brushes her lips against mine, smiling.

"Saturday."

"Congratulations," I tell her again, though this time I mean it, "on your promotion."

Hermione lands a gentle kiss to my lips. "Thank you."

I back away, and she takes her leave, but not before sending me one last, gentle smile.

The beast within me curls around inside my chest and closes his eyes. He's sated, for now. And that's all I could ever hope for at this point.

(Fans herself)
Hope you enjoyed!
More to come.

~A.

Threats

I've been fighting a pretty severe sinus infection, so I hope this is still up to par.

~A.

She's awake. I can feel her stir next to me on loveseat as the first rays of light peek through the curtains of her tiny loft. All night I've been here. She fell asleep hours ago, her head resting on my lap. Last night we did nothing physical. I have to say, the sexual portion of me is disappointed on a primal level, but the rest of me craved this kind of remedial chatter about work and hopes and aspirations. I never know what to expect when it comes to Hermione Granger, and this evening's been no different.

"Draco?"

"Present."

One eye pries open, and then the other, and now she stares up at me with a soothing smile. "You stayed."

"And?" I ask expectantly, unsure of why she's so surprised. I'm entirely at her mercy now, and I can only hope she ends me swiftly. I am weak, like a puddle of mud beneath her shoe, giving way to the weight of her chocolate brown eyes and cinnamon curls. The irony of that thought isn't lost on me, considering I've called her mudblood for a better part of both our lives. Now, it seems those dirty veins can do nothing but stain my tainted heart with her goodness.

"And..." She wipes the sleep from her eyes and shifts against my lap, resting her cheek against my lower stomach. "I'm just glad you're here."

My heart seizes. "Are you?"

"Did I stutter?"

I smirk. "No, you didn't." My eyes drift over to the fire, contemplating what all of it means. Hermione Granger, muggleborn and magical creature rights activist, has a soft spot in her heart for me. I can't wrap my head around it, no matter how many times I mull it over in my head. There's been a few times in these twilight hours where I thought about falling asleep along with her, but I much prefer to watch her sleep. The face she makes when she's resting... one couldn't put a price on it.

"Where do you go?"

I glance back down to her. "What?"

"Sometimes you fade away inside your mind and leave me here. I wanted to know where you went when you did."

"Who's to say I'm not always with you?"

She rolls her eyes. "Fine. Don't tell me." Her lower lip juts out, and she pouts like I used to (and, sometimes, still do.)

I feel hesitant about my next words but say them anyway. I don't enjoy lying to her.

"Hermione, if you understood what was inside my head, I guarantee you, you would go back to Weasley in an instant."

"Draco, I'm a big girl. I can handle myself."

"You think so?"

"Of course." She leans upright, her arms on my legs to prop herself up. Our faces are dangerously close, now. I'm fighting off the urge to wrap my slender fingers around her throat as she says, "Something is bothering you."

Only my persistent mental ticks that want me to throw her down to the floor and have my way with her. "Nothing's wrong, Hermione. I'm fine." I put on my most charming smile and stroke her cheek with the pad of my thumb. "The only thing I'm thinking about is you."

Seemingly satisfied with my answer, she rests her head on my shoulder and kisses just under my jaw. "Alright, Draco. I trust you."

My throat, my shoulders, my arms -they all tense at once at her words.

She trusts me?

She trusts me.

How can she trust me when I can't begin to trust myself?

"P-please... I'll do whatever you say... j-just-"

I hold the knife at my side, polishing it against the fabric of my sleeve. Holding the knife so dangerously against my arm is exhilarating, but it doesn't compare to the feeling of Hermione's bare flesh against mine. I'm beginning to notice the nuances in my thought patterns. Even now, with this man tied to the table, it doesn't satisfy me the way it once did.

"-You want money? No. U-Um... women? I can get you women!"

My eyes flicker upward, meeting my victim's eyes. I can tell he's trying. Good for him. It won't change his fate.

"What the fuck do you want?!"

I lean forward, giving him a predatory smirk as I inhale the scent of his fear. "Atonement."

Knock. Knock. KNOCK.

"Excuse me -you can't just barge in-"

"-Auror business," a gruff voice mumbles, pushing my office door open and disrupting my afternoon ritual of pretending to work when really I'm thinking of all the sexy outfits I'd love to see Hermione in for Valentine's Day. My gray eyes meet the steadfast glare of Ron Weasley, determination set in his tone as he stalks across the room. "Malfoy, we gotta talk. *Now*."

"Do you have an appointment?" I raise a singular eyebrow, commanding authority over the room.

"Appointment? I don't bloody need an appointment, you slimy git."

"Actually, you do." I set my quill down and fold my hands across my desk, attempting my most pleasant tone. I know how it will get under his skin. "And don't think of using your Auror credentials against me, Weasley. You and I both know you retired last year."

His blue eyes narrow, and his lankish body throws itself into the chair reserved for guests -of which he is not. Just a primordial speck of dirt which flitted into the room by its own accord. "What are y'doing with 'Mione?"

"Nothing -at the moment. You're welcome to search my office, however, if it sates your curiosity."

"You know that's not what I mean. Hermione says you two are... together."

"And?"

"*And?*" His voice cracks an octave. "You're kidding me, right? And you're no good for her, that's what!"

"I think she's entitled to make her own decisions, don't you?" I drawl, putting adequate displeasure in my voice. "And her name is *Hermione*. Not 'Mione."

Weasley's face turns the color of a fresh tomato. "Merlin! What the Hell does she see in a prat like you?"

"You mean besides my obvious good looks, charm, and countless fortune?"

"She doesn't give a flying turnip about fortune! 'Mione's better than all that!"

"Weasley, calm yourself."

"Or what? You gonna have one of your cronies 'escort' me out the door?" He snorts a laugh.

Schoolboy Draco relished these kinds of verbal tit for tat, but the Draco I am now only wants to take Weasley's tongue and shove it so far up his arse he can taste his entrails. "Better. I'll escort you out myself." I push myself up to stand, and Weasley does the same. We are two

bated sharks, smelling the blood in the water and looking for the weakness it stems from. "Hermione's made her choice, Weasley. Unless you'd like to find your head quite literally shoved up your arse, I highly recommend leaving my office."

"You don't scare me, Malfoy."

"I should." My smirk drops from my face, as do my pretenses. "Stay the Hell out of our relationship, Weasley."

"Relationship? Is that what you're calling it?"

"What else would it be?"

"A perversion of nature."

"No, Weasel-bee. That's reserved for the day you were born."

Weasley rolls his eyes, kicking back the guest chair and scooting it a few feet behind him. "You think I don't see it, but I do. There's something seriously wrong with you, Malfoy. And I'm gonna find out what it is."

"By all means," I bow mockingly, extending my arm toward the door, "But in the meantime, I highly recommend you make like Hermione's feelings for you and *disappear*."

"Fucking Malfoys." Weasley takes his leave, slamming my office door behind him. I pretend it doesn't bother me, even when my secretary comes in apologizing profusely and making a fuss over her failure. I agree with her -she is one, but I have appearances to keep, so I simply dock her a day's pay and warn her that if it happens again, she will be fired.

When I'm alone in my office once more, I lock the door and begin to pace.

Tension builds in my fingertips and in my forearms. I can feel the inner demon within me screaming to come out, to hunt down Weasley, to give him a piece of my mind and my knife. How *dare* he come in and parade himself around as the protective boyfriend? Their relationship is finished. Good riddance. The deader, the better.

No. No... Weasley is an important jigsaw in Hermione's world. He's not next on my list, or even anywhere near my list at all. He's just an annoying mosquito who I mustn't squish, less it upset the animal-rights-activist Hermione Jean Granger.

Still, I don't like the idle threats made by Weasley all the same. If he were to figure out my secret, he could ruin me.

But I can't kill him.

But I can't let him run around and build any suspicions against me, especially when things are just starting to go my way.

Fuck. I'm certainly in a pickle, aren't I?

I'll see how this develops for now, but...

I scratch my scalp, trying so hard to be *good*. Fuck, how to normal people survive day to day?

More to come, of course. Darker. Deadlier. Sexier.

~A.

Clash

I hope everyone's had a Merry Christmas / whatever you might celebrate. It was a good one on this end. Enjoy the chapter!

~A.

Valentine's Day.

Ugh.

The one day of the year where humans celebrate fertility and the want to get it on by painting everything in red or pink hearts and stuffing themselves full of sugary sweets. We give flowers that will die, like the love we promise others, and if a gift isn't given, the results are astronomically disastrous. As a Malfoy, I try to avoid this time of the year at all costs; my newly acquired counterpart, however, seems to want to spend the holiday together.

Not that I'm complaining...much.

Secretly, there's a minute portion of me who feels a sense of excitement. I've never spent a Valentine's Day with someone I honestly... cared about. What ring of Hell have I emerged from to realize I've grown fond of Hermione Granger? What did I do in a past life to deserve all of the festive bubble hearts floating through the hallway on the way to her office, making me want to vomit? What did I do to piss Karma off so bad I'm forced to watch little magical cupids float around the Ministry and sample cheap wine in hopes of making it past her new secretary?

Oh, that's right. I kill people. That's what I've done to deserve all of this.

But have I *really*? I'm not sure even Jack the Ripper deserved the Hell I'm forced to endure.

As it turns out, Hermione's S.P.E.W. is hitting it off quite swimmingly in the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. She has her own alcove carved out in a cozy office with three subordinates beneath her and a lifetime of paperwork always neatly placed on the corner of her desk. I'm just outside the door, about to let myself in to surprise her, when I hear the faint murmur of chatter inside.

"Everything's under control," Hermione can be heard from the other side. "You're being irrational."

"You didn't see the way he looked at me, 'Mione."

Weasley. Of course, he'd be here, groveling before her on the most romantic of holidays. I shouldn't be surprised.

"You barged into his office, unannounced. I imagine he looked at you with loathing and deploration."

"This isn't *funny*."

"I'm not laughing."

"There's something wrong with him, Hermione. I have this... Auror's intuition. Malfoy is definitely up to something."

My breathing stills, and a cold sweat breaks out over my ivory skin. The weasel is stooping so low as to involve Hermione in his suspicions? I underestimated him. Part of me wants to storm into the room, shove my wand down his smug throat, and prove just how correct his intuition is. The rest of me beats back the idea in self-preservation, knowing to do so would only wreck my chances with the witch of my desire, not to mention it might earn me a one way ticket to Azkaban for roughing up a former Auror officer in the middle of the morning.

"You sound just like Harry all those years ago back at Hogwarts," Hermione dismisses his suspicions. "You remember how accurate he was."

"Yeah. The sod let Death Eaters into Hogwarts. Harry was right."

"Do you think I've forgotten?" she hisses at him, and then I hear the scraping of a chair across the wooden floor.

"Why are you dating him, then?"

There is a pause. "It's none of your concern, Ronald."

"Mione..."

"Don't."

"Has he threatened you?"

She gives a shrill laugh. "Oh, yes. I'm daft enough to become the victim of an abusive relationship. I'm only dating Draco because he's forced me to. -Is that what you want to hear?"

"Y'don't have to be so snippy."

"I'll be as snippy as I want to, Ron! You can't just come in here and ask me why I'm dating someone new. You walked away from this relationship, or have you forgotten?"

"That's not fair, 'Mione! How was I supposed to compete with-"

"-*Compete*?" she seethes. "We were *together*, Ron. There's nothing to compete with! Once my heart belongs to someone, it stays faithful. You should have trusted me."

Weasley produces the question in my head into words. "So, Malfoy... does your heart belong to *him* now?" There's an even longer pause, and I hang on bated breath. "I see... "

"Ron-"

"-I'm gonna figure out what's going on with him, and when I do, you'll see I was right. I'm never gonna stop fighting for you, Hermione."

Footsteps approach the door, and I prepare to back away and feign innocence when Hermione says, barely above a whisper, "Don't interfere."

Now, I might not be able to see what's beyond that door, but I can feel the magic intensify in the room as Weasley metaphorically hackles. "What does *that* mean? What aren't you telling me?"

"It means... if you love me, you'll leave Draco alone. For your sake."

"*My* sake? What the actual fuck, Hermione?"

"Goodbye, Ronald."

The door swings open before I have a chance to react, and I'm caught in my public eavesdropping position. I try my best to play it off, glancing at the imaginary dirt beneath my nails as if my hands are the most interesting things on the whole damn planet. It doesn't stop Weasley from glaring daggers at me and blanching at my presence.

"Malfoy..."

I snap my eyes up in his direction, nodding once while painting a smirk across my vulturine expression. "Weasley."

The git drives his shoulder into mine, but I catch him by the arm and dig my fingers tightly into his biceps, determined to make an impression.

"Draco," Hermione warns, and I release him quickly. Somehow, the witch knows I'm under her spell and cannot argue with her. Weasley storms off down the hallway. When he turns the corner, I give my full attention to Hermione as I step into her office and shut the door firmly behind me.

All of my Valentine's Day spirit has snuffed out like the many lives I've taken, and my gaze is icy as I meet her weary expression.

"How long have you been standing there?"

"Long enough."

After biting on her lower lip (which I know means she is lost in thought), she gestures to the guest chair on the other side of her desk. "Take a seat."

"Not really in the mood."

"Draco-"

"-What did you mean?"

She's quiet, assessing the room. It must be obvious how skeptical I am, because she gives a soft sigh and strums her fingers atop her planner, forcing her eyes into my own as if doing so will absolve us of all the tense energy in the room. Instead, it only pricks the monster inside of me like a needle on the edge of my thumb.

"Did you or did you not threaten Ron earlier in the month?"

My lip twitches. "Did he use the word 'threat'? I'm flattered."

"He didn't *need* to." She slams her palm onto the table, grasping my full attention. "I think we should have a chat. *Please*, take a seat."

And I do. My posterior rests comfortably on the seat cushion, and I curl my hands around the armrests, teeth clamped together and mouth arid. Hermione walks back around her desk, grabs up a quill, dips it in some ink, and begins to scribble something down on a bright pink notepad. Then, she folds it once over and slides it across the table to me.

"This was *not* the way I imagined us spending our first Valentine's Day together," she whispers, eyes on the note between us. "I was hoping to have more time to build trust..."

My eyes flicker up to her face, and an uneasiness settles in my stomach. "Trust?"

She nods, sitting down in her chair. There, she places her hands properly in her lap, like a formal British lady, and licks her dry lips. "I haven't been entirely honest with you."

All I can do is sit blankly across from her, tense and nervous. This all came out of the blue, and it's been my experience that particular color can only end in disaster. My hand instinctively reaches for the note, and Hermione reaches over the table, overlapping my hand with hers. "Before you read it, I want you to know... I'm not walking away from you. I'm not turning my back. Us being together... I didn't plan it. But I'm glad it's happened."

Resisting the urge to vomit, I jerk my hand out from under hers, the note between my fingers. With a sardonic smirk, I wave it in front of my face then unfold it. My eyes scan over the words, and...

My entire world shatters.

'I know.'

My hand begins to shake, and there's a sting in the back of my brain.

What does she know? She can't possibly... what does she think... I can't... Oh, Merlin. Shit. Shit, shit, shit. What does it mean? What does she think she knows? Do I confront her? Threaten her? Modify her memories and make a cover story? Do I trust her?

Courage has never been my strong suit, and I'm not about to begin learning new skills this late in my life. I jerk myself up from the chair, straighten out the collar of my coat, and start toward the door.

"Draco, wait!"

"I can't."

The door shut echoes like a magical explosion down the hallway, startling a passerby. I struggle to keep my composure as a barrel past the portly gentleman, ignoring as the door comes back open behind me. There's no way I can handle looking at her right now. No way I can ask her what she thinks she knows. I need room to think. To breathe. To plan and stew and - "Fuck."

I need to kill.

Okay, remember. Not everything is as it seems in my stories, but we definately will have some interesting developments to address. Don't worry. You can trust me with this story. Please leave a review? It would mean so much!

~A.

Bloody Bones

 Image may contain: 1 person, text

This chapter is extremely dark and deals with topics of murder as well as graphic depictions of violence. If this is a trigger, please do not read beyond this point. But if you'd like answers, along with an insight into Draco's darkness, please, keep reading.
~A.

There's a spot in Knockturn Alley that's just sleazy enough for no one to question my motives called The Spiny Serpent. The door remains locked at all times and only opens to those with deceit in their heart. That isn't a metaphor -it literally is spelled that way, so all occupants know exactly what they're walking into; no one with pure motives can entire the pub, and that's just the way we like it.

Of course, it opens to me. Always has, even when I was a teenager. As the door swings open, I'm met with the robust aroma of dark ales, smoking tobacco, and residual dark magic. Honestly, the smell brings me back to my youthful days, as these were the scents which would fill my home on numerous occasions when the Dark Lord and his followers took up residency in the Malfoy Manor. It isn't a scent I associate with warm feelings, but beggars can't be choosers when running away from romantic counterparts in fear they might already know...

Considering it is only noon, and on the most potentially romantic day of the year, the pickings are slim for any company at all. A group of silver-haired, snaggle-toothed witches sit in a back corner, dwelling over older textbooks in hushed whispers; there's a hairy wizard off in the back corner, throwing darts at a moving picture from the Daily with the headline 'Auror Potter: Back in Black.' Besides these three hooligans, there's the alluringly seductive Veela hybrid bartender I've learned never to piss off, but always to compliment. I find it difficult to locate the will to as I approach the bartop and take a seat on one of the swivel stools, but I know if I don't, I'm liable to be cursed -or worse, my beautiful eyeballs could be pecked out should she decide to turn into a foul harpy.

"Rosita, you're looking marvelously well-groomed today. Pruning those feathers all night?"

Rosita rolls her olive colored eyes and pours me a shot of something strong. I've also learned never to question what she decides to offer, less I want to end up burned by fireballs like the werewolf in here last weekend who said her drinks were watered down.

"Last we spoke, you had yourself a girl," she says to me, leaning over the counter to show off her exquisite pair of tits. My loyalties might lie with Hermione, but my eyes can still appreciate the finer things in life. Merlin, those mounds are mouthwatering... "What are you doing here?"

I take my chances of pissing her off and sneer under my breath, "I don't see where that's any of your concern," before I throw back my shot. It's sour and bitter, and it burns my throat just the way I like it. I barely flinch as I slam the shot glass back down on the table and point to it, signaling I want another round.

"Don't tell me you're giving up just yet."

"I haven't given up on anything," I mutter, watching her pour me more amber liquid. "However, her insufferable ex continuously finds the need to block my path at any given chance."

Rosita strums her manicured nails along the table and sighs. "You haven't put him on the list, have you?"

"Men like him... they never go on the list," I grumble back, disheartened.

"Have room for one more?"

"It doesn't work like that."

"Too bad. I know an ex who deserves it..." She rests her chin in her hand and leans even closer to me, forcing me to inhale her thick perfume of lilacs and cinnamon. It isn't a pleasant scent, and I resist the urge to repel away from her. "So how do you know?"

"Hmm?"

"Who goes on? Who stays off?"

I shrug. "I'm not sure." My paranoia kicks in, and I grab her around the wrist. "Why are you asking so many questions today?"

"Easy there," Rosita simmers, using her partial Veela charms to force oxytocin to release in my brain. Quickly, I let go of her wrist and am given a reprieve. "I only ask because I can feel it in you, Malfoy. There's something wicked in that soul of yours."

"You're one to talk."

She all out laughs at me, twirling a section of her hair around her finger. "I think it's delicious -the darkness in you. You could use your talents for bigger things if you'd branch out."

"That an invitation?"

"If you want to call it that."

"Not interested."

She shrugs. "Fine. Suit yourself. But I know a few people who would be interested in your... expertise, should you find the want."

I snort a laugh and watch her pour me another shot. "Just keep the booze coming, Rosita. That's your *job*, after all."

I'm not sure how much time passes inside this hole in the wall bar, but it's long enough that the bottle of mysterious liquor is halfway gone, and the pub has filled up considerably more than it was before. My fingers keep finding their way to my scalp, tugging on the roots of my white-blond tresses in frustration. The only thing on my mind, playing on repeat, is Hermione Granger biting her lip just before I read the words on her obnoxiously pink note.

'I know.'

But what the bloody Hell *does* she know? Does she know as much as Rosita? That I'm dangerous? Does she know about my list? Does she know how many I've taken under my knife? Or does she suspect there is something wrong with me, as Weasley does? Is she conspiring with him? Is that way he was in her office this morning?

That note was fucking vague as Hell. I don't know what to make of it, and regret forms in me from not simply asking her what she meant before I stormed off in a fit of paranoid rage. What's worse is I'm not sure how to approach her from this point on. Do I hear her out? Can I take that risk of knowing she might actually despise me with every part of her soul? Am I some charity case? How can one witch crumble my pillar of depravities? I'm a cold blooded killer, and yet...

The door swings open, presenting a huge gust of Northern wind. It shivers me down to my bones -or, I think it does until the prickle in my brain begins to sting, and my head turns abruptly behind me, taking in the sight of a tall gentleman with a thick, black beard and matching, slick backed hair.

"Two pints, honey," he says as he approaches the bartop and takes a seat one away from mine.

His voice... there's something... infuriating about it. Though it might seem pleasant enough, I can hear the acidic drawl of a monster inside. The monster inside of *me* doesn't play well with others, especially so close to its kindred heart. There's a twitch of a smirk at the corner of my lips as I realize: this man is perfect for the list.

"I'll take a pint, too, Rosita," I chime in, tossing one finger up in the air, "You know what? I'm buying his round, too."

"I don't swing that way," says the man to me.

"You think I'm hitting on you?" I snigger. "That's *cute*. Even if I were bent, which I'm not, my tastes run a bit more... selective."

The man snorts in response. "Yeah, you ain't my type, either." He sets his wand on the counter. "So, why buy a stranger a drink, then?"

Rosita sets the pints in front of us, giving me an inquisitive look, to which I ignore and clink my mug with the man's. "Just came into a bit of luck, is all. Right place, right time, you

know?"

"Sure..." He tosses back his drink and downs the mug in five gulps. Dribbles of ale fall down the sides of his mouth and soak into his beard, but he doesn't seem to care. He goes to the next one, and that's when I see it -the scratches on the sides of his wrist, just underneath the cuff of his coat. It's all I need to agree with my other side, and excitement brews inside my stomach.

"Got a name there, mate?"

The man raises a thick eyebrow, burps, and pats his chest with his fist. "Floyd."

"Hello, Floyd." You're going to die today.

Fuck yes. This rush... it's just what I need to take the edge off. The warm splatter of blood on my face is as soothing as a hot bath after a long day or Hermione's embrace. I'm able to think clearly now as Floyd twitches beneath the knife carving into his shoulder, toying with him. Tears trickle down his cheeks, and his muffled wails beneath the gag in his mouth are music to my ears.

"What's the matter, Floyd? Can't take what you dish out?" I smirk above him, stripping off my blood soaked overshirt and revealing the plain white one beneath. I've severed a brachial artery, which explains the newly paper-white complexion he wears.

I can read the crease in his brows: 'Sick fuck.' That's what he thinks of me.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't agree with him.

Seriously, what the fuck is wrong with me? I'm spending my Valentine's Day carving up a shithead instead of under the covers of my bed deep inside the woman I... Holy Hell. Do I love her? Is that even possible?

Love. No. I'm not capable of that.

So what is it that binds me to her? Why am I thinking of her, even now?

I pull the knife up into the candlelight and watch the crimson drip down my wrist. So beautiful, isn't it? The color red. The color of passion, of bravery, of anger. So much can be said in its boldness. I never appreciated its wonder until I saw it spill from someone's throat the first time...

Maybe I should hear her out.

"You ever been in love, Floyd?" I ask, twirling the hilt of the blade around in my fingertips. "I don't know why I'm even talking to you about this. It's not like you'll be around to give me advice on the matter. And judging by a scumbag like you, I doubt I'd care to take the advice from someone as perverse as yourself." I tap the blade on his cheek, and Floyd's eyes go wide. "Oh, don't worry. Your secret's safe with me. I'm not entirely sure how I know you're a deplorable shitbag. I just... do." The tip of my knife skirts over his eyelid but not enough to

bite. "But my question is, do shitbags like us deserve to love, Floyd? Are we capable of it?" I push the knife into the groove of his tear duct, finally piercing the skin. A fresh line of ruby drips down his cheek and pools into his eye. Floyd screams against his gag -I imagine the saltiness of his blood burns his sensitive cornea. Pity. "And even if we were, should we be loved back? Not that I think she loves me. But it's always nice to dream, yes?"

Ah, I'm not getting through to him. He's thrashing against his restraints, and I cast a stunning charm on him to hold him still.

Then, I lean over, holding the tip of my knife over his other eye. "I'll ask again. You ever been in love, Floyd?"

Then I drive the knife down and listen to the faint, muffled scream, followed by his body seizing up. "That's what I thought." A wicked smile crosses my face, and the knife slides easily through the soft tissue all the way back to the base of his skull.

I inhale the scent of death and exhale relief.

Hermione's brown eyes are the first thing that rises to the surface of my mind when I come down from my high. I can only imagine how disappointed she would be in me if she knew... if she saw me this way. Fuck, what am I doing? Why am I here? What the Hell is wrong with me?

I drop the knife, and it clatters at my feet, splattering my shoes with blood.

"Get it together, Draco," I whisper to myself.

It's now that I know what I need to do. I need to talk to her. There's no way she can know who I really am, can she?

I can play this off. I can... I can make this okay. Some memory modification, a little romance, and this can all be swept under the rug. I can't lose her. I can't...

My feet take to the steps leading out of the dungeons two at a time until I'm at the top. My hand is poised for the door when a faint knock stops me in my tracks.

"Draco?"

Hermione.

Fuck.

Shit.

Damn it.

"What are you doing here?" My voice carries shards of metaphoric ice in her direction, hoping to pierce her soul. Even if it's the last thing I want to do. "How did you..." The floor. I left it open. How could I have been so careless?

The doorknob turns, and even though it's locked, my hand goes to it and stills its movements.

"Can I come in? Please?"

I shake my head, knowing she can't see it. "I... no." My palms are soaked in a dead man's blood. I'd rather lose my entire inheritance before I let her walk through that door right now.

"How long have you been here?"

"I only arrived a moment ago," she starts, jiggling the handle again. Eventually, she gives up and sighs. "Please... talk to me."

"Alright." I lean my forehead on the door, imagining her solemn face and knowing I could never resist it. "Let's talk."

"Really?" Her voice holds hope. I've given that to her, and isn't that entirely selfish of me to enjoy it so much?

"Let's start with the note." I pause, gauging her reaction. I'm met with only silence. "Just what the Holy Hell was all that about, Hermione? What do you 'know'?" I drain my voice of pleasantries and fill it with prideful sneering. I can't let her know how anxious I am to hear her answer.

"I imagine it's a bit difficult to explain through a door."

"This is as good as you're going to get, Granger." There I am, back at my roots of casting everyone at arm's length.

"Okay." I can already imagine her nodding. "Okay..." There's a soft thunk, like a hand touching the door. "I know what you are, Draco."

My heart skips a beat. Impossible. "And just what do you think I am?"

"You shouldn't blame yourself. If you let me, I can help you-"

"Answer the question. What. Do. You. Think. I. *Am*?"

"Lost," she answers. "Confused. Tortured... God, you must feel so alone... It started with headaches, didn't it? Sensitivity to sunlight and sounds? Then it heated, like water left on a hot stove. You had nightmares. And anger. And you began to turn away from everything and everyone-"

"Stop analyzing me," I snap, hating how she is accurate in every way. "I'm not one of your damn case assignments."

"So it's true, then. You know what you are, too."

I stare down at my shaking hands. "A monster..."

"No, Draco! No, you're not!" I can hear the desperation in her voice as she tries to comfort me. "You're not the monster. Open the door, Draco. Please. I'll explain everything, but you

need to open this door."

"I can't."

"You can trust me."

Hot tears spring up in my eyes, and I shake my head. "No... I can't."

"Draco... please. I'm here. I'm right here for you. I can help you. All you have to do is open the door."

Open the door. Is that truly all I need to do?

"You don't understand. I can't trust myself. I don't know what I'd do..."

"You won't hurt me." She wiggles the doorknob. "I trust you, Draco. Trust *me*. I can fix this. I can help you understand."

For the first time in a long time, I want to trust someone again. I want it to be her. So, I unspell the door and turn the handle, holding my breath. Then I tug the door open and stand before her, bloody bones and all.

"Help me."

I told you this fic would get dark. Bigger reveals next chapter, along with some darkness. You've been warned.

~A.

Fear of a Name

Answers in this chapter... you're not going to see it coming. (Closes eyes and prepares herself) Alright. Here we go.

~A.

Have you ever planned something in your head, down to the last gruesome detail, only to have it go completely in the opposite direction? I thought she'd run in the opposite direction, scream at me to go away, possibly hex me on the spot and floo the Ministry. I prepared myself the moment I opened that door; a thousand different scenarios ran through my head, each more disastrous than the last.

However, I'm not prepared when our eyes meet and all I can find is sympathy.

"Help me." My words hang in the air between us like dust particles, too scattered to grasp and take back. I stand before her, dressed in blood, my gaze a withering shell of who I am when I'm alone. Standing before her, I've never felt so small. My knees knock together, and a weary exhaustion fills me up to the brim. Suddenly, all I want to do is fall to my knees and beg her forgiveness. Beg her to understand. Beg her to see the human in me... if there's any human in me left to give.

Then, she takes a step *forward*. "Oh, Draco." Her hand extends, slowly, as if I'm some thestral meant to bolt should she startle me. And like a thestral, I observe her hand with interest, wondering if I can truly trust her. To both our surprise, I let her place her hand on my blood-splattered cheek, leaning into her touch. "How long?"

How long *what*? How long have I been killing? Enjoying the thrill of blood dripping over my skin? Contained a darkness in me that's been devouring my soul? "Years." My cheek brushes against her palm, and my eyes close automatically. "Say it."

"Say what?"

"Tell me I'm unforgivable."

Her other hand comes up and cups my face, a perfect tipping point to let my emotions boil over. I'm butter in her hands, spread thin and warm. I want... I want...

"Come with me."

The next thing I know, I find her hand in mine, and she's dragging me down the corridor towards the parlor. I'm not worthy enough to follow her, but I do anyways, simply because I'm not strong enough to resist her presence. I barely register my surroundings until I find myself in my leather armchair, Hermione's hands moving swiftly to the bottom of my crimson stained shirt to remove it. My hands catch her forearms, and I meet her gaze, finally, shaking me out of my lost in translation thoughts. "Stop this."

"You need new clothes," she says stubbornly. So stubbornly that I allow her to finish her task, and the thin material of my shirt brushes over my head and arms before dropping to the floor at my feet. Hermione produces her wand next and conjure up a bowl and towel. "*Aguamenti*." The bowl fills with water, and she dips the tip of the hand towel into the bowl before bringing it to my cheek and dabbing. Silence falls between us, uncomfortable and stuffy, as she cleans my face and neck with careful consideration. My fingers dig into the armrests of my chair, and my jaw is so tight my teeth ache. I want nothing more than to recoil from her, but I am too entranced by her willingness to see this through. Inspired to do the same, I relax my posture slightly as she moves the cloth down my neck, pressing it to my skin like a compress.

"Why?" I ask.

"It isn't your fault."

I snort a laugh.

"It *isn't*, Draco."

"What would you know about any of it?" I sneer, dutifully sticking my nose up in the air and turning my gaze elsewhere. "You should be horrified right now."

"Who said I wasn't?" she eloquently counters. Hermione wrings the towel over the bowl of water, dripping droplets of watered down red into the water. Then she brushes the material over my nose and cheek. "Tell me when it started."

"You said you knew what was happening to me. Explain."

"Answer my question first."

"It was hardly a question," I reply. "More of a demand, really..."

"Draco."

I lick my lower lip, finding myself smirking. No matter the situation, my name from her mouth is deliciously sinful. "It began with headaches, as you said."

"When?"

"After the War."

Her eyes trail down my neck, to my collarbone. "I see." She dabs the cloth there in gentle strokes across my chest. "The headaches. Describe them."

"Mind numbing. Like a needle pricking the back of my skull."

"Mhmm..." she nods. "What eggs it on?"

"Noises... No, more than noises. High frequencies."

"And then what?"

Do I give her the chance? Could this all be some figment of my imagination? Have I finally gone around the bend and lost my mind?

"We both know what comes next," I say. "The only question is why you aren't turning me into the proper authorities."

"It isn't your fault-"

"-Yes, you keep saying that. But I don't think you understand, Hermione. I *enjoy* it." My hand wraps around her wrist and tugs her closer, between my legs. Her knees rest on the floor, but her head hovers just inches from mine. I want her to understand my presence in her world and see the terror in her eyes when she does. Only then can I oblivate her memories in good conscience. "It's euphoric. I'm high as a kite when I do it, and I don't plan to stop. Not even for you." My heart is in my throat, choking me as my stare chokes her.

"I can help you."

"I highly doubt that. I am what I am."

"You're only this way because you've let a darkness into you."

"Tell me about it."

"Not metaphorically. *Literally*." Our eyes meet again, and this time hers hold a sense of resolve. "You're not this way because you're evil. You're this way because you've been *cursed*."

Cursed?

"The headaches. The detachment. The... bloodlust..." she swallows. "They're all signs you've been cursed by a *Dybbuk*." The sound of the word is like cymbals crashing against my eardrums, and I wince. Fuck it all! What the Hell was that?

"A what?" I mutter out, shutting my eyes and cursing the way my head throbs.

"A *Dybbuk*."

"Fuck!" I release her wrist and clamp my hands down over my ears while it feels like quill tips are being shoved into my eardrums. "Stop saying that word!"

"Fascinating..."

Before I know what's happening, Hermione has climbed into my lap and placed a hand on each side of my face, turning it this way and that. The pulsing pain lessens, and I will my eyes back open, though my hands stay firmly shut over my ears. "What did you do to me?"

"I didn't do anything. Though, it does confirm my theories." Her muffled voice is soothing. She doesn't look at all frightened by me, only in awe. "Only someone affected by the creature is repelled by the name. You're cursed, Draco. And if you continue down the path you walk without intervention..."

"What?" I ask. "*What* will happen to me?"

"You'll become a Dyb... one of them. For good. Unhinged. A restless spirit out for revenge. There will be no retrieving your soul."

Is there a soul to save at all, in any case? I can hardly see the appeal. "I... you're wrong." I shake my head. "I'm not cursed. I'm damaged. Mental. You should be calling St. Mungos to lock me up, not..." Her nose brushes against mine. "What are you doing?" I now notice there are tears in her eyes.

"Stop pushing me away. I know what I'm talking about. My entire career is based off of the knowledge of magical creatures. Do you think I'd confront you if I thought saving you was futile? Do you really think I'd risk my career on a hopeless cause?"

"I've killed people, Granger."

"I know."

"You should be frightened of me."

"I know."

"Then what are you doing?"

"I won't give up on you." Her lips brush dangerously against mine. "I can save you."

Save me? "And who says I want to be saved?"

"Stop it. Of course you do. Why else would you ask for my help?"

Does she not understand? This... Dybbuk or not, it doesn't matter. If I'm cursed, or mentally conditioned, it makes no difference. I've *killed*. Murdered. I'm beyond her forgiveness, and she needs to understand it.

"Get off me."

"No."

"I said *get off me*." I dig my fingers into the back of her hair and tug her head back, forcing her to see me for what I am. "There is no saving me, Granger. I'm not one of your little projects. I'm broken, and there's no fixing me. And if you don't get out of here right now, I'll break you, too."

"You won't hurt me," she whispers, stark still in my lap. There's a challenge in her eyes. "This is part of the Dybbuk curse."

"Stop saying that word!" I growl as pain floods inside my mind.

"Look at me, Draco!" she shouts back at me, and it startles me to the point where I release her hair and am transfixed in her stare. "I'm not going anywhere, do you hear? I'm going to see

you through this. We can lift this curse."

I can feel the prickle in the back of my brain, and I'm conflicted. Every fiber of my soul is screaming to accept her help, but there's a layer of numbness inside me that won't let my feelings break through. "I like the way I am, Hermione. I don't want to be changed." And even as I say it, I'm not sure if I believe it. "Besides," I coil one of her chestnut curls around my finger and tug, "I think the you before me is smitten by who I already am."

"I-"

"-Are you really going to deny it?" My eyes bore into hers, demanding her attention. "If you've known what I am -what I do for so long, and yet you'd be willing to go out on dates with me and let me fuck you over my work desk," I emphasize my point by gyrating my hips against hers, "then I say you like me just the way I am."

Her eyes flutter closed half a moment, but she catches herself, brings them back open, and stares stubbornly at me. "I'm here to help you. The more you let the darkness in, the more it will consume your soul."

"Would a good person want to tie you up and shove a cock down your throat just to shut you up?"

She glares evenly at me. "You don't mean that."

"That's the thing." I can already sense my patience wavering. "I really, *really* do." Curling my arms around her waist, I draw her close to me, pressing our bodies against each other just before I smash my lips against hers. Never in my life did I imagine my darkest secret would be one I could share with the one person I cared about. It's liberating. Freeing. She thinks she can save me... ha. She'll try. But if she likes me as I am now, what's to say she couldn't join me over here in the darkness? She wants to see the good in me? All I want to do is show her how very *bad* I can be.

It's only going to get darker from here on out, so I suggest preparing yourself. More answers on what a Dybbuk is next chapter. I didn't make it- it really is a lore.

~A.

Testing the Water

 Image may contain: one or more people and text

Managed to get some more writing done tonight. This chapter contains a slight non-con element, peppered with consent. Complicated emotions. You'll see. However, if that isn't okay, there is always a lighter fiction of mine to read, yes? Anyway, read on! Just posted a new comedy fic titled 'Tango.'

Somehow, someway, she's vexed me into staying the night at her place for not one, two, but three nights in a row for 'observations.' Each night after that fateful encounter, I've been accompanied from my office to her flat with no room for extra curriculars. Hermione believes it's what's best, and I'm willing to let her think so if it means I am allowed to spend as many extra moments with her as possible. I sent her home the night she revealed her true intentions to me; I couldn't bare the thought of her being considered an 'accomplice' in my transgressions. But after I disposed of Floyd what's-his-name, I arrived at her place promptly, freshly showered, and allowed her to run vital scans on me to reveal my inner workings.

Three nights of this and the only thing she's discovered is the slight heart murmur I've carried since birth. I watch her wave her wand this way and that over various parts of my body before she nods or sighs and scribbles away in a composite notebook meant for her research. Eventually, I grow bored and retire to her sofa, flipping through her coffee table magazines and debating how best to approach her on the subject of sex. So far, the topic hasn't come up, and I haven't wanted to push my luck, considering she *did* turn the other way when she saw me covered in blood which didn't belong to me. But, like that nagging prick I feel in the back of my skull when it's time for me to do my worst, my cock has a 'bone' to pick as well, and she is the ever unknowing victim of its desire.

Well, almost unknowing. I'm sure, by now, my want for her hasn't gone unnoticed. After all, we have 'done the deed' before.

Her eyes focus on me as she draws her face away from her writing, and she taps the tip of her pen to her chin. "On a scale of one to ten, rate your hunger level."

"Considering I ate before I left the office... a three. However," I purposefully trail my eyes down to her comfortable-looking lounge shorts and smirk, "there are other things I crave besides food. And those hunger pains are... extremely dissatisfying."

"Draco, I need you to focus," she scolds, pointing the pen at me in accusation. I simply roll my eyes as she continues, "You said there was a list."

"That's right."

"And on this list, you keep track of every person the Dybbuk-" I squirm in my seat at the word, though it's been easier to handle, as we've been practicing, "-has selected as your next..."

Her voice trails off, and I find myself finishing for her, "Victim?"

"Target," she corrects me. "It's very peculiar."

"Sorry, but what's peculiar?"

"I've combed through every archive and book at my disposal, and yet I've never read about a case where the victim makes a list."

I snort a telling laugh and roll my eyes yet again. "I'm not a victim, Granger. I've told you -I enjoy it."

"And as *I've* told *you*, that's the Dybbuk talking." The sound of the composite notebook slamming shut only adds to the piercing in my ears at the sound of the word I've come to dread. "You say you don't know how you select them, yes?"

"Correct again."

"Yet you've said every one of them 'deserved' it. What did you mean by that, do you think?" she stares expectantly at me, poised for an answer I'm not sure I can give her.

"It's just a feeling," I say, waving my hand in dismissal while staring at the freckles along the bridge of her nose. "Something, maybe the thing inside of me, knows their hearts. It's like..." I try to focus on the feeling and how best to describe it, "like I'm reading their auras and finding them wanting."

"Interesting." She rests her chin in her hand and leans her elbow along the arm of her recliner.

"It isn't interesting," I snap at her. "You should be bloody terrified."

"Misunderstood creatures are my specialty," she states respectfully. "Tell me, what kind of researcher would I be if I turned my back on you?"

"A safe one. An intelligent one."

"Are you stating I lack intelligence?" she raises a cool eyebrow.

I smirk in return. "Why do I get the feeling *I* should be bloody terrified, now?" When I watch her yawn, I see my opening. "Perhaps some rest is in order?"

"Are you tired?" she asks immediately, reaching for her notebook.

"Not in the slightest," I admit honestly. I pry myself off the sofa and saunter over to her, offering out my hand. "But you, little witch, look as if you could use a lie-down."

She smiles up at me, setting her notebook on the floor before taking my hand and allowing me to prop her up to her feet. She leans into my chest and wraps her arms around my torso, shocking me. "And you wonder why I won't give up on you."

"I don't wonder; I know. You're insane." I kiss the top of her head, rubbing gentle circles down her back with my thumbs.

"The very definition of insanity is repeating the same actions over and over again while respecting different results."

"Precisely why I'm a lost cause."

"We've only begun to scratch the surface of your condition."

"If we get caught-"

"-We won't. Besides, you have yet to do something heinous while under my watch. I consider that a great success thus far."

"Just because you've kept me from scoping out the prospects doesn't mean you've sated my impulses," I point out. "And then there's Weasley to consider..."

"I'll handle Ron. You-" she pokes a finger into my chest, leaning up to look me in the eyes, "-stay as far away from him as possible. Is that clear?"

"Hmm... I'm afraid you'll need to convince me. I'm thinking a lack of clothing and an addition of myself in your bed will suffice."

"It's bad form to bring my work into my personal life," she counters.

"Says the woman who brought her work home with her -literally." My fingers trail down her back to the hem of her shorts before greedily scooping her asscheeks and yanking her up. Her legs automatically curl around my waist, and she wraps her arms around my neck to balance herself out, though her eyes narrow in response.

"Bold move," she says, brushing her nose against mine.

"I'm a bold man," I reply, challenging her with a heinous smirk. To my delight, her lips find mine, and I'm met with gentle caresses of her tongue against my lower lip. Instead of letting it inside my mouth to play, I nip at her tongue with my teeth and catch it, chuckling as she withdraws it back into her mouth. Then I capture her upper lip the same way, tugging on it with seductive measure. A soft gasp is her reply, and I dip my tongue into her mouth before staking my claim on her mouth with mine in a fanfare of rough kisses. Hermione's hands find their way to the back of my neck, up the nape of my hairline. The way she tugs at my tresses causes me to groan, and I'm elated when our kissing becomes slower but firmer, as if we must devour each other or face the consequences.

Impatient as I am, I manage to find the will not to roughen her up like last time, instead carrying her with appreciation toward her bedroom, like she is the fairest prize to obtain.

The only time I pause is to flick the door open with a wave of my hand before I carry her into her room and lay her back against her bed, taking my time. My beautiful Granger knows the bloody bits of me and still finds me deserving of her. Perhaps it's all a figment of my imagination; perhaps it's lunacy from the both of us, but we have found each other in this rubble we call life, and I don't intend to let her go.

Ever.

My body urges me to lay claim to her by penetrating not only her body, but her heart as well. It's why I'm gentle with her this time around: the more she falls for me, the easier it will be to darken her spirit to match mine. She's already at the tipping point. All I need is one good push to send her over the edge. Love, I think, would do it, but I have to be careful. Matters of the heart are fickle, and I need her fully devoted to me as I am to her.

My lips find her neck, and my teeth sink into her throat, leaving my mark on her. My Granger. Not Weasley's. Not Potter's. No, this woman belongs to me.

"Draco," she urges, her legs releasing from around me to split apart and present herself to me. Such compliance for a good soul like hers.

My hands travel up her hips, her stomach, finally cupping her exquisitely perky breasts through her camisole top. Those nipples have been teasing me half the evening, so I tease them back now, brushing my thumbs over their pebbled flesh. At the same time, I dig my teeth into her collarbone and earn a muted scream in reply. I can tell it takes everything in her not to wriggle beneath me, refusing to give me the satisfaction. But I still get my way, because her back arches slightly, moving her breasts further into my hands. I give them each a light squeeze and whisper against her pulse point, "I have to say, I'm a tad conflicted."

I can hear her rattled breathing as she struggles to respond. Finally, she forces out, "Oh? Why... is that?"

I continue to knead her breasts, loving the control I have over her body. "There's so many urges within me... I'm torn between which one I want to listen to the most."

Ever the scholar, her interest is peaked, and I hear her groan between gasps, "Describe the urges."

I smirk; she's like putty in my hands or fruit ripe for the taking. I'll feed her what I know will soothe her spirit and make her feel important. "I have the want to wrap my fingers around your throat and choke the life out of you." I nip at her neck to prove my point. "And I, also, want to strip you of all your clothing and make you scream my name until you no longer have the voice to." One hand still on her breast, I straddle her hips and move my other hand up to the base of her throat, curling my fingers around the muscles there. Our eyes meet, and I lick my lips, reveling in the small show of surprise in her eyes. *Finally*, an honest reaction. Now to see if I can make her fear me. "Which do you think I should listen to, hmm? Voice one or voice two?"

"Are they actual voices?" she asks, and I snarl in response, tightening my grip around her. Not enough to actually choke her, but certainly enough to gather her attention. Her eyes

widen while I continue to massage her tit, confusing the Hell out of her nervous system.

"Does it matter?" I whisper, moving my face lower to the top of her shirt as I keep my grip on her neck above me. I pull the soft material down, exposing her erect nipple to me. My head dips, and I capture the bud with my lips, sucking and nipping in all the right ways to make her gasp and sigh against my hand. Her heart is beating so loud I can hear it, can feel it in her breast as I lap gingerly at the nipple and swirl my tongue. Fuck sakes, that small bit of pink flesh tastes divine, and my fingers tighten in response.

"Dr-aco," she mutters, struggling for breath, "I-I... too tight..."

"Mmm," I respond, constricting my fingers more. "I'm aware." My hand on her breast moves down, down, down to the hem of her shorts again, but this time it doesn't wait to see how she will respond. I jerk the garment down with one swift movement. "Oh dear, Miss Granger. Do you always retire to bed without any underwear?"

Her fingers dig into my wrist, trying to pry me off of her, but I'm not one to be budged.

"Now, now. You said you weren't frightened, Hermione," I tease, moving my fingers into the folds between her legs and finding them dripping with want for me. This was all a game before -a teasing of sorts to see how well she could handle the darkness within me. But seeing her bare before my eyes with my fingers ready to shove into her beautiful cunt at a moment's notice, I find myself lost in the gloriousness of it all. Fuck it all. Foreplay is my specialty, but I have to have her *now*.

I lean up and reach for my belt buckle, still not allowing her to move beneath my hold around her neck; however, I do grant her permission to breathe, easing up the tension. Quickly she gathers a large breath and begins to heave in shock beneath me, eyes confused and lust filled. Yes, that's it, Hermione. Realize what I've given you isn't something so easily obtained: a choice in the matter.

"Frightened yet?" I whisper, withdrawing my cock from my trousers and stroking it over her.

Her eyes gaze hungrily over it before she licks her lips and answers, "You won't hurt me."

"Oh, Hermione." I chuckle and shake my head. "That's where you're wrong, love."

Without missing a beat, I release her throat and use the same hand to grab the curls from the back of her head, jerking her face forward. At the same time, I frame my legs over her torso and shove my cock inside her mouth, all the way till it hits her throat. Hermione gargles in surprise, eyes round and eyebrows flying upward -I don't really care, because the sight of my prick stuffed inside her mouth is more than I could ever dream up. This is a far better image than what I've pictured while jerking myself in the shower. It's better because it's real, and she's real, and her tongue is softer than my palm, no matter how much lube I might use.

"Gods, Granger," I mutter, withdrawing my cock to the tip just to slam it back in again. Hermione's hands reach up and push against my hips, but I'm relentless in my resolve to fuck her face numb. I move my knee over one arm and pin it, then repeat with the other. Hermione struggles beneath me, gasping for breath around my cock, breathing through her nose before I

shove it so far down her throat she gags. The retraction of her throat muscles is spectacular, like a woman coming, and I bite my lip while wearing a smirk worthy of Salazar Slytherin himself. "Such a good little witch you are, taking my fat cock in your mouth like that." I begin to bob her face forward and backward, moving her lips and tongue up and down my length. With a forceful thrust, I ram it all the way back and hold it there, down her throat, my sack brushing against her chin. "Fuck, what a champ."

I withdraw myself completely, and Hermione gasps for breath, tears in her eyes. She rubs the sore muscles in her throat, but I don't give her time to think about what's just happened. I roll over onto my back and jerk her up to sit on my lap. When she does, I brush her hair out of her eyes, wiping at her tears as I do.

"Shh," I coax, brushing my length against her folds. "Shh, now. Ride my cock. It'll make it all better."

Hermione closes her eyes, leaning into the caress of my hand. Well, that's a change of pace. I thought she'd be furious with me, but instead she seems to like what I've done. Just how much darkness can one woman take without breaking?

"You want me to ride you, Draco?" she whispers, licking my thumb with her wet, soft tongue. She pushes herself up on her knees, positions herself above me, and guides my cock to her entrance. "Alright." And then she sinks herself down onto my cock, sheathing me inside of her like a homecoming while kissing my lips in tender motions.

Fuck. I'm not entirely sure a man like me knows how to love, but if I had to take a guess, this is it. This is what it feels like. Caring about someone who only wants my best interests at heart, and visa versa.

I close my eyes and allow Hermione to rock me into oblivion, taking with her the bits of my darkened soul and cleansing them with her purity.

Tonight, I've seen the beautifully corrupt in her, and I know, now, I can accomplish my goals. One step at a time, I tell myself as I bring her to her first orgasm.

One step at a time.

Thank you for all of the wonderful feedback! More to come! Squirm on!

~A.

Empty

Sorry I've been MIA this last week. I've been doing some personal discovery within myself. But I'm back, so expect updates quicker. Also, there will be updates on my other stories as well soon, as well as a one-shot birthday gift I'm writing for LightofEvolution.

~A.

I'm a corruptor. It's in my nature, it's who I am. There is no changing it. I'm not even sure I'd want to change, given the opportunity. I've always been one to push people to their breaking points just to see what it takes to make them break, and Hermione is no exception. So when the sun peeks in through the break between the curtains, I find no regrets in what was accomplished last night. If anything, it tells me she is stronger than any woman I have met, and, most likely, will ever meet. Especially when I pry my eyes open in the early morning hours to find her already jotting away in her notebook.

She's dressed since I've fallen asleep, and I'm mildly disappointed to see her body covered by the small camisole top again. Her body looks far more beautiful without anything to take away from it -like clothing. She's far too entranced in her work to notice I've awoken, so I lay still in the bed and watch her write. Merlin, she has no idea how beautiful she looks right now.

Eventually, I grow tired of watching and scoot closer to her, tucking my arm around her waist and moving my face into her side, distracting her from her working. She sets the book down on the dresser table and looks down to me, smiling.

"Good morning."

"Hello," I reply back, leaning up to kiss her lips. To my disgruntlement, she turns her face at the last moment and forces me to kiss her cheek. That'll never do. I sit upright and slink even closer, caging one of my arms, and then the other, on each side of her head, touching nose to nose with her. "Kiss me."

"We have to talk."

My eyes narrow, but I concede (because I'm feeling generous) and draw my face away from hers, settling back into my side of the blankets, my head hitting the pillow. "Alright. You have my attention."

"Firstly, I want you to know how much I enjoyed last night," she says, though her body language says she isn't enjoying whatever thoughts run through her mind as she wraps her arms around herself. "But I will *never* tolerate you taking advantage of me again."

"Taking advantage? Is that what you call you screaming beneath me?"

She shuffles in the bed, turning her entire body toward me. I can tell it's difficult for her to remain calm. "What you did -manipulating me like that... it won't be tolerated."

I perch an eyebrow, and, for some reason, my cheeks glaze over in heat. I feel as if I'm on display, being chastised for something ridiculous. "I'll manipulate you all I like."

"If you do, I'll turn you in to the Ministry myself," her eyes stare challengingly at mine. "We're here to cure you, not for you to put me in danger."

"You're already in danger, just being around me. Do you think you're actually safe? Because I have news for you, Miss Granger. I've given you no indication to feel as such."

"You're a good person, Draco. Even if you don't see it yourself."

I scoff, rolling my eyes. "Don't call me that."

"What?"

"Good."

"But you are."

There's a growl, low at first, then loud as it escapes the top of my throat and erupts out. I can't explain it. Suddenly, I'm so *angry*. So... fucking... angry... "I'm anything but good, Hermione."

"How can you say that?"

"How can *you*?" I seeth, grasping my hair at the roots to keep from using my fingers to damage her pretty, pretty body. "You think you know me, but you don't. You don't know what goes on inside my mind."

"Explain it to me, then."

My arms shake, my jaw clenches, and I'm entirely at the mercy of my other self. I roll out of bed, naked, and bustle toward the door. Hermione follows swiftly behind me, blocking me just before I make it to the doorway, shutting the door behind her and leaning against the doorknob. Wondrously determined, startlingly nude, she stands before me on display, refusing to back down from the monster I am. "Get out of my way."

"No."

"Now, Granger."

"Don't you Granger me! Now, I've looked the other way because I believe there's a shred of good in you, and I want to save that part of you. I don't want you to lose your soul." She places a firm hand on my chest. "Talk to me."

I lean forward, brushing my nose against hers. I know I should feel something -but I *don't*. She might not move from fear, but she *will* move. "There's nothing to talk about, love."

Now..." I inhale the scent of her skin, drawing my nose down her cheek and into her bushy curls, "why don't you hop in the shower, and I'll join you here in a bit?"

"And you won't leave?"

"Of course not."

She sighs, stroking her hand down my stomach. To entice her, I push my body against hers, and it's all I need. She steps aside, and I take my chance, reaching for the doorknob. Her hand reaches out and wrenches my wrist away, turning me to face her again.

"You said you wouldn't leave."

"Well," I roll my eyes, "I lied, didn't I?"

"Draco, stop this."

"No, Hermione. I won't. Can't you see? You want to know the real me? This is it. No pretenses. No formalities. Here I am." I stare deep into her eyes.

"What do you feel right now?" she asks.

A thin smirk crawls up my lips. "Nothing."

"Nothing?"

I shake my head in agreement. "Nothing. Not a damn thing. I know I should -a normal person would feel terrible for manipulating you the way I do, but I don't. I won't. I will always manipulate you. It's who I am."

"*Why*? I... I thought you cared for me."

"That's the thing. I *do*."

"Then why won't you let me in?"

"I am letting you in. You're just not liking what you're seeing. It's not that I don't know what I'm doing is wrong -I just don't *care*." I turn to leave, but she grabs my arm again. "Let me go, Granger."

"I'm not giving up on you."

"Maybe you should."

"Maybe you feel empty inside because you're afraid to let your emotions in. You're afraid of seeing yourself for what you really are. Did it ever occur to you?"

"You're going to analyze me now? No offense, but you're not a shrink. And I'm not your bloody *pet*." I wrench my arm away and rip open the door. "I'll do as I damn well please, and you won't get in my way."

"Fine. You want your space?" she crosses her arms. "By all means. Go."

I raise an eyebrow at her. "Really?"

"Yes."

"Reverse psychology won't work on me, either."

"Of course it won't. I'm telling you to go."

I smirk, *accio'*ing my wand and clothes. It's as if a weight has been lifted off my shoulders as I thread my legs into my pants and pull on my shirt. I can tell she's cross with me when I kiss her on the cheek -I know I should feel something for making her feel terrible. But I don't. And now she knows it.

"I'll... see you for dinner?" I offer.

"Don't count on it."

And then she slams the bedroom door in my face, leaving me alone in her hallway.

Interesting... maybe I'm not the only one who needs some space.

Turn the Tide

Squirm has been nominated for a Dramione award for "Best WIP" (work in progress) - please, if you'd like to vote for it, go to:

goo .gl/ forms/ SzBPZ9IR8CKHOVbV2 (just take out the spaces)

I'm up against some very amazing works, and feel very honored (and a little out of place) to be nominated for this dark work, but I will say this: I've poured my darker parts of my soul into this, and I think it shines through in the most connecting of ways. There is a darkness in all of us. What we do with it, and if we let it control us, is what makes up who we are. We are not our darkness. We are our decisions.

~A.

Somehow, I've ended up back in Knockturn Alley, looking for something -someone to sate my appetite. This morning, I woke up next to the woman of my dreams: someone who cares about my well being, even when I know damn well I'm beyond redemption. Now, I've gotten my way, and I couldn't feel *worse*. I thought being in control was supposed to make me feel powerful, but it's only added to my stress and built a layer of regret.

I thought I was empty...

So what are all of these emotions? How do I control any of them?

I need.... I need to...

"Knock it off, Verl."

"Ah, come on. You know I'm only playin' with you."

It's as if something clicks within my subconscious, and I turn towards the conversation, spotting a younger couple in the darkness of an alley just to the side of Borgin and Burkes. The girl is pressed up against a wall by the boy, and he's running his hands down the side of her skirt, pensive.

"Seriously," she says, jerking out of his reach. "We shouldn't even be here. I'm going to find Jewel and Roman."

"Don't be like that, Bessie. I only want a peek-"

SMACK.

"Touch me again and I'll yell rape." Bessie grabs up her holiday bags and scurries out of the alley, nearly running smack dab into me. "Er... sorry, Mister."

I give a compliant nod, allowing her the freedom of leaving Knockturn Alley in one piece. Verl doesn't take notice of me as he kicks the wall and curses under his breath. He runs a shaky hand through his hair, void of remorse. The only thing I see in his eyes is what I see when I look in the mirror; a need to hurt, and his victim has just left before he's been given an opportunity. He can't be more than seventeen, freshly graduated from Hogwarts if I had to guess. He's young... has all of the opportunity in the world to get his life together, and yet...

My feet stalk over to the alleyway, and his eyes turn up toward me in confusion.

"Er... yeah, mate. Can I help you?"

With a heavy jerk, I grab him by the coat collar and drag him deeper into the alley, away from prying eyes.

"Oi! No need to get rough! I've got money!"

"Shut up," I demand, slamming him up against the wall. There's a stinging in my chest I know won't go away without getting my fix. One look into the sod's eyes and I see: he's made for my list. "Verl, is it?"

"I-I..."

"I bet you think you're hot shite, don't you? Bet that wasn't the first time you've tried to take advantage of someone."

"Whoa. Mate. You got the wrong impression-"

I jerk him forward and then back, smacking his head into the bricks behind him. "I've got the right impression. And don't call me 'mate.'" My fingers go to his throat, latching on like a vice. I feel so far away from the situation, looking at it from the inside but having no control over my actions. This time, it feels different. It feels... tainted, somehow. I see the fear in his eyes, but it doesn't stir what it should from me.

This man, if left unchecked, will continue on to be some sort of rapist. I've seen his kind before, skirting around in the sleazy pubs I like so well. They have a deadness in their eyes... like goat eyes. Void of life, void of a conscience.

But as my fingers grip his throat tighter, and I begin to choke the life out of him, I can't help but feel... wrong.

Something is so *wrong*.

I close my eyes, choking him harder. It's when I realize what is wrong: Hermione's face is the only thing I can see behind my eyelids. She wears a look of disappointment -one which only grows when I hear Verl's strangled cry.

Kill him.

I can't.

My eyes come back open, watching as Verl turns red under my grip. I can see it -he's on the verge of no return. Just a little longer, and his life will be a fleeting memory of dear Bessie and all the other woman he's molested. Only a bit more...

Stop it.

My fingers release involuntarily, and I back away from him as Verl struggles for breath. I have no idea what's come over me, but I can't finish the the Hell has happened to me? His left eye holds a few broken blood vessels, making my mark known to him. Good. I hope it serves as a reminder.

I could oblivate him, but then the message wouldn't sink through.

"Get out of my sight," I tell him. "Mention this to anyone or try anything like what you did to that girl again, and you'll be dead before you can say 'mate.' Got it?"

Verl nods vigorously, running his hands over the bruised skin of his neck. "Y-yeah. G-g-got it." And then he veers past me, making a B line for the more lit parts of Knockturn.

I stare down at my fingers, still curled in the shape to take his life. Something in me has changed.

What has Hermione Granger done to me?

Two days. It's been two bloody days since we've spoken. I've been at the mercy of my own self control, nervous and agitated.

I'm not empty anymore. Every step fills me up with something new and yet sold familiar: anger. More than that, it's a fuming, volcanic fury ready to erupt at any moment. I'm not sure why I'm so angry, but I know it's consuming every resolve I have to go home after work and ruminate over the fact Hermione and I don't see eye to eye on things. I've been so 'good' lately, I thought, perhaps, her therapy was working but...

No. All I want to do is *hurt*. Someone. Something. I want to break glasses and throw knives and gut a stomach open with my bare hands. How *dare* she try to keep me like I'm some sort of creature to add to her menagerie? How dare she think she can control what I say, what I do, where I go... How dare she keep me from killing?

She was only trying to look after you...

Lies! Giving out commands telling me my actions won't be tolerated? That's what an owner says to a dog before kicking it. And now to ignore me!

She's done nothing but care for you and put up with your shit.

Oh, please. She's far too up my arse to see I'm no good for her. Really, what traumatic events has she undergone to seek comfort in *my* arms? In a murderer's arms...

Well, there was the War.

Yes, there was that. It affected us all, to some extent. I remember my aunt laughing shrilly as she carved into Hermione's arm. I remember the guilt, the frustration I felt in that moment. I hid in my room and smothered my face in a pillow to muffle the sound. And now, I'm the one carving people up... I'm the one making them scream. And I can't even do that properly now...

Damn this Dybbuk.

Damn it, indeed.

I give a loud sigh as I pace my study, coming down from my anger. My hands fidget with the buttons on my shirt, looping and unlooping them in systematic movements. I should be leaving, off to a pub to get my fill of whiskey and loose women and victims... so, why haven't I? What's holding me back from doing any of it? What's this tightening in my chest?

It's called a conscience.

Preposterous. I haven't had one of those in...

My head jerks up. I'm overcome by a theory, and I dash across the floor to my desk, hands still wobbling from the adrenaline. "Where is it? Where is- aha!" I find the book hidden under a pile of work notes I brought home with me. '*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.' There's already a bookmark on the page I need, and I read the words aloud, mind churning as I soak in the definition. "A Dybbuk-" I nearly drop the book from the excruciating, stabbing pain in both my ears, but I press on, "is a malicious possessing *spirit* believed to be the dislocated soul of a person who has passed on..." Dead. It means dead.

After hearing Hermione go on and on about the spirit, I assumed it was some ancient entity. But it could be anyone, couldn't it? Anyone who died. Anyone who left with unfinished business and anger in their hearts. And what better time to harbor unsatisfied souls than the Second War? Particularly, the Battle of means, if the spirit who has cursed my soul has unfinished business...

Knock, knock, knock. Silence. *KNOCK, KNOCK, KNO-*

"Goodness, Draco! It's two in the-" Hermione jerks her door open to see me this time standing not in blood but rainwater, soaked head to toe. "-morning." She stares, bewildered, at me for some time, watching me as I shake. "Are you alright?"

"Depends on your definition," I reply, unsure if I should move, or stay put, or go the fuck on, or come the fuck in. Frustrated, I blurt out, "You're in my head."

"Actually, I'm in my doorway."

"No. I mean... I can't get you out of my head." I begin to pace, hands tucked behind my back to hide the spasms in my fingers. "I left you, and I had every intention of killing after that. I had him -in my grasp-" my hand comes out in front of me, imitating my strangulation of Verl.

"Did you?" she whispers.

My hand falls to my side. "I couldn't. You... you're in my head."

Relief washes over her face, and she clears her throat. "And?"

"And?"

"And you're sorry for what you said?"

"You can't be serious right now." I turn toward her, eyebrows drawn together. "I tell you I managed to stop myself from killing someone, and you still want an apology?"

She straightens her shoulders and says, very serious, "Yes."

I raise an eyebrow, perplexed at her boldness. Slowly, I cross the distance between us, until we're but a foot from each other.

"Admit it, Draco," she says. "You're not empty inside. You only wish you were."

"What would you know of it?" I sneer, hearing the uneasy edge in my tone.

"If you're empty, you don't have to hold yourself accountable. But that's exactly what your curse wants from you. The more you embrace your emotions, the closer you'll become to who you once were. But the first step is admittance. So... yes. I want you to apologize. I want you to face your demons head on and own up to your mistakes."

Wow. Even now, at two in the morning, she's still working. "I'm not one of your monsters."

"Not if you admit what you did wrong. If you keep running from your emotions, you *will* become one. And if you do," there's a sternness in her voice, "I'll be forced to put you down myself."

My throat tightens. "Promise?"

"If I feel you're beyond saving, yes. I promise."

A month ago, I'd have been amused at her for even thinking she could. I'd have taunted her, twisted her words around and shoved some reality down her throat. Now, I cling to those words like a buoy as if they're my saving grace.

"I was wrong," I admit, though it leaves a foul taste on my tongue, "I... I need your help."

"And you're not empty."

"No... I'm not."

Her hand slips into mine, and I feel its tug as she guides me inside. "Hello, Draco. It's nice to see the real you, for once."

A vote for me would make my heart sing, but vote from your heart and who you thinks deserves to win, whomever that may be.

Good luck to those in the Winter Dramione Awards!
~A.

Tethered Soul

 Image may contain: 2 people, text

Tries to contain excitement* *Bursts

Squirm has made it to the finals of the Dramione Awards for "Best WIP"! (Work in Progress)

Will you, please, consider voting for me one more time? It would be a dream come true to go all the way and take home the prize! I'm up against some wonderful contenders, so the ball is in your hands! Thank you to everyone who has voted so far! Vote here (and just take out the *'s)

*htt*ps:/*goo.*gl/for*ms/HOUx8zh5ISlvNXuW2*

Thank you again.

This chapter gave me the shivers while writing it. I hope it does something similar to you.

My clothes are soaked to the skin as I am pulled aimlessly into Hermione's abode, dripping rainwater on the immaculately clean floors. I suppose I shouldn't say aimlessly -I might feel that way, but the bushy-haired woman in front of me never ceases to have things planned five steps ahead. She guides me over to a stool by her kitchen counter and sits me down in it. As soon as I'm rooted, I feel the twitching in my fingers die away, leaving only the shivers of being cold behind.

Taking pity on me, Hermione reaches down to the bottom of my vest, unlooping each button with slow precision. I let her. There is no point in refusing her care -and besides, her fingers are warm to the touch as they find the top button of my white shirt and begin to thread them undone as well. Once she's finished, she walks around to my back and peels the shirt from my shoulders and arms, leaving me bare chested and just as vulnerable with my emotions.

"What did you mean 'the real' me?" I ask, voice husky and parched for water. When was the last time I ate anything decent or had a glass of water for that matter?

Hermione stalks around to my front again, wet clothes in hand. "I think we both know the answer to that."

I say nothing for a time, divested of everything I've known to be true. For years, I've accepted the monster I am. I've never questioned what makes me this way, only ever giving in to my instinctual urges to kill like they were as easy as breathing. To think it wasn't me at all... it feels perverse somehow. As if my entire existence outside of Hogwarts has been a lie.

Finally, I find words. "The D-Dy... that *thing* has been inside of me for years."

"Yes," she nods, taking my bundled clothing and setting them on the counter neatly folded. Why is beyond me, considering they are still as wet as if they'd been thrown into the ocean. Then, she pulls up a stool in front of mine and takes a seat, hands in her lap.

"I've given it some thought," I tell her, running my tongue across my teeth, "and the urges only came after the War."

"Mhmm," she nods again, a hint of experience in her voice, reminding me of a professor who has just experienced one of her pupils about to come on some great discovery.

"Why do I feel you already know the punchline to this?"

"Just tell me what you know," she says. "I want to hear what you have to say."

A surge of anger washes over me, but a soft hand comes out and rests against my knee.

"Deep breaths, now."

And I do. I give breath after deep breath until I'm calm again. It takes me minutes to reach this level of relaxation, but Hermione's patience never falters.

"I only ever started this after... well, after the Battle of there..." the words are difficult to form, but I find the will. "...Is there a way someone who died then could be possessing me now?"

"The thought *had* occurred to me, yes." No shock. No look of nonplus. Simply a clinical answer and touch of excitement along the edges.

"Oh, had it?" my voice sings with sarcasm, hoping to burn off some of that eagerness in her eyes. "And tell me, *when* were you planning on letting me in on, quite possibly, the most *vital* bit of information I could use to expel whatever *-whoever* is inside of me?"

As if reading cue cards in front of her, she spews out, "I didn't want to give away too many of my theories until I was sure your commitment to curing yourself was *in toto*. I needed to be convinced you weren't beyond saving."

"So all this time, you've been unsure?" I press, my pulse elevating.

"I've wanted to believe-"

"-But you haven't. You've doubted me."

"Well, you haven't given me much of a choice, have you?" she throws her hands in the air, invested in her frustration.

"So you're admitting to lying to me, then?"

"I never lied." Hermione wags a disgruntled finger in my direction. "I believe you're good, underneath it all. I was *not* sure if you would allow yourself the luxury of believing it. This won't work if you don't believe in it."

"And how would you know?" I lean forward, dangerously close to that finger. "Have you ever encountered someone like me before?"

There's a pause, then a cough. "As... as a matter of fact, I have."

I feel my left eyebrow tug up. "Oh?" There's a thousand questions I want to ask, but she beats me to it before I can.

"-She wasn't... exactly like you. The Dybbuk-"

My eyes squeeze shut as I'm painfully reminded one word can bring me to my knees. My hand reaches next to me and grips the counter for dear life, otherwise I'm sure to spill to the floor in a puddle.

"-the spirit," Hermione corrects herself, "wasn't at all like the one in you."

"What was it like?"

"The unfinished business was simple. The spirit was an elderly woman who died alone in her home. No one found her body for weeks... she wanted someone to visit her grave."

"Well... that doesn't sound too bad."

"You'd think that, except her two sons had her body cremated and split the ashes up amongst each other. She wasn't ever properly buried, and the woman was extremely religious. Her sons... not so much. One of the sons sold many of his possessions after a separation with his wife, accidentally including his mother's ashes inside a wooden box he kept the urn inside, including his mother's ring and the last letter she had ever written him. That box went to a young woman in Scotland, who had no idea at the time she possessed a dangerous item: a Dybbuk box."

"Fuck!" I nearly bite my tongue. "Stop using the bloody word, Hermione!" It then hits me- "A box?"

"Not just any box. A sentimental one with the spirit's remains and keepsakes. This is how a... well, how one is created. There are plenty of malevolent spirits who haven't passed on, but they all can't possess a host. They need to be tethered to something in order to effect a proper anchor to do its last wills."

When I realize the implications to her words, a proper shiver cascades down my spine. "Does it... does it have to be a box?"

"No. It could be any container, so long as it contains the proper ingredients."

"Proper ingredients? It isn't a *potion*," I snap at her, too far gone in my own thoughts to hold my tongue. My mind shifts back to the last bits of essence I can remember of being truly *me*: the sniveling, cowardly brat afraid of standing up for myself or anyone around me. Afraid to toe the line and make a difference. Afraid to get my hands dirty. "Could it... could it be a book?"

Finally, I seem to have stumped Hermione Jean Granger. Why, oh why, does it have to be with the most important question of my life? She opens her mouth to speak, pauses, and the closes it, tapping her fingers atop the kitchen countertop in thought. After what feels like eons, she formulates a response. "I suppose... if all of the components were in order... yes. One would need an item of sentimental value-"

"-the book," I offer.

"Then a voice. It would need the spirit's voice."

"An inscription -would that suffice?"

"I don't see why not..." she tilts her head, looking to me with curiosity and, dare I say, horror. "But the final thing needed would be a tether. Ashes. A lock of hair..."

"Blood." I stare her deep in the eyes, formulating the final puzzle piece. "The inscription was written in blood."

"Are you sure?"

"I've seen enough blood to know what it looks like when dry. It never occurred to me before, but..." I leap out of my chair and tug her out of hers.

"Wait- Draco -what are you -where are we-"

"-I thought you were intelligent, Hermione. We're going to my home, and you can see it for yourself."

As I cast a hefty amount of floo powder into the fireplace, she asks, "What sort of book is it?"

I turn to her, fearing her reaction but hoping for the best. "It's a journal... with every name of every life I've taken." I don't give her time to answer because I'm too afraid to know, instead yanking her into the green flames with me and letting us be swept up by the current of fire on the way to my place. As soon as we land inside my den, I tear out of the floo and trudge over to my work desk across the room, knocking down the useless clutter of quills and sealed ink bottles. I misjudge one, and it clatters to the floor, spilling its black, oozy contents. I care little as I move enough items around to press a small lever on the back shelf.

My hand reaches for the drawer beneath my workspace, now free of glamours. I tear it open and, carefully, remove the lone tome within. I turn to Hermione, cradling my confessions in my hands, knowing what I do next signifies the trust I have in her. This book could ruin me. This book could, literally, earn me a one way trip to Azkaban. The Dementor's Kiss might be banned by law, but I wouldn't put it past the guards to slip one in if word got out Draco Malfoy, renowned ex-Death Eater, was found to be a serial murderer.

I slip the book into her palms, gauging her response. What I'm met with is a mix of fear mingled with understanding. Unspoken though it is, I can see it in her eyes; there's a promise there to stay, even if the horrors within are morose.

Slowly, I open the book to the inside of the cover, where words are written with flourished script in crimson.

*'Oh how I wish my smile
Could slay demons
The way only yours can.*

*Then you would never
Need cry again.'*

That poem is something I wrote, inspired by my husband. I thought it was too fitting not to use it in this case.

Who is the Dybbuk? We shall find out! Get ready for more lemons, horror, and big reveals soon!

And also, please vote as your conscience sees fit. :)

All of the love

~A.

Stay

 Image may contain: one or more people and text

Thank you to everyone who has voted for Squirm in the Dramione awards! Voting goes till January 29th, so there's still time if you haven't done it yet!

This chapter is lighter, but this story won't stay that way. Enjoy it while you can.

~A.

We stand in silence for what feels like an eternity. I watch her eyes study the inscription with instrumental detail, fingers dancing across the blood-stained lettering like she's in a trance. My stomach tightens, and my eyes blur because I refuse to blink, even for a second, until I can read a reaction. Her stoic expression only adds to my already building tension, and, eventually, I grow impatient waiting.

I've never been one for patience.

"Hermione."

Her eyes flicker up toward mine, and her lips form a hard line. I see the muscles in her neck contract as she gulps before opening her mouth to say, "Might I... what I mean to say is... could I read it?"

"Read it?"

"Yes. The book. Your... entries. Could I-?"

"-I don't think that's a wise idea." Without thinking, I reach out and pry the book away, giving it a firm shut as I do. "Do you think this is it? The 'box'?"

I watch her swipe her tongue over her lower lip before biting it -it's an unintentionally arousing move for the darkness inside of me. "I think it's a large possibility. There are a few tests we will need to run. Where did you get it?"

Confession time: my younger, teenage self loved to pluck things off of shelves that didn't belong to him. "You remember the day we nearly died in the Room of Requirement, yes?"

She nods, slowly. "The fiendfyre. You mean the day Harry, Ron, and I saved your life."

"Details," I wave my hands in dismissal, "The point is, before the room went up in flames, I pocketed something." My hand waggles the book.

"You stole it."

"Again with the details," I roll my eyes.

"Why?"

"Does it matter?"

"I want to know all the variables."

Why *did* I steal it in the first place? "I'm not even sure. It was like... when I walked by it... it called to me."

"Called to you how?"

"Intuition, perhaps? How should I know?" I cross my arms, book still in hand.

"How long were you in possession of the book before you felt a change?"

"Before I killed, you mean."

A stale beat hangs in the air between us.

Then I answer. "Months, maybe."

"Were you carrying the book with you at the time?"

"No. I keep it here."

"Was there anything written in it -besides the inscription?"

"No." So many questions...

Bravely, she takes a step forward and touches my cheek. "I'd like to see inside of it. Please."

"But-"

"You can trust me, Draco. I've come this far without turning my back on you. Please."

I can't explain the trickle of distrust I feel in her -for all intents and purposes, I owe this woman my life. No, I shouldn't want to rip her limb from limb. I shouldn't want to tear her apart with my teeth. "I... It's too bright in here," I change the subject, retrieving my wand to douse the flames inside the fireplace and the various candles which lit to life upon our arrival. Without giving her time to beg any longer, I close the distance between myself and my desk, shove the book back inside, and shut the drawer. "Is it warm in here to you?" I know it isn't. My still soaked trousers remind me of the bitter draft now that I've extinguished the flames of the hearth. It still doesn't stop the cold sweat that breaks out over my skin.

"Draco..."

"I'm fine," I insist, turning to face her. My heart races as I fidget with my fingers nervously, pushing and tearing at my cuticles. I can feel it -the darkness in me. It wants to escape so badly... "You should leave."

"I'm not going anywhere," Hermione says, setting her feet in a wider stance to solidify her words. "Is it happening?"

"Water," I whisper.

"Alright. Let's find you some water."

"No need. I can have one of the house elves-"

"-If you finish that sentence, I'll hex your bits off." She gives a quirky grin, though her threat feels very real. "We're more than capable of fetching our own things. Once we've cured you, we're going to have a long chat about house elf liberation." She nabs me by the arm and proceeds to usher me out of the den. I take the lead, guiding us down hallway after hallway until we near the kitchens. As we cross the archway leading into the dining room, I hear her breath hitch. We have yet to establish the dragon in the room; the past haunts both of us when it comes to *there*. Ever since my parents moved out to set up roots in Naples, I haven't set foot in that treacherous memory trap called 'the dining room'.

We take a set of stone steps down to the kitchens, and I allow Hermione to pour me a glass of water from the tap while I sit at the quaint nook in the corner, where a set of stone benches offer retreat under a wooden table. This is where I take most of my meals when I'm home.

Hermione sits down beside me as I sip idly from my cup. Moments go by in silence until she's filled my cup three more times and I've quenched my thirst. I'm too shaken to use proper manners, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand like some commoner.

"Better?" she asks.

"Yes," I reply, sliding my hand over to hers and wrapping my fingers around her slender palm. "I haven't felt this... free in a long time."

"May I ask you something?"

"I believe you just did," I retort with a hint of a smirk. Her reply is a swift smack on my shoulder, followed by a teasing eye roll.

"When you managed to stop yourself, what was going on inside your mind?"

"I've told you, haven't I? I couldn't get you out of my skull. It's like you were wedged there behind my eyelids, giving me this disappointed scowl."

"You were afraid of disappointing me?"

"I guess that's one way to word it." I tug her hand closer to me, spreading her fingers wide and noticing the vast size difference in not only our fingers, but our nail beds as well. She's so delicate, but I do notice the torn skin at the edge of her fingers, as well as the shortness of her nails. "Nail biting is a bad habit, Granger."

"So I'm Granger again, am I?" she prods me in the side with her free hand, making me jump in surprise. Cold hands.

I squeeze her hand tighter, hearing the ringing in the back of my head. No. Not now. I'm content. I don't want to... "What happens now? We have the box. Do we destroy it?"

"No." She shakes her head. "That's a *very* bad idea."

"Why?"

"If one destroys the original tether to the spirit, it will create a new one -a permanent one within the host."

"Don't destroy the book," I nod. "Noted."

"How are you feeling?" she asks.

"Cold. Bitter. Alone." I run my free hand over my eyes, rubbing away at them in exhaustion. "But more myself than I have in ages. Is that a good thing?"

"It's a very good thing. Wonderful, in fact."

A smile creeps up the sides of my mouth, though I try to muffle it with a question which has been burning in the back of my mind since the topic was mentioned. "Hermione, what happened to the woman? And her spirit?"

I feel her hand grow stiffer in mine; Hermione's whole body tenses. With a quick jerk, she relinquishes my hand and scoots off the bench, grabbing my cup to place into the sink. "Are you finished?"

Suspicious, I raise an eyebrow. "Hermione..."

"*Are you finished?*"

"Yes."

The glass tinkers as it is set in the sink, and Hermione's hands wrap around the counter's edge. "You'll have to forgive me. The topic is still very fresh in my mind, and I feared the worst for the woman when I was researching her case. Some points were very touch and go..." She turns her head and gives me a weary smile. "Just know, everything was successful. Her and her spirit were able to work out an agreement of sorts."

"Agreement?"

"To fulfill the Dyb- sorry, to fulfill the spirit's unfinished business. Yours, however, will not succumb to parlays, I imagine."

"What is my *-its* unfinished business is, do you think?" It's difficult to imagine this is anyone's will but my own. It feels so *personal*.

"That's why I'd hoped to have a look in that journal of yours."

My eyes fall to the table, bleak and contemplative. "Do you really think it will help?"

"I think if we can make a connection between your victims, we might be able to ascertain motive, or at the very least a person they all could have been connected to."

"They all deserved it." I hear the words, but I don't recall the want to say them out loud.

Instead of arguing, Hermione simply shrugs and says, "I'm sure they did." Her pretty brown eyes fall on my pale gray irises, resilient in their resolve to find the good in me. "You must be freezing. Come, let's get you out of those sopping pants, or you're bound to catch cold."

I find myself smirking. "Hermione Granger, are you trying to get me naked? All you need do is ask." To be cheeky, I blow her a mocking kiss as I stand.

"Believe it or not, I'm concerned for your health. -Listen to me," she giggles, "Worried about a Malfoy's health. I never thought I'd see the day."

"Everyone succumbs to our charms, sooner or later." I feel it -a playfulness inside of me I haven't felt since I was a teen, chasing after short skirts around the halls of Hogwarts. There's a lightness in my chest, and my head is far less foggy, and... dare I think it, I *feel* again. Not just anger or retaliation, but eagerness and admiration for the woman in front of me. I feel the pax clawing in the darkness, but it's fearful of the light inside Hermione's tender smile. With her, I'm given a reprieve from whomever I've been all these years. I don't want this to go to waste. "Come here." I curl one finger, beckoning her on.

"Why?"

"Just do it."

And she does. She obeys my every command like the *-no, stop it. You're not commanding her.*

"Well," she says as she stops inches away. "I'm here. Now wha-"

My lips meet hers at the same time that my fingers dance across her cheeks, delicate and persuasive. They slip back into the roots of her hair, desperate for contact. *I'm* desperate for contact. I don't want to lose this part of myself again. The only way I want to become lost is within her.

What is this?

It's love. You're in love with her, you dolt.

"Say you'll stay," I whisper, nose to nose with her. "Don't leave me alone with myself right now."

A smooth hand strokes down my cheek. "I said I'd help you out of your clothes, didn't I?"

I can't stifle an amused smirk. "I noticed you never said anything about getting me in something else."

"Skin to skin contact is clinically proven to warm a body faster."

"I'm freezing, then."

"Practically turning blue." She pulls away from me and giggles as she moves toward the hall.
"Warm water should also help... which way is the bath?"

There's an itch in the back of my head, but I ignore it, for now. Right now, all that matters is Hermione and the promise of her warm, wet embrace. My darkness can wait... for now.

Next chapter promises a zesty lemon with some moving plot at the end. XD Very excited to share it with you!

Will update soon.

~A.

Carnal

An amazing friend of mine, HarryPotterandtheGobletofWine (follow her on Tumblr) AKA SaintDionysus on A03, has made a steamy playlist of songs inspired by Squirm on Spotify! Find the link on my author's page! 3 I'll also be adding Spotify playlists for my other stories as well sometime soon.

Thank you to Sunful824 (who is one bad ass bitch) for proofing the chapter for me! ~A.

Oh, PS... hard lemon alert? XD This is your sensual one, so eat it up! After this, down the rabbit hole we go again.

Watching her shiver above me, lips parted, eyes closed while I tease her clit with my thumb is nothing short of mesmerizing. I'd often dream, in my youth, of having a girl in this very position, straddling my waist in a tub full of water while my fingers work leisurely in and out of her. Today, my fantasy becomes a reality. Soapy foam drips out the sides of the bathtub as Hermione rides my fingers, moving her hips in time with each curl of them inside her scrumptious cunt. Her tits bounce in my face, wet and tantalizing. They're pert and pink from my tongue and the excessive lavishment I've bestowed upon them, nipples so taut I could capture them with my teeth at will.

"Draco."

And there's her verbal mantra, given unto me time and time again, especially when I add more pressure against her clitoris. Her hands rest against the edge of the tub behind my head, giving her leverage to force my fingers deeper inside. Her skin glistens wet with water and sweat, giving her an ethereal glow while she rocks forward and back, forward and back. I can hear the desperation in her panting -she's close to the precipice, and I'm fighting the urge to push her off. No... I want to take my time with this. I haven't felt this lax around someone in years. I can feel the sharp sting of my darkness as its teeth seize my soul, torturing me to stir the anger within. But I won't give in... not now.

"Draco," she sighs again, licking her lower lip in lust, "I'm... so close... please..."

I said I didn't want to shove her off the precipice -what I meant, and still mean, is that I fully intend on letting her fall. But on her terms, and with me at the bottom, ready to catch her when she does decide to let go. I want, more than anything, for her to remember this small bit of who I am -the bit I'd forgotten still existed. Someone charming and witty and hopeful. Someone who doesn't want to bite the hand which feeds me, instead opting to give the same pleasure right back. I can't believe I've forgotten him; he's been trapped in the dark pit of despair for too long, afraid to look at the light in fear of what it might do to him.

"Give in," I whisper into her ear, licking against the shell between words, "I want you to quake from it. I want you to scream as loud as you want and remember this-"

"Mmh- God!" Hermione gasps, mewling louder and louder until her fingers find the back of my head and drive my face between her lush breasts just as her legs quiver around my thighs. Though I can't see them, I imagine her toes curling as she cries out, flushed with heat and waves through her pulsing core. "Draco... Draco... Draco..." Her chin rests on the top of my head, fingers still wrapped in my blond locks. Her tits heave around my face, and I kiss against her sternum, proud.

"That's only round one," I chuckle, scooting her backward in the water to rest my cock between her thighs. Her swollen pussy rests against my length, still throbbing in time with her heartbeat. I listen to her shallow breaths and soak them in like sunlight. For once, this demon isn't afraid of the light; I crave it.

"Can't... think..." she whispers, eyes still closed as a shiver runs down her spine. She quivers in my arms, a breathtaking sight to behold with her damp curls sticking to her chest, slightly covering her nipples.

I can't help what I say next; when life hands you lemons... "That has to be a first."

"Oh, shut it," she laughs, bringing her eyes open before grabbing my face and pulling me forward into a smothering kiss. The water laps at the sides of the tub, lukewarm now. Goosebumps ghost my flesh as I sit upright in the water, away from the warmth, and jerk her body against mine, forcing our pelvises against each other. My cock brushes against her clit, making her groan for more contact as our tongues meet, gentle and possessive. I can't remember the last time I've been gentle with a woman. Have I ever? Even in my youth?

I wonder what it will feel like, should I take her tenderly. Will it be boring? Will it stimulate parts of me I didn't know existed? Will it be one big let down? Can I even do it? Will I fail?

I pull away from Hermione's lips, my blue-gray eyes meeting her coffee-colored ones. "Out of the tub, Miss Granger."

Playfully, she gives a long, lean stretch, brandishing those perky mounds in my eyeline once more. "But I'm so comfortable here."

"You know what's even more comfortable?" I brush my thumbs against her nipples and lean forward to kiss along her collarbone. "My bed."

She moans softly. "That so?"

"One thousand thread count," I nip her shoulder, "Egyptian cotton," then I trail a line up to her neck, "Not to mention how cozy you'll feel with my cock buried deep inside you." To add emphasis, I pinch her nipples and listen to the pleased sigh in return. "Convinced?"

"Mmm... getting there." Her head falls back, exposing the luxurious length of her neck. I brush some strands of curls away from her shoulders and trail a brazen line of kisses up to the spot just below her ear, where I know from experience makes her go crazy. She shifts on my

lap, wriggling, practically *squirming* from the anticipation. Something primal inside of me takes over, and my hands slip down to her hips, grabbing them, digging my fingers deep into the grooves of her pelvic bones until she mewls under the pressure. Fuck, she's so lovely when she submits to me.

No. Stop it. Not now... But why not now? Why not take advantage of this situation? She's putty in my hands, ripe for the molding... I could shape her into whatever I desired. A cock hungry slut, ready to open up her mouth and take my cum, or a wanton whore moaning as I ride her... *I have to stop this. This isn't me.* Of course it is. Pretty things like her are only good for one thing; being used and broken. *She isn't a thing. She's-*

"Your bed sounds more appealing by the moment," I hear her say, and I bring my concentration back to center stage, where Hermione smiles anxiously at me. With shaky arms she pulls herself up and out of the water, reaching for a nearby towel. As she steps onto the bath mat, I take in the subtle curves of her hips and the divine ass of a woman who seems to have forgotten just how dangerous I am. I reach out to touch it, but my hand is swatted away, and Hermione gives a coy laugh as she wraps the towel around herself. "Now, now, Mister Malfoy. Do try to be on your best behavior."

A low, gritty laugh is my reply as I pry myself up to stand, uncaring as she stares at me in all my erect manhood. If anything, it turns me on even more as her eyes trail down my chest, my abdomen, reaching my cock with a lustful expression. I step out of the tub, not bothering for a towel as I reply, "Best behavior? I don't know the meaning of those words." As I take a step forward, she giggles and takes a step back.

"Didn't your mother ever teach you manners?"

"Don't bring my mother into this," I say, cheeky, "Besides, you're over here talking about manners when you're such a cock tease..."

A smile splits her lips, and she rushes to the door, swinging it wide open. "Catch me if you can, then."

Oh, Hermione. Don't say things like that to me.

With a feral growl and a grin on my face, I chase after her as she takes off into the bedroom - *my* bedroom. It doesn't take me long to catch her, wrapping my arms possessively around her middle and jerking her to me, her back to my chest. I rip away the towel and toss it to the side, still keeping her cradled in my reach, even as she laughs and attempts to flee. To her, it's fun, but to me... it's primal. Carnal. I can't control myself as I latch my teeth onto her throat and suckle at her pulsepoint. Listening to her gasp and feeling her writhing in my arms stirs a need within me.

"Fu...ck..." she whimpers as I suck and bite at her neck until it's bruised and violated.

"Mmm... Draco..."

Damn it. This woman loves the tortuous things I do to her. How am I able to resist my darker impulses if she moans beneath me as if this is what she really wants?

What if this *is* what she really wants? What if she doesn't care for me at all? What if her only reason for staying with me is because of the darkness? Because it's what she craves, deep inside? What if she could never truly love me because the monster already has her heart?

I can't let it be this way.

With every ounce of control I have, I release her and push her forward, struggling to gain composure. "On the bed."

She has no idea what darkness she's awoken in me as she tucks her hands behind her back and peers over her shoulder at me, a playful, determined look on her face. She saunters over to the bed, slowly leaning herself back onto it until she's propped up on her elbows, a 'come here' finger curled in my direction. "Like this, Draco?"

Fuck yeah like this. *Fuck yeah.* My feet take control, taking the space between myself and the bed to nonexistent. I crawl on top of her, and she lets her body fall the rest of the way, her head hitting my pillow set. Our mouths meet in slow, lavish movements, tasting and exploring. I can feel my fingers twitch, the impulse strong to wrap them around her throat like I have in the past. *No. Not this time.*

"Roll over for me," I command, already guiding her to her side as I move myself behind her. My cock slips between her ass cheeks as I pull her against me, and we both groan at the sudden warmth and friction. If I have her this way, she can't see the struggle in my eyes. I don't want her to see the darkness trying to claw its way back out. I want to believe the me she's attracted to right now is *me*, and not *it*. If I realized she wanted *it*... I'm already broken. But I could just as easily shatter.

With precise movements, I guide her leg up and around my hip, opening her legs to me and with them the sweet prize between. One of my hands cradles her around her stomach, pulling her against me even tighter while my other one guides my cock between her slickened folds. I kiss her shoulder and nuzzle my face into her neck as I find her entrance and -

"Yessss..."

There's her glorious voice, singing praises to me as I snug myself inside of her dripping quim. I move, delving deeper, filling her up in ways only I can. I've come to know what gets her off, what pushes her on, what sort of pressure and angle will induce high screams or low moans. So I take my time at first, holding myself within her so she can feel every solid inch of my cock. My fingers curl under her leg, pulling it up into the air, opening herself up to me so I can sheath myself to the hilt, adding a bit of pressure to make sure the message sinks in. She's *mine*. Her head arches back, her fingers grip the sheets, and she moves her ass back against my stomach. Oh *sweet baby dragons*, she's gotten even *tighter*.

"Keep that up, and I'm not going to be able to control myself," I whisper against her throat.

"Who says I want you to?"

Without warning, I snap my hips back, sliding out of her wet cunt to leave only the tip inside of her. She sighs wantonly, lost in the sensation and sudden loss.

"Please... in me..."

I bite my lower lip and fight with every single ounce of discretion I have not to pound away at her. "You want it in you, Hermione?" I whisper, unable to resist dipping back inside her pussy again for another round. Her walls tighten around me, and she cries out, excited and caught off guard. "Is this what you want?"

"Yes... Dra-co... ah!"

Roughly, I jerk my hips and fill her, loving the pure slip and slide between her legs. I relish in her gasps and groans as I begin a slow pace, treating every thrust like a line in some sort of symphonic melody. I savor the way Hermione's back arches, catching myself sighing right along with her. Nothing has ever felt more right and less of a burden than bringing Hermione Granger's pleasure to new heights.

Soon, I pick up speed as Hermione moves against me, in time with me, my thrusting becoming more and more deliberate and forceful. I lean up, peeking over her shoulder to watch her breasts bounce as I drive into her. Her eyes are closed, her mouth is parted, and she's never looked more beautiful than with my cock inside her. If it weren't so perverse, I'd want to take a picture of this moment to remember forever.

"God... that's it... don't stop..." Her eyes open, and her head tilts back, catching me. A thin smile pulls her lips back as she takes in the darkened look in my eyes and the way my breath comes in pants.

No. I can't see her right now. I can't look her in the eyes and find out it isn't *me* she craves.

So, I do what I do best; I distract, taking the opportunity to push her forward as I roll on top of her, pressing my weight against her back while still deep inside of her. I nibble on her ear as I frame her shoulders with my arms and begin rocking her into the mattress. Her sighs turn to all out moans at this new angle, and her head tilts to the side, glazed in lust. "More..." she whimpers, chewing her lower lip in earnest. "More... God... give me your cock..."

The lady insists. Yes she does. Best not to disappoint, yes? My hips roll and my arms sway my body over hers, adding leverage as I begin to pound away into her heated core, listening to the abandonment as she begins to scream. Over and over I give her what she wants, what she *craves*. I feed her trite but honest compliments, "So beautiful," and, "I love it when you moan," and, "Never want to let you go." But they're true. They're unequivocally true.

One of my hands curls under her hips and tilts her ass up, giving way to the angle to which she fancies the most. Her cries become desperate as I stimulate the heavenly bundle of nerves inside of her. My hips snap in contrast to the slow grind of hers, and I feel her begin to tighten around my prick as her voice jumps up an octave.

"Goddamn it, Draco. Yes. Give it to me. Oh... ah! Yes!"

I feel the heat in my cheeks and the tightening in my abdomen as well as my testicles. I'm so close, and her moans are only stimulating the want to unload myself inside of her until she drips my come onto these thousand thread count sheets.

"How close are you?" I whisper.

"Ohhh... so, so close... please... just... a little... fuck!" Her entire body tenses beneath me as she falls - I want to be there to catch her, and I begin to abandon my pacing, giving into the raw emotion behind it all. My mind is floating, my senses heightened. I can smell her sweet arousal mixed with the scent of her perfume. I can taste the copper on my tongue from biting the inside of my cheek to keep myself from coming. I can hear the desperate groan of release beneath me as Hermione arches her back and digs her fingers into the sheets. It's only when I catch sight of that glorious tint on her cheeks that I'm sent over the edge, spilling my cum inside that warm, scrumptious cunt that hugs my dick so tightly. My arms shake. My senses numb. The only thing I can feel now is the powerful wave of my release as it crashes over me.

I don't come-to at once. It takes me some time to come to my senses and open my eyes once again. When I do, I see the beautiful creature beneath me, still spent and gasping for breath. Her body quivers. Her lower lip is cradled between her teeth. She's a puddle of frenzied nerves, just the same as me.

Carefully, I lean down and kiss her cheek with sensual pride. "You're my everything," I admit to her, too caught up in the moment to be fearful of what she might think or say. I only want her to hear these words, should I lose this part of myself all over again. I want her to know, just once, what she truly means to me. I hold myself against her for a time, both of us shivering and sighing until we're able to come down from our blissful high.

I pull myself out of her, eventually, and roll her over to face me as I lay back on my side and pull her against my chest. There, I kiss the top of her head and rub circles down her spine, tentative. Sleep overtakes her first. I can hear it in the gentle way she breathes against my sternum.

Eventually, my eyes close as well. I can't imagine a future without her, no matter how hard I try. I meant it when I said she was my everything. She found a way to bring out *me* again. I'm afraid, without her, I'll never be able to find my way back out of the darkness again.

I need her to...

I'm plucked from my sleep when something buzzes. My eyes crack open; in the pitch black room, there is a faint glow on the floor near the bed. Hermione lays curled asleep in my arms, facing away from me, lost in dreams. My memories skitter to the surface like fish to the top of a pond.

We made love. *We made love.*

...Disgusting.

How could I stoop so low? How could I allow myself to be burdened with all of these crippling emotions? Even now, they stagger my chest and weigh me down like an anvil, holding me against the bedframe. What was I thinking, letting her in the way I did? What did I think it would accomplish?

Still, the soft look on her slumbering face is humbling in ways I couldn't have imagined before.

Buzzzzzzzz.

What is that confounded noise?

I peel myself out of bed, careful not to stir her awake. With delicate stride, I stalk around the bed and see a faint light from inside her pajama pants. *Buzzzzzzzzzz.*

What do we have here? I delve into the pocket and reveal a small, black box with a tiny screen on the front and far too many buttons. Oh, I've seen these... 'cell phones.' Muggle things.

Words blare up at me in the light of the screen.

'Mione, need to talk. URGENT. Did you find it yet? Please, be careful.'

The name above the message causes me to nearly drop the phone. 'Ronald W.'

Two more days to vote for Squirm if you so choose!

Please leave a review in your wake? :3

~A.

Enigmatic

Overjoyed to announce... Squirm won 1st place for "Best WIP" (work in progress) in the 2017 Winter Dramione Awards!

Thank you to everyone who voted. :) I couldn't be happier. A lot of wonderful things have happened to me as of late because of fanfiction, and I couldn't have gotten to this point without all of you.

Just a reminder, there is a Spotify playlist for Squirm by

SaintDionysus! It gives me the chills. If you'd like a link, PM me!

This time around, the lovely QueenVulca made some brilliant cover art for Squirm! Please enjoy, and shout out some love to her on Tumblr!

Image may contain: 4 people, text

Image may contain: 5 people, text

Sunlight peeks from the bottom of my curtains as daylight breaks over the horizon. Hermione sleeps soundlessly between my covers, tucked away as if she's always slept here. I've been watching her from the edge of my bed, phone still tucked tight in my hand, for some time now. I can't decide if I'm upset, or furious, or perhaps a combination of the two. For the past two hours, I've been attempting to decipher this text which leaves my mind flummoxed to no avail.

Only one thing continuously plays inside my head on a loop: *She's still talking to him.*

Why would she? She's made it perfectly clear to me, on multiple occasions, her and Weasley do not see eye-to-eye on most things, and me especially. What reason could she possibly have to... and at such a late...

What was it she's to have found? Why must she be careful? Does he know? About everything? About my condition?

Don't be naive. Hermione wouldn't dare share that type of information if she knows what was good for her. And I assume she does, considering the way she screamed my name last night. Her writhing underneath me while I was buried deep inside...

That wasn't you. That doesn't belong to you.

Shut up. Shut up, shut up, shut *up*! This bleeding heart inside of me needs to sit down, shut the fuck up, and realize what's good for him. It isn't some sexually stimulating bint, albeit the sex has me craving her affections this morning, despite what I've discovered in this 'text message.' A good morning pounding inside that sweet pussy seems in order.

You get your mitts off her!

I pause, considering this contradicting voice inside my head. I've had conversations with myself, sure; everyone has. But this... this feels...

"Mmm... morning, sleepy head."

My head jerks as I'm startled out of my thoughts, and I catch Hermione peering at me, eyes half-open in comfortable awareness. Her hair is a tousled mess, and the blanket barely covers her tantalizing form.

"Morning," I reply, lacing my voice with seductive undertones to cast off suspicions of my deceit. While I'm all for carving up humans on the table in my basement, I don't do it without cause. I'm paranoid, delusional, cursed, but I know to wait out problematic situations and use them to my advantage. Carefully, I tuck the phone underneath the comforter behind my back and then crawl up the bed to pin her arms beside her head. As I straddle her waist, I lay claim to her lips in a sultry kiss that I know will have her eating from the palm of my hand.

'You catch more lacewing flies with honey than vinegar,' my mother would say. And at the moment, I'm a spider, spinning my web, biding my time until events unfold before me. Still, my anger can't be fully contained, and my fingers dig into her wrists, causing her to gasp against my lips.

"Draco, you're hurting..." she pulls her face away and stares into my eyes. Really stares in them. Her face contorts to one of almost irritability, and her head leans back against the pillow. "Oh. It's *you*."

"Who else would I be?" I ask, perching an eyebrow.

"I think we both know the answer to that," she whispers, a challenge in her tone as her eyebrows pull together. "I know he's in there. You think you have him buried, but you don't."

"Hermione," I start, "I'm *me*."

There's a pause.

"Of course you are." She bites on her lower lip and turns her head to the side, staring off at nothing in particular. "Forget I've said anything."

"It's difficult to forget when someone accuses you of not being yourself," I leer, tucking my face into the crook of her neck to inhale her scent. My fingers dig deeper into her skin, sure to leave impressions of my nails. I hear her sigh, watch as she scrunches her face in pain, but she refuses to give me the satisfaction of commenting on it. It then occurs to me, "When you say him... you aren't referring to the spirit, are you?"

"No."

I smirk. "Oh... *someone* enjoyed her special treatment last night." A string of amused laughter follows, and I lick the shell of her ear. "Well, don't go getting used to it. It was a moment of weakness, nothing more."

Her head jerks back around, and we stare at each other, nose to nose. "I told you: you weren't to take advantage of me anymore. I meant that. Get off me."

"I don't like be told what to do, especially but such a fragile-"

"I'm anything but that," she says, her eyes cold and formidable. "Release me. *Now*."

"And if I refuse?" I taunt, purposefully pushing my weight onto her. Hermione thrashes beneath me, legs kicking and back arching, but it's no use. I'm much stronger than her. Physics are physics. I relish the feel of her squirming beneath me, this time in a new, fearful way. Yes, last night was enjoyable, but the struggle is so... primal. It stirs a need for control within my chest, and I lean down, catching the left side of her neck with my teeth and clamping down. *Hard*.

Hermione's body goes still beneath mine as she gasps, her voice rising higher and higher as I add more pressure.

"Ah!" she cries out, as motionless as a pond's surface frozen in Winter. "D-Damn it... please..."

I tug on the sweet flesh, bruising it before releasing and bringing my gaze to hers once again. Hermione pants in shallow gasps, eyes red with tears she's refused to let go. With a haughty smirk still painted across my face, I lean up and release her, running my fingers up her arms, her shoulders, down her sides to rest against her pelvic bones. My weight still pins her legs to the bed while I lick my lower lip and tell her, "I'm sorry, Hermione. But you left me no choice. I can't have you thinking you're in control."

A single tear slips down the side of her face as she says, "And you think you're in control? Right now?" Her voice grows louder. "How can you possibly think that when you aren't even in control of yourself!"

"Hey!" I yell back, glaring harshly into those kind, almond orbs. "Don't presume to know me, mudblo-!"

SWAT!

The slap echoes inside my darkened bedroom, and my cheek burns hot.

Hermione leans upright, a mixture of surprise and conviction in her voice as she whispers, "You will never call me that word again, Draco. Do you hear me? I don't care what that *Dybbuk*-" I clamp my hands over my ears and shout incoherently as she continues, "says! You're better than that, do you hear me?"

My nostrils flare as I suck breath after intoxicating breath, trying to alleviate the throbbing in my head. She said *the word* purposefully this time, and it makes all the difference. My entire body is wracked in pain, but it all stems from my temples, bleeding out to all of the nerve endings. It's enough to make me collapse to the side of the her, white dots lining my vision. I close my eyes in an attempt to rid myself of them, and vertigo sets in.

"I'm sorry," she whispers, setting a soothing hand on my shoulder to turn me over. Before I know what's happened, I find my head rested in her lap, her hands smoothing down my cheeks in gentle strokes. "I didn't know how else to snap you out of it."

I can't find the words to answer, so I lay still in her lap, teeth clenched and nerves on the fritz.

"I'm going home, now. Get dressed. Meet me at the Ministry in one hour in the front lobby. I thought we were making progress, but..." Hermione smooths my hair from my forehead, and my eyes find the will to re-open, finding her not with a glare, but with a smile instead. "Bring your journal. It's vital that you do."

Hermione leans down, kisses my forehead, and pries herself out from under me. I'm in such a daze, I can only watch her dress in silence, too far gone to make some quip or reprimand her for her actions. My heartbeat begins to decelerate around the time she pats her pajama pockets and turns her head inquisitively to me.

"Have you seen my...?"

Her eyes follow mine as I sit up, to the spot where I tucked it before. There's no denying it now. She reaches down, moves the covers and finds her phone. I expect her face to flare in red, and I narrow my eyes, ready for another round of *the word* when she gives a slight huff.

"It's dead."

I find the courage to speak again, glazing over the fact she's pushed me to my limits on how much I will stand to take from her. "How can a plastic object be 'dead'?"

"It's a figure of speech. I need to recharge it to power it up again." Her eyes meet mine. "Are we good?"

No. No, we are not good. We are far from it. "Of course," I lie, because I haven't decided how I want to make her suffer. Besides, there's a small hint of something within me that is glad she has the means to stop me should I go too... can I go too far? Really? Have I reached that point? What's gotten into me? It better not be that damn conscience again. I won't stand for it. I'll strip it apart like bloody tendons if I have to.

"I swore this was in my pocket last night," she says, hinting.

"Must have fallen out when we..." I bite down on my tongue, because the words 'made love' just aren't in my vocal vocabulary.

"Ministry. One hour."

"Hmph." I give a curt nod and watch as she touches her neck, wincing. There's a strange pang of guilt in my heart, but I won't comment on it.

"Alright." She backs herself to the door, never once turning her back on me. Probably for the best. My predatory senses are tingling, begging to snatch her up like a snitch. She reaches behind her, fumbles the doorknob, and smiles faintly. "And Draco?"

"Hmm?" I grumble.

"... You're my... my everything, too."

Am I falling? When did my bed turn into an abysmally black hole? Why do I feel stretched out like a leather strip to make a drum? *Boom, boom*. Loud, soft. The drum is my heart, and it beats frantically for Hermione Granger.

My palms sweat as I step out of the floo into the Ministry of Magic. My journal is tucked inside of my robes, but I keep patting it every so often since I've placed it there, paranoid it might fall out and spill my secrets to the world.

After a cold shower and a bite to eat, I've had some time to think on what happened in my bedroom one hour ago.

If Hermione Granger can still find the want to kiss me after I nearly took her against her will in my bed, I can find the want to hear out what she has to say on the subject of this Dyb...Dybbuk. Still, I'm frantic with mistrust, because stepping one foot in the Ministry after my ill will goes against every fiber of my instincts.

Trust her.

If she betrays me, I see no reason not to put her on my list.

She said I was her everything...

Probably trite horse shite to keep me coming back for more... though it is working.

An arm slips around mine, and Hermione leans her cheek against my shoulder. "Are you ready?"

"Where are we going?" I ask with an uneasy edge.

"There's something I think will help narrow down your Dyb... your passenger's motives."

"Here? In the Ministry?" My legs quiver. I don't want to go any further.

"You can trust me, Draco."

"How?"

"I can't tell you yet."

"If this is some sort of trap..." I begin, and she steps in front of me, a hand on my chest.

"You think I would do that? You honestly think I would?" Her eyes look hurt, her expression worn.

"I..."

She takes my hand and leaves her fingers with mine. "Let's get you a visitor's badge. It'll all make sense soon." Together, we make our way to the front counter. Hermione throws her Ministry badge around, along with about five different colored parchment forms, and then the secretary, after carefully scrutinizing over every one, hands me a visitor badge of my own. We step to the lifts next.

"What floor?" I ask. We are the only ones inside as the doors close.

"Level nine," she answers, pressing the button.

Shame. I enjoy pressing the buttons.

"Nine... the Department of Mysteries." Our eyes catch. "What aren't you telling me?" I press myself up against her from behind, resting my nose against the side of her neck. The elevator begins its slow decent down and sideways. It gives me the opportunity to curl my arm around her stomach and kiss tentatively along her glamourised throat, where my bruising lays beneath. An apology of sorts. Also, I just like to lay claim to what's mine when I can, and she's most certainly *mine*.

"You remember my promotion, yes?" she asks, her eyes closing at my ministrations, my tongue darting out to swipe at her pulse point. I give a noncommittal sound as response, so she continues, "It doesn't just involve the S.P.E.W." My teeth nibble her ear, causing her to sigh. "I work part-time with the Unspeakables as well."

My fingers splay against her abdomen. "Have you told anyone about our little secret?" I ask, thinking of Weasley in particular.

"I've told no one," she replies, tensing in my arms. "I forged a few entries on the forms to get you into Department Nine, saying it has to do with research involving cooperation with your company."

"Perfidious claims on official forms," I tease, my hand sliding down to press against her covered sex, only separated by another pencil skirt. "How very Slytherin."

The ding of the lift causes my hand to still, and, as the doors spring open, I release her and smirk. I don't need to see her face to tell she's flushed with arousal. One only need see her press her thighs together as she fans her face. Straightening out her posture, she steps out of the lift, and I follow closely behind her.

"Where to?" I ask.

Hermione bites her lip (such an alluring habit) and says, "What do you know about an enigmatic structure called *The Veil*?"

Dual Delirium

A lot of you have been asking when the first chapter comes into play. Soon. I can say that with confidence. In the meantime, let's get some answers. The next chapter should be updated Friday, so you won't have to wait too long.

~A.

 *Image may contain: one or more people, text and closeup*

The Veil. I can't say I've heard of it, but the sound of the words from Hermione's tongue sends my stomach into a whirlwind. My intestines ache like they've been shoved inside a blending spell and left on the highest setting. A cold sweat breaks out across my forehead, and my heart palpitates in quick succession.

Hermione notices my distress, and, to my amazement, a smile forms on her pretty lips. "We're getting somewhere."

"What the *actual fuck* does that mean?" I sneer as the elevator door dings shut, solidifying my nerve to stay on this godforsaken floor and not dash away like my instincts scream at me from the inside.

"All will be explained, Draco. Looks like you're just going to have to trust me." Her hand extends, and she takes my hand, walking backward as she does to guide me into a grand hall with doors encompassing all sides. Black, marble flooring reflects my face back at me as I struggle for breath. I glance up at the ceiling to find it missing -just an empty pit of blackness up above that travels up for miles on end. Not noticing Hermione's stopped, I nearly run smack dab into her when we pause directly in the center of the room.

"Why have we stopped?" I whisper.

"What we're about to do breaks nearly fifty Ministry regulations and is highly dangerous," she replies, concern in her tone, as if she speaks more to herself than me. "I need to know you're all in."

"I wouldn't be here if I-"

"-I need to hear you say it," she insists, eyes snapping onto mine and holding her own against the frozen tundra of my soul. "Things have taken several steps back since last night, and I have no idea why. I had hoped we would never need to resort to this, however - I won't lose you, Draco." She places her free hand on my chest, above my heart.

Something inside begs to hold her, but I shove it aside and narrow my eyes. It's reflex to be suspicious. It's all I've known for years. "Why are you so keen on 'saving' my soul, Hermione? You know I could give two shites less."

"You might not care, but the Draco inside of you- the *real* you -he's begging for my help." Her hand slides up my chest, fingers dancing gracefully along my neck and over to cup my cheek. I allow it; the feeling is stimulating, so why shove off something that is physically pleasing? "You hear him, don't you?"

She knows everything. The woman is brilliant. The woman is annoying.

"I haven't the foggiest clue what you're talking about."

"I know you're lying," she insists.

"And how would you know anything about what goes on in my precious mind?"

A door clicks open to our right, knocking the conversation clean out of us. My inquiries will have to wait, because Hermione says, "We only have an hour inside before the room is sealed once again. Let's get going."

The closer I approach the door, the more distant I feel to myself. Soon, I'm like a third party watching on from up above the endless void of non-existent ceiling as Hermione pulls me through the threshold of the ominous black doorway. A shiver, procured from magic, runs down my spine, and a quick snap of magic releases us inside a vast, empty room. Well, nearly empty. There's something large and ominous in the center of the floor. Around us stands an inquisitory hall, much like the one used for the Wizengamot, though this one looks as if it hasn't been used in a few lifetimes. But that isn't what holds my attention. No, it's the grand archway made of crumbling stone which looks as if it's been here over a millennia. It sits on a large dais made for the criminals on trial to stand.

"What is this?" I ask, my tongue suddenly as dry as the pages of a book.

"This is The Veil."

Hermione guides me one step forward -I'm suddenly so sick I wrench my hand out of hers and rush over to the wall, vomiting into the corner. My morning coffee and eggs won't get to tag along for the journey. I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand, embarrassed and angry. Hermione touches my shoulder, and after casting a freshening charm and a scourgifying charm to the floor, I turn around and glare at her.

"It's alright. That happens."

"I don't see it happening to you," I sneer.

"It has. But it doesn't happen to everyone. Come, I'll show you."

Uneasy, I follow her back to the aisle and walk down to the center of the floor, ready to turn on my heels should the need arise. But as we draw closer, the most peculiar thing happens. I begin to hear voices.

Soft whispers envelop my senses, tickling the back of my mind. Murmurs and hisses alike beat against my ears like drumsticks. I can't make out what they're saying, but they're as real as the tip of my nose.

"I can hear them, too," Hermione says, stopping just ten feet short of The Veil. A tattered, black cloth drapes down from the archway, billowing in a gust of nonexistent wind. "The first time I looked upon this place, I was sixteen. I didn't hear them, then."

"Sixteen?" I ask. "How did you get in here-?"

"Do you remember when your father was arrested? At the end of our fifth year?"

"How can I forget?" my voice holds dark contempt as I recall the events like a flickering pensieve inside my mind. "My family fell out of the Dark Lord's favor, then. It's what drove him to give me the task of repairing that damn vanishing cabinet." I know I sound broody, but the memories are ticking time bombs in my mind. If I'm not careful, I could set myself off. "You fought him here, didn't you? My father?"

"Yes. In this room."

"And those voices... you didn't hear them before?" I ask, hoping to change the subject before my anger is out of hand.

Hermione shakes her head. "Harry did. And Luna. But not me. When I first joined the Ministry, I worked part time on creature activism and legalities. But there was another position I took on... as an Unspeakable. Shacklebolt insisted."

"Why you?"

"Brightest witch of our generation, remember?"

"How can I forget?" I roll my eyes. "It's practically your catchphrase."

"Shacklebolt wanted me to see if magical creatures were susceptible to the sounds of The Veil as well. I spent a great long while in here, after the War, running all sorts of tests. The first time I stepped back inside after all those years apart, I heard the voices. Any living being who goes near it will hear voices of their dead loved ones. It's why I wasn't able to hear them before -I hadn't known loss. The War, however..." she trails off.

"The magical creatures you worked with -they were Thestrals."

"Precisely."

"And?"

"And even they were frightened of The Veil. I've never seen a Thestral spook. Something so close to death has hardly a reason to be afraid." Hermione inhales slowly, taking her time to search for her words. "You remember when I told you I knew a woman with your condition?"

I nod in response.

"I brought her here, to The Veil. I wanted to help her, and I thought maybe if she could become closer to the barrier between the living and the dead, it might help her settle the spirit."

Why do I get the feeling there's more to her story she isn't telling me?

"Is that what you want me to do?" I ask. "Settle the spirit within me?"

"I want you to read your journal."

We stare blankly at each other, both of us at a loss for words at this point. Minutes drag on.

"I think it will help you hear the spirit within you and decipher clues."

"Who was the woman?" I ask.

"It doesn't matter," she whispers.

I take a step closer to her. "You want me to talk to the dead. You want me to confess my sins to the *dead*, Granger. Now, I'm not putting myself out there until I get answers."

A coldness spreads across her face. "I have a loyalty to the people who I've cared for. I have a loyalty to her secrecy."

The darkness inside of me flickers -it doesn't like being near this structure; it feels vulnerable. Hermione might be onto something. Still, when I open my mouth to concede, all that spits out is, "Your loyalty belongs to *me*." I grab her arm and jerk her forward, toward The Veil. "There's something you're hiding. Tell me."

"Draco, let go of my arm! Dy-"

"*Silencio*." I won't have her crying 'Dybbuk' again.

Hermione struggles, digging her heels into the stones as I drag her along, mere feet from the structure now. The whispers grow louder, practically crying out from behind the cloth. I yank Hermione right to the edge, standing behind her.

"You're going to tell me what's really going on, or I'm going to toss you through." *Don't you fucking do it*. A thick smirk slaps across my face as I jerk her arms behind her back and push her an inch closer. Hermione frantically pants, wide-eyed and desperate. "From what I hear, Potter's godfather took a nice little trip through. Maybe you'd like to say hello."

Cut it out. She's had enough. She'll talk.

I'll decide when she's had enough.

I remove the silencing charm from her lips and whisper against her cheek, "Say the word and I'll shove you in. *Don't* think you're special enough I won't."

Hot tears stream down Hermione's cheek, meeting my lips. I lick them up: a show for whatever's beyond that dirty old veil. Don't ask me why, but I'm suddenly aroused by the helplessness of her situation. Imagine if I took her, right here, in front of this dingy tapestry. I can just see her back scratched to blood against the stone archway as I fuck the willingness to help me out of her. Not even the whispers would be heard over her attempts at screams.

"Talk. *Who* was the woman?" I push her so close her nose could practically touch the curtain, my cock pressing into her back through my robes.

"M-My mother!" Hermione screams. "It was my mother who was possessed! Damn it, Draco, stop-"

Against my will, I throw her to the side, away from the curtain, and listen to the soft impact of her fall. My eyes trail down to my hands, now shaking, and stare in bewildered horror. Why did I release her just now? I wasn't done with my questioning yet!

Hermione stays in her spot on the floor, now in full blown waterworks. Her eyes are red and puffy, and she swipes at them frantically as the tears fall. Fear shrouds her face as she stares up at me, along with pure, unadulterated anger.

"I was wrong about you," she whispers.

"Yeah?" I smirk wider. "What tipped you off?" With a snort, I roll my eyes and turn my attention back to The Veil and the whisperings beyond. "So, your mother acquired the box, did she? -You said she made a deal with the spirit. What sort of deal?"

"What makes you think I want to tell you after the way you just treated me?"

Is she serious right now? One glance over to her confirms my suspicions: I might have betrayed that trust she has in me. Or, rather, the 'real' me. My mistake was letting her see me without filters. She thinks that soft, timid nature is who I really am, but why can't she understand the real me feels nothing but hate?

Even as I ask these questions, I think about how I threw her away from The Veil. There must be some part of me, deep down, which cares deeply for this woman.

Of course, I care about her. She's the only good thing to happen to me since you came along.

My thoughts are mucked up. I can't *think*!

I clasp my hands over my ears -these damned voices are too loud, and so is the one stirring inside of me, longing to rush over to her and apologize. Fuck... fuck, fuck, "FUCK!" I stumble back and find myself on my knees, head swimming. "Hermione..." Why am I calling out to her? "Hermione... please..." What's this wetness on my cheeks? Am I *crying*? "Fuck, I'm so sorry. Just push me through... push me through the damned Veil and get it over with." I don't mean that! Why am I saying that?

Hermione stirs next to me, and the next thing I know, her arms are around me, encompassing my frame. Her chin rests on my head. "No, Draco. I can't do that."

Stop touching me. Stop holding me. Can't you see I don't want it? Why won't my body work the way I want it to!?

"I nearly... you could have died." I hear my voice, but I'm not controlling it. "It's getting worse... tell me what to do."

"You need to read the names," she says.

Don't you fucking read those names, Draco Malfoy. I swear to fucking Merlin himself...

"O-Okay..." I curl my arms around her and bury my face against her chest. "Fuck... I love you, Hermione. I never meant to hurt you."

Hermione's eyes light up. "You love me?"

No. She's just a thing to play with. Don't be daft.

"I love you."

"I love you, too." She wipes a new tear from her eye, this one from happiness.

My hands shake as I reach inside my robes and remove my journal.

No. NO.

"I'm sorry about your mother..."

"Shh." Hermione presses a finger to my lips. "We don't have time for that. Read the names. They'll come to The Veil."

"How will it help? I can feel it trying to claw its way through again..."

"Just do it. Trust me. It will all make sense soon."

"Alright," I snifle. I *sniffle*? Merlin, how pathetic am I right now? Hermione moves to give me space to stare into The Veil, and I open my mouth,

Shut up, Draco!

"Irma Leopold."

Oh, I love this. Can't wait for the next bit. Don't worry. Answers about Ron are coming, and more backstory with Hermione's mother. Also, it only gets darker from here on out. I love slow build horror, but the time has come for it to happen. Prepare yourself. ^_^
~A.

Meet the Monster

I've had a few of you ask if this has a HEA.

While I cannot answer, I can say this: It's going to get a Hell of a lot worse before anything gets better.

Thank you to everyone who gave me a large playlist from Facebook to work with when getting me in the mood for this chapter. There was one suggestion -Seven Devils by Florence+The Machine- that gave me chills. My goodness. It's perfection at its finest. Every suggestion was well worth the while, though.

And here. we. go.

~A.

"Irma Leopold."

The name, said from my lips, feels like dozens of razor blades slicing at my vocal chords. It's painful, to say the least, and I choke.

"Don't stop," Hermione encourages me, moving to stand beside me, her hands on my shoulders. I stay kneeled before the veil, physically shaking and mentally exhausted. The darkness inside scratches and drives its talons into my soul, ripping at me from the inside. Gods, it hurts so *fucking much*, but I press on, reading the next name on my list.

"Phius Gamp."

The whispers behind the veil grow louder, feeding me hisses and taunts I cannot understand.

"Keep going." Hermione's hands rub my tired shoulders, and my eyes fall half-closed, lost in the sensations.

I already know the next name. "George Bones." The veil's curtain whips back and forth. My ears are pierced with a shrill, high-pitched moan I can only describe as otherworldly. The words the souls trapped inside shout begin to solidify, but it's still unclear as to what is said. Again, I continue on, despite the mounting pain writhing inside me. Each name is like a new wound to my core. Name after name pours from my lips. "R-Rosy Doge... Thomas Ogden... shit! I can't!" I can't, it's too much! Every nerve feels like it's being singed with a hot poker.

"One more," says Hermione, soft and sure, "If you stop now, all of this will be for nothing. Don't let it win!"

"F-Floyd Stokke!"

A large gust of wind pushes the curtain forward, causing its frayed edges to whip in our direction. Then, the curtain stills.

"You've done it, Draco," Hermione murmurs.

But what have I done, exactly?

I gasp for breath, my ribcage tightening like it's being squeezed. Lightheaded as I am, I focus on the curtain, wondering what comes next.

"Hermione—"

"Shh."

The silence drags on, and the monster inside of me paces, back and forth, ready for a moment of my intermittent weakness. Until, with a loud, boisterous scream, voices chime out in unison, screaming—

Mur—er—Mu—der—rrrr—Mur—der—er—Murderer—!

My journal drops to my knees as my hands abandon it and clamp down my ears. "Make them stop!" I shout, desperate. "Stop them! Shite! I can't take it!"

"What are they saying, Draco?"

Mur—der—er— MU-DER-ER—

"I know I am!" I scream at The Veil. I jerk away from Hermione's grasp and angrily pick the book back up, rearing tit back. "I fucking know it! Tell me what's wrong with me! Tell me who's inside me!" I aim the book back behind my shoulder, ready to toss it into The Veil, but Hermione's fingers wrap around my wrist as she yells, "You mustn't!"

I don't want to exist. Anything would be better than this torture. Death would be a sweet release from my sins being put on display. Fuck, I'm so weak... I'm so fucking weak...

Mur—der—er— MU-DER-ER—MURDERER, MURDERER, MURDERER—

The vicious chants continue, echoing in my ear drums.

"Help me," I beg; I'm unsure if it's to Hermione, or the voices, or to the cosmos, or even my dark passenger. I just know I can't bear another moment of this pain.

The chanting stops.

A bitter laugh escapes my throat. Letting go of all resistance to throw the book, I say to Hermione, "They've stopped."

"What did they say?"

"Murderer." I set the book back down, eyeing the names on the pages. "It's all they said, over and over. Murderer."

"You're not the murderer. It's the soul inside of you."

"If it isn't me, who is it?" I ask, voice just above a whisper. I'm exhausted beyond compare, but I fight to keep my eyes trained on the tapestry. I'm suddenly so angry with wasting my time with these useless souls. "Is that all you can say?" I taunt, my voice growing louder. "Murderer!? Hmm? Well, come on, then!"

The wind picks back up, seeping from the curtain. A hoarse, guttural voice beckons me. Only the one, and it makes my sweat turn cold.

The wench thinks she can control me... control us. Such a pretty thing, isn't she, Malfoy? I bet she'd be even prettier with her blood spilled on the floor.

My eyes skitter over and glance up at Hermione. "I-"

Shut up. My mouth snaps shut.

"Draco?" she asks.

I get it. Really I do. Girly's got chops and a fine ass. Following around her skirt tails has been mighty fun, hasn't it?

That voice... I know that voice.

And you trust her. That's going to get you killed. Lucky you have me to deal with things like that.

It can't be... you're dead.

Kind of the point, isn't it? I appreciate you letting me tag along all these years. All the alcohol, and loose women, and never having to deal with the impotent slags who looked down on me for what I was. But what they didn't know, Malfoy-what they didn't understand was that I liked who I was. Sinking my teeth into people. Hearing the children scream. Oh, and did they ever-

"Gr-Gr-" I struggle to force the words out of my mouth, to warn Hermione.

Oh, no. Can't have you giving it away, can we? After all, we haven't made her bleed...

I glance down at the journal, my body stiff and unwilling to do as I tell it. It's as if someone has cut all the chords to my spinal system and rendered me useless. - Quickly, I try to reason it out in my mind, thinking of when I acquired this book... in the Room of Requirement during the Battle of Hogwarts.

But you weren't dead yet.

Didn't have to be.

But the book *called* to me.

Called to you? The voice snorts. *Nah, Malfoy. You're just a kleptomaniac. Wanting this thing was all you and your greedy little soul. It's how I got inside you so easily. And inside Hermione-*

Don't say her name!

Ha, I'll say whatever I want to say.

But the inscription...

What? I can't have a soft side for poetry? -Ah, who am I kidding? Pretty, wasn't it? My mother wrote it the night before I killed her in her sleep.

"Draco?" Hermione calls my name, but she feels like a million miles away. I feel my mind slipping; he's taking control again, morphing my opinions and points of views to his own wolfish needs. I can't let it happen. You can't have her -*I've already had her. Over and over and over again. Apparently, you don't get it. I'm not giving up this body so easily, now. It's young, full of life. I can kill so many more people while I'm here. Now, we've been real careful about who we've killed because you're a high profile, but if you don't shut up and sit down, things are going to get dicey. You get me, Malfoy? Dicey.*

Hermione sits in front of me now, her hands on my cheeks and a determined look in her eye. "Did you hear it? Did you hear your Dybbuk?"

Fear fumbles my words into nothing, and I stare up at her, horrified. How can I begin to explain the monster inside of me? Where do I even start? It's worse than I ever thought possible.

Somewhere behind us, a door slams. "What the *Hell*, Hermione?"

Well, well. Lookie who decided to come and piss on our doorstep. Go on, Malfoy. Have a look. He just might make the list this time. My head whips around.

"Ron," Hermione growls, a slight edge to her voice, "What are you doing here?"

"What am *I* doing here?" Weasley's face is so red it looks as if it's been submerged in boiling water. "What the bloody Hell is *he* doing here?"

"Have you been following me?" she seethes, her eyes glaring daggers at him as she massages my cheeks in gentle circles as she turns my face back to her, attempting to stir a reaction from me. But my body is anchored. I have no control, now; no say in what it does.

"I owled you last night-"

"I wasn't home, Ronald."

"I did that texty-thingy you taught me how to do-"

"My phone was dead, Ron! And you *followed* me here?"

"Technically," Weasley says, "I *had* you followed."

"That's not any better!" Hermione releases my face and stands. "How *dare* you!"

"I've been worried about you!" he shouts back. The itch, the passenger -he doesn't like the yelling. "You've been avoiding me, aren't home in the middle of the night, tell me there's a dangerous case you're working on but not to be worried!? And then you have the nerve to ask for *my* help pulling Ministry archives on things that could get us both locked away in *Azkaban...*!" His voice shakes, and his tone drops lower, more serious. "And then I find you down here, locked away with *him*." There's a pause. "It's him, isn't it? The dangerous case you're working on. He's the reason you're acting loonier than Luna Lovegood!"

"Ron, let me explain-"

"Fucking Merlin, 'Mione!"

There's a cold silence between them while I struggle to move my fingers. It's not 'Mione. It's Hermione... *You're just going to let him come in like that? Turn you both in? Go away. Nah, he won't turn her in, will he? Just you. Once he sees that ledger in your hands, he's going to have enough to lock you away for life. And then he's going to fuck her- Stop it - fuck your girl like you didn't even exist. Is that what you want, Malfoy?*

"Why are you even down here?" Weasley asks, softer this time. I can hear his feet echo around the hall as he approaches. He stops next to me and glances down. "What's wrong with him? Is he hexed?"

"Draco," Hermione says, and my eyes snap up to hers on someone else's command. "You found out who it was, didn't you? Give me a name. Give me a name and I can end all this. We can fix this. Together."

A name? Is it really that simple? *Of course, it isn't. She doesn't know what she's talking about. She's too close to it all -maybe it was a good idea, you falling for such a young, fresh piece of flesh. We can use this. We can break her... over and over again.*

"What'd you do, 'Mione? Obliviate him?" Weasley stares down at me in wonder. "Blimey, I've never seen him look so... well, I don't know what I'd call it, exactly."

"He's sick, Ronald," Hermione snaps. "He's been infected."

"Infected?" Blue eyes flicker back to The Veil behind him, and then Weasley turns his attention on me. That's when he notices it. The journal in my hand. Fuck. *Fuck, indeed. What are you going to do, Malfoy? You going to keep fighting me? Or do you want to stop being a little pussy about this and let me take this body out for a walk?* "Oi, Hermione. What's this?"

"Leave it-" she starts to move toward the journal, but Weasley is quicker and gathers it up in a flash, out of my useless fingertips.

"You said you were looking for something -is this it? Is this the...?" Weasley's eyes trail over the names on the page, and he pales exponentially. For a dumb bloke, he catches on quickly. "This is in Malfoy's handwriting. Isn't it?" He doesn't wait for a response. "It is. I'd remember this gaudy penmanship anywhere." He looks me dead in the eyes and crouches down, pushing the notebook in my face. "Why do you have this list, Malfoy? Why do you have a missing persons list in your possession?" His Auror hat is on, brimming with questions. "Did you steal it? What're you doing with-"

"That's quite enough, Ronald!" Hermione grabs the notebook out of his hand.

Weasley stands back up, towering over her like a daunting figurehead whose face resembles a moldy turnip. "You have ten seconds to explain it, Hermione, or I'm going to the Minister of Magic myself."

Ten seconds. You hear that, Malfoy? And I bet the shit can't even spell up to ten, so I'd hurry if I were you.

I'm not giving you control. Sod you.

"Alright," Hermione whispers, placing a hand on his chest to steady him. It touches a jealous, possessive nerve in my heart. Don't touch him, Hermione. Can't you see he's willing to turn you in for helping me? "You're right. When I told you I was looking for a dark object, this is it."

She *told* him about a dark object?

I think the better question is: why wouldn't she tell you about it unless she was working you the whole time?

Hermione wouldn't do that. She's trying to help me rid myself of *you*!

Or, she's been using you to further her research? Why bring Weasley into it unless she planned on coming clean, eventually? The answer is easy. Because she never cared about you. She wanted Weasley there to clean up the mess she's made once she's through with you.

You're wrong.

Look at her. Touching him. Touching him while she wears your bracelet. That's cold, Malfoy.

No... she wouldn't... she loves me. She wouldn't betray me. She loves... but who am I, compared to Weasley? Weasley, with no blood on his hands? Weasley, who can offer her a pure, untainted soul? Weasley... I can't believe I'm second best to a Weasley... I'm not. I'm better than him.

You feel it, don't you? That anger? That resentment? You must remember; it's the way you felt the day you let me in. You remember how betrayed you were that day. The day your family abandoned you in that cold, impressive Manor- she's going to leave you, just the way they left you. But I've been there for you, Malfoy. I've kept you safe. I've kept you alive. Feel that pain? But I can make it go away. I can make the pain go away. You'd like that, wouldn't you? -You

want to risk winding up in Azkaban for some tasty pussy? You be my guest. I hope you've gotten your fill of living, Malfoy, because when you're rotting in that cell, you'll be begging to slit your own throat.

For years, there's been an itch in the back of my mind. I've fought it, tried to wrestle with it, even scratched at it in hope of relief. Today, I give in to the itch, letting it crawl up my brain and into my veins. I can't go to Azkaban. I won't let it happen. For too long, I've been fighting the shadow inside of me, but tonight I let it loose. I let the monster inside of me free from its cage and off its leash. Tonight, I am my monster, and my monster is me. We are two halves of a complete being, and we refuse to allow Hermione Granger to use us a moment longer.

There's a small fracture in my heart as I take one last look at the woman I love. *I won't let her hurt me. I'll hurt her first. I'll fracture her in ways she can only imagine.*

The darkness begins. Will Draco make it out of this? Let's find out.

***A/N: I gave lots of hints as to who his Dybbuk is, but I can't speak his name just yet.
There's a reason.***

Commanding Loyalty

So, I've been sick. Like, coughing, fever, chills, chest pains, vomitting kind of sick. I took my first sick day off in 3 years kind of sick. That's why it's taken me so long to update, and I want to thank everyone for their patience.

Down the rabbit hole we go.

~A.

 *Image may contain: 2 people, text*

Inhale. Yessss... this feels... *exhale.* Perfect. Fucking perfect.

My fingers twitch, and my body is my own again, I fight back the demonic smirk I so want to give and train my eyes on Weasley, who curls his lengthy, pale fingers around Hermione's wrist, smudging my gifted bracelet in the process. His eyes glare expectantly at Hermione.

"Well?" he says, pressing his chest against her hand. Her fingers splay in a starburst design across his pectorals, and I'm tempted to break Weasley's hand. Patience, I tell myself. Formulate a plan, first. Slytherins aren't known for charging in with guns blazing; we much prefer to sneak in through the back gate.

Hermione trails her pretty, pink tongue across her bottom lip and knits her eyebrows together. "You're going to have to trust me on this one. You're making it worse."

"Making what worse?" his voice cracks. "Tell me, 'Mione."

I can't help myself. I'll be damned if I hear that infuriating nickname again. "Her name isn't 'Mione," I bite, tearing at each word. "It's Hermione, you benighted fool."

"It speaks." Weasley meets my glare, once again having the audacity to stare at me as if *I'm beneath him*. Just you wait, Weasley. The tables will turn soon enough.

"Draco...?" Hermione whispers, and to my relief, she jerks her hand away from the troll-faced oaf and crouches down to my side. "Are you... *you*?"

I blink once, twice, three times, formulating my best impression of the self I am in public, mixed with the timid imbecile I've allowed myself to become. I'm quite convincing as I break out into an 'unsure' smile and reach up, cupping her cheeks with my hands. "Yeah. I'm me." It's perfection to see her melt against my touch, relief flooding her features.

Weasley clears his throat to our left, displeased. Fuck him. He'll get his soon enough. Just to rub it in his ugly face, I draw Hermione closer to me, managing a few useless tears for extra effect. As I blink, they fall down my cheeks, and Hermione wipes them away; my own personal moth to a flame.

"Did you hear a voice?" Hermione asks me.

I give a practiced, distant expression. "No. Just the voices from The Veil."

"Would you two mind clueing me in?" Weasley takes a step forward. "Seriously... all of this is giving me the creeps."

"Ronald! Be a tree for a moment and pretend you can't speak!" Hermione snaps. Her attention immediately turns to me. "That's impossible. You should have heard your Dybbuk."

I flinch, ready for the pain, but it doesn't come. Nothing. Not a damn thing. Hermione and I share brief, quizzical glances, and then, before I know what's happened, *-zapp!* "Fuck!" I'm blasted back twenty feet, my body barrelling off the platform and down the stone steps leading toward the door. All I see is red for half a moment, but the next, my wand is drawn, and I'm crouched on my knees, one hand wiping away the blood from my lips.

A bombarding spell. Clever little bint. -Out of the corner of my eye, Weasley readies a spell. "*Accio wand!*" His wand flies from his hand and lands in mine. The smirk on my face is prominent as I push myself up to stand, rubbing the sore muscles in my neck. "Now that wasn't very nice, love. After all I've done for you... how'd you figure it out?"

"The only reason the word Dybbuk loses power is if you've given it complete control." Hermione gives a disheartened sigh, a crease working between her brows. "Why, Draco? Why would you do it?"

"You really have to ask?" I sneer back, gesturing toward her red-headed counterpart. "Did you think I wouldn't find out about your little tryst with Weasley? I saw the text messages. You've been talking to him about everything behind my back-"

"-you know that isn't true!" she shouts back. "I haven't hidden a thing from you! Why would I talk about everything so openly with Ron in front of you if I-"

"-Don't." I point my wand at Weasley, threatening. "Don't fucking say his name, or I'll blast him into the fucking Veil."

Hermione motions one hand up in peace. "Easy."

"Do you care about him?"

"He's my best friend. Of course, I care."

"You know what I mean. - Do you *love* him?"

Slowly, she says, "That's a complicated question, Draco."

"No, love. It really isn't. - Weasley, I swear to *fucking Merlin himself* if you take one more step, I will rip out your tongue and feed it to you."

Weasley stops his careful sidestep toward Hermione, palms out. "Alright, Malfoy. Alright." He's using his Auror training to seem friendly, but we both know it's a ruse. "Just tell us what

you want."

A conflict rises within me. What *do* I want? I want to watch the two of them suffer. I also want out of the Ministry alive, without the Auror Division becoming aware of the situation at hand. It's obvious I can't leave Weasley to his own devices, and I can't trust Hermione anymore. But to kill them would mean putting a target on my back. Still, they deserve tribulation...

With a smirk, I Disapparate and reappear directly behind Hermione, pressing the tip of my wand to her throat. She jumps in surprise, but I slink a hand tight around her middle and hold her against me. Weasley pales as he realizes the gravity of the situation. "Stupid Granger," I whisper against her cheek, "did you really think you had any power over me?"

"Malfoy, let her go!" Weasley shouts.

"Or what? Hmm? What will you do?" I flash my daunting, gray eyes in his direction. "Just how far would you go for your precious little bookworm, Weasel-bee?"

"I said leave her alone!"

"Draco, please," Hermione whispers. "Fight this."

"On your knees, Weasley. Hands on your head, or it'll be Hermione on her knees... and I'm fairly certain you won't like that as much." Hermione stirs in my grasp, so I light the tip of my wand in warning, burning a small circle into her skin. She winces, but she stills, compliant. I pull her back, one step closer to the Veil. "Hurry now. Decisions, decisions..."

Like the beta subservient he was always meant to be, Weasley falls to his knees, hands high above his head before he places them on the back of his skull. There's still a hatred burning in those stale blue irises, but I have no doubt that by the end of the night, I will break him. Break him like I've always known I could. And I'll do it with Hermione by my side, underneath me. I'll break her too, and then I'll pour my darkness into her.

"Wonderful." I turn my wand on him. "*Imperio*."

"-No!" Hermione gasps, but it's too late. Weasley's eyes gloss over in a softened expression, and then it's as if he isn't there at all. A smile greets us.

"Lead us out of here."

Weasley nods, blissfully unaware. "Sure - Can I stand up now?"

I roll my eyes. "Yes, yes. Go on."

"Please, don't do this," Hermione whispers to me. "This is all my fault. Please, just leave Ron out of this. He was just trying to-"

"-just trying to get in between us. And you let him. Congratulations, now you pay the piper. - Weasley!" I toss his wand back to him. "If she tries anything remotely suspicious, Avada yourself."

"Yessir!"

I'm half-tempted to have my way with Hermione here and now, but my priority for my life grossly overshadows my primal need to copulate. I shove her forward and allow Weasley to guide us away from The Veil's presence. The whispers cry out to me, but I barely hear their call. I have no need to worry about them any longer. I see my true purpose now, and it's with *him*. My beast. My bloody monster.

We step out into the black tiled room filled with doors. "Wait," I say, snatching Hermione by the wrist and turning her to face me. There's burning anger etched within her betrayed expression, and it brings me great joy to know I put it there. Weasley stands with his back to us, compliant and unaware. "The book, Granger. I'll be needing it."

Hermione stands her ground, eyebrows pulled together in pure frustration. I yank the book from her shaking hand and stow it back within my robes for safe keeping.

"Thank you."

"You don't have to do this," she says with raspy breath. "If you fight it, you can gain control again-" she stops speaking when I lean in close, tucking my nose into her curls to inhale her scent. Fear is distinct, and it smells divine. She reeks of it as I slide my wand down her side, resting it at her hip.

"Oh, Hermione. I really do. You've left me no choice."

"If you'd let me explain..." Her eyes plead with me as my nose glides across her cheek and rests against her own. Silver eyes glisten into brown; it's a showdown, but we both know who fate will side with.

"Be a good girl and keep quiet, now. Wouldn't want your boyfriend to meet the end of a deadly curse, would you?"

"He's not my *boyfriend*," she seethes at me. "You *know* that! Draco, snap out of it!"

Apparently, she doesn't understand the severity of the situation. So, I take it upon myself, backing up a few paces and removing a pocket knife from my robes - one can never be too prepared when it comes to who you might murder on the go. "Weasley, come here." The redheaded giant turns and gleefully obeys. I hand him the knife, smiling at Hermione. I've never seen her so nervous before; I like it. "The next time Hermione speaks without permission, I want you to carve out your eye and eat it."

Weasley takes the knife and nods. "Sure. Which one?"

"Good question. Which do you prefer, Granger? The right or the left? They're both rather dull to me."

Hermione stands like a statue, her mouth shut tight, though I can tell it takes everything within her not to make some snarky comment. Satisfied, I give a mock clap.

"Great. You took the lesson to heart. Such a teacher's pet. Shall we continue, then? - And Weasley, stow that thing away for now. Wouldn't want to draw unwanted attention." He dutifully does as asked and takes point again, leading us through a black door to our left. We take the elevators up to the main lobby, turn in my badge, and joyfully make it to the guest floos. Now, what to do with Weasley... I suppose he'll have to come to the Manor with us. We each step through different floos, seemingly to arrive at different locations, but when I step out of the green flames again, I'm greeted by two pairs of eyes. My gaze falls on Hermione, who has already drawn her wand. "Oh, come now," I taunt, "we both know you won't use it. Any little word out of bounds lands your friend without an eye, and any suspicious activity, like nonverbal magic, leaves him six feet under. Really, you might as well just hand it to me."

There's only so much one pair of eyes can convey, but her eyes never disappoint; there's anger, resentment, plotting and sadness within the same expression. Defeated, she turns the wand around, extending the hilt to me. I take it, smirking, and toss it into the flames. The hissing of the fire vibrates the scream of magic her wand releases - it looks physically painful for her to watch her tool crack and pop, burning before her eyes.

"Right. On to better things...."

Controlled by my thoughts, Weasley removes his Ministry-regulation magic dampening cuffs from his belt and clamps them around Hermione's wrists. She winces, and I know why; a pinch shoots through one's body when one's magic has been doused. I experienced this myself after the War, awaiting my trial. Uncomfortable as it is, that's the least of her worries right now.

"Feel free to speak freely, now. No consequences," I smirk, strolling over to pour myself a glass of scotch. "Thirsty?"

"Go to Hell."

"We're already there, sweetheart. Take a look around." I kick back my first shot and release a satisfied chuckle. "I'm ever so excited. So many possibilities... first thing's first, though. Weasley... put your hand in the fire."

"Alright!" he says, leaping into action. Hermione watches in horror as he approaches the fireplace. "How long?"

"Did I give you a time frame?" I raise a calculated eyebrow. "Until I say."

"Sure."

"Wait!" Hermione shrieks as Weasley extends his hand out. "Don't do this! Please!"

I give an unentertained yawn and pretend to observe my nails as the fire laps at his fingertips.

"Draco, stop! What do you want? I'll give you whatever you want, just don't make him-"

My hand waves, and Weasley withdraws his hand completely. I lick my lips as I eye a quivering, crestfallen Hermione Granger glaring daggers at me in my study. Oh, how I relish in her begging. It's music to my ears, but I'm not a fool. She's nowhere near broken yet. However, I have just the thing to fix that.

"Whatever I want - is that right?" My head cocks to the side as I think up all of the wonderful things I want to do to her right now. "I like the sound of that." I pour myself another glass, kick it back, and curl one finger in her direction, beckoning her. "Those clothes look entirely too tight. I think you need out of them."

Next chapter gets *reallllly* dark. You've been warned.

~A.

No Mercy

Trigger warning: non-con, forced sexual episode.

A/N: I do not condone, nor support, forced sexual acts, and this chapter does not reflect my opinions on the matter. This chapter is dark, so you've been warned, but it's not just obscenely dark. More psychologically torturing than any physical torture. Anyway... there you go. Warnings up.

Ready?

~A.

 **Image may contain: one or more people, text and closeup**

"You're joking."

"On the contrary. I'm quite serious."

Hermione approaches me, slowly, her eyes wet with tears she's struggling to hold back. When she's but a foot away, her eyes plead with me. "Draco..."

"Start with the blouse," I tell her, drinking in the sight of her running makeup and pouty lower lip as it quivers. "I'm sure Weasley will enjoy the show - I know I will." Eagerly, I pour one more glass and extend the tumbler out to her. "To calm your nerves. I'm not a complete monster, now am I?"

"That's yet to be determined," she mutters, dignified as she straightens her shoulders and takes the glass from my hand. Our fingers touch for only a second, but it's enough to cause my entire hand to twitch and jerk back. I can't explain the feeling that overcomes me, but it's something I don't want to experience again. I narrow my eyes as Hermione downs the glass, not bothering to clean up the small dribble of alcohol that drips down her chin. With flames burning behind those enticing brown irises, she slams the glass on the table next to her hip. "Fight this."

"There's nothing to fight," I smirk. "Be an obedient little mudblood, now. Unless you want Weasley to show us his rendition of a personal bonfire."

"Don't make me do this in front of him," she whispers. "Please. We can go to your room. I'll do whatever you ask, just...not here. Please."

"Listen to that," I chuckle. "Begging doesn't become you, love." As I snap my fingers, Weasley jumps to attention, pulling out the pocket knife I bestowed upon him earlier. "Enough chit-chat. Take off the blouse, Granger. Let's show Weasley what he's been missing."

At first, nothing happens—Hermione stands as rigid as a statue, defiant in her actions. And then, as Weasley draws the blade closer to his face, she reacts, immediately fumbling her fingers over the top button of her blouse. She threads it through its loop and begins work on

the next one. A lonely tear falls down her cheek as she works the third button, finally exposing some of her alluring cleavage.

"Don't stop," I tell her, pulling out my wand to remove the glamour on her neck. My bruise appears where I marked her this morning, a testament to my claim on her. Hermione unloops three more buttons, reaching the bottom of her shirt. I extend my wand out, moving the white material to the side to take in the sight of her left breast, covered by a nude-colored brassiere. Her chest rises and falls in time with her staggered breathing. Merlin, she's tantalizing like this, fearful of what I might do. The kind of power I have over her is better than her compliancy—it's better to know she's internally struggling on the inside, screaming in her mind to escape me. It's glorious to know she won't. Not with Weasley standing near the fire, a blade ready to cut out his eye at any moment.

I reach out, jerking the shirt off her shoulders while simultaneously turning her away from me. I have to rip at the material to free it from the cuffs around her her shirt on the floor, I establish my dominance by grabbing her around the middle and pulling her flesh against me, nuzzling my nose into her shoulder.

"I can smell your fear." My tongue darts out and trails a line up her neck. I stop at her earlobe and bite down harshly, making her whimper. "Shh... not a word now, remember? Unless you want Weasley to cut out his eyes before the show even begins... hmm, maybe that isn't a bad idea." Without warning, I reach up and twist my fingers in the nape of her hair, jerking harshly to get her attention. She squeals, but she doesn't speak as her head arches back. "Come on, Granger. You shouldn't be the only one screaming tonight, should you? Don't be selfish, now." I walk her backwards and turn her toward Weasley so she can look upon him. "Tell him how much you love my cock. Tell him how a pathetic little mudblood like you left him for *me*. Go on."

She shakes her head, despite my tightened grip on her curly tresses. She clamps a hand down on her mouth in fear she might utter an accidental word. Weasley stares on with an aloof grin, completely unaware the woman of his dreams is in mortal peril.

"Stubborn," I *tsk*, "Guess a punishment is in order then." With a shove, she falls to the floor at my feet, landing hard on her knees and elbows. But it's fine by me, because her ass is up and exposed to me, just barely covered by that ridiculous skirt. Tonight, she learns what it means to belong to a Malfoy. "On all fours, Granger. Like a good little slut."

After swiping at her full blown tears, Hermione complies, resting her palms against the floor and bracing her knees together.

"Put your chin to the floor."

Her eyebrows furrow as she jerks her head around and peers over her shoulder at me.

"Do it. *Now*."

Sniffing, she lowers herself down until her chin rests on the floor, facing the fire.

"Spread your legs." Rolling up my sleeves to my forearms, I enjoy the sight of Hermione doing exactly as asked, this time without hesitation. I can tell it's difficult for her to balance, but she makes due. "Weasley, tell the truth, now. How does all this make you feel?"

"I'm completely terrified," he replies with a smile.

Smirking, I meander over behind her and use my wand to lift her skirt up over her round hind end. A pair of blue satin panties are my reward. "How do *you* feel, mudblood?" I receive no reply, so *accio* my armchair to sit right behind her, resting my shoes on her backside. As I dig my heels into her lower back, I snap my fingers. "Weasley, go to the cabinet beside my desk and fetch the clear phial with a green stopper, will you?" Ron Weasley has no qualms, keeping the pocket knife aimed near his cheek as he strolls over, fetches the phial, and returns to stand in front of me. Coincidentally, it's directly in front of Hermione as well. "Wonderful. Feed some to him, Granger. And then take some yourself."

I remove my feet from her for the time being, and Hermione sits up, taking the phial from his hands. Weasley drops to his knees. With a shaky grip, she removes the stopper. Apologetically, she tips the phial into his mouth. I watch on, noticing the glazed look in his eyes. Next, she brings the phial to her lips and swallows.

"How do you feel right now, Weasley?"

Words topple out of his mouth. "I hate you. I want to rip your throat out." A small shimmer of his true self fights through my *Imperius*.

"Wonderful. Be sure to keep that truthfulness about you, will you?"

The honest nature of the veritaserum contradicts the curse over his mind -he struggles to focus on which one to obey, shaking.

"Stand up, Granger." She does. "Now come sit in my lap." Hermione turns, tears streaming down her face as she approaches me and crawls into my lap, stiff and precise. "Like you mean it, pet. Remember all the fun we had last night?" Her eyes would burn holes in my skull if they could, and her legs slink over each of my legs, caging me in as her arms drape around my shoulders. Her skirt bunches around her upper thighs, exposing nearly all of her to me. "Kiss me like you still love me," I whisper, setting one hand, and then the other, on those silky hips, pulling her against the firmness of my cock. I'd be lying if I said the sight of her in tears hasn't made me extremely hard by now. It's even better to know Weasley is forced to watch on, completely at my mercy.

Hermione leans forward, slowly, and brushes her lips against mine. There's hesitation in the delivery of the kiss, but I don't get caught up in the small details. All that matters is she obeys as Weasley witnesses. My fingers dig into her skin as I draw her closer, pushing my tongue between her lips to taste all of her. She complies, and soon I'm fucking her mouth with my tongue, lapping at her like I'm a dog begging for scraps. I have to remind myself I'm in charge, not her, so I bunch up her skirt over her ass and expose it to Weasley.

"I bet he misses this," I tease her, slapping her ass for show. Hermione gasps, tucking her face into the crook of my neck. "Do you miss this, Weasley? Do you miss her ass?"

"Y-Yes..." Embarrassment hangs on the edge of his tone.

"What else do you miss about her? Physically, of course."

"H-Her... chest."

"You miss her tits?"

"Yes." Weasley chews on the word like it could come apart in his teeth.

"You'll want a front row view of this, then. Come here, Weasley; stand behind her and hold that knife to your wrist." He approaches, his face solemn as he readies the blade. "Fantastic. If she screams, I want you to slice your wrist open, do you understand?"

"Yes."

"What would you do right now, if you could?"

"I'd run that knife through your chest."

"Brave," I chuckle, trailing my eyes over the woman spread on my lap before me. One of my hands stays latched to her thigh while the other trails up her stomach, between her breasts, and finally over to the front clasp of her bra. It comes apart with a soft *click*, and now her tits are exposed to me, the straps of her brassiere falling gently down her slender arms. Hermione moves to cover herself, but I dive forward and capture her left nipple between my teeth, rendering her still. My fingers find her right nipple, tweaking it between my thumb and middle finger thoughtfully, like playing with the dial of a radio. Hermione Granger shakes beneath my touch, afraid to move as much as she's afraid to enjoy my ministrations.

I take my time, my teeth nipping and tugging on her pebbled nub. The sensitive button hardens as a reluctant sigh escapes her lips.

"That's it," I encourage, brushing my nose against her breast. "Give in to it, Granger. A girl with blood as dirty as yours needs to be treated accordingly." I twist her right nipple harshly, causing her to throw her head back and bite her lip in pain. Without hesitation, I recapture her left nipple between my lips, this time suckling it with fervent administrations. Her hands weave through my hair, tugging at the roots in a nonverbal issue of begging for me to stop. It only stirs to life within me a need to continue, and so I do, nuzzling my face against her breasts as I begin to bite harshly at the supple mounds. I leave a trail of hickeys from one breast to the other. "These are mine now, Weasley. These tits are mine to suck on, to fuck, to torture as much as I want. -Tell him."

Hermione's eyes flutter back open, and I wipe under her makeup-stained eyes, licking my thumb to taste her tears.

"Are you afraid of me, Weasley?" I ask, my eyes never leaving Hermione's.

"I'm afraid of what you'll do to her," he admits, choking on his words.

"And what do you think I'll do to her that I haven't done already? Should we show him, Granger? What we do in the dark?" Hermione shakes her head. "Your face says no, but your body," I reach down and pinch her inner thigh, making her squeak, "says yes.- Turn over, love, and sit on my lap proper now. Face Weasley."

Hermione grips my shirt tight, silently hoping I'll change my mind. But I don't, and when she doesn't obey, I smack her cheek again, rough and forceful. Carefully, she turns around on my lap and takes a seat facing Weasley. I guide one leg, and then the other, over the armrests of the chair, exposing her covered pussy to the room.

"Remember -if you scream, he bleeds." And then my hand snakes down between her legs, the other curling around to cup one of her supple breasts. Delicately, I begin to trace small circles over her panty-clad clit, simultaneously pinching her nipple. Hermione inhales sharply, leaning her head back against my shoulder. I peek over to find her eyes closed as her cuffed hands attempt to push my fingers away from her. The hand on her breast travels to her throat, and I grip it tight, letting her know, "You aren't in control here, Hermione. Best remember your place."

"Stop it," Weasley growls, fighting his *Imperius*. "When I get ahold of you-"

"-You're all talk, Weasley. But go on. Tell us how you really feel when I..." My hand slips beneath the band of Hermione's underwear, down her smooth Mons Venus. She wriggles in my hold, but the hand around her neck keeps her still as my fingers move just a bit lower, over the hot, pulsing button of her arousal. To say she isn't wet right now would be a lie - it's like a flood inside her knickers; her juices coat my digits as I work her clit into submission. I give it a pinch to remind her who she's dealing with -she squeaks in pain, biting at her lips. "So wet for me already. What does that say about you, Granger? I suppose it makes you a slut. *My* slut."

"Mmmf..." It takes everything in her not to say something, to tell me how wrong I am, but Hermione Granger is an intelligent woman. She'd rather die than betray her friend. Which is precisely why I need to break her.

"Tell me how you're feeling."

She shakes her head.

"Do it. Speak freely, pet." My hand picks up speed, stimulating her body in ways I know she can't resist.

"I still love you," she whispers, groaning when I move my fingers further down, teasing her entrance. Her words cause my hand to still, and my grip on her neck tightens.

"What did you just say to me?" I growl.

"I still love you," she repeats. "The real you. I know this isn't-" Strangling against my grip, Hermione falls silent.

"Sounds like I'm going to need to fuck some common sense into your skull, aren't I?"

My heart slams against my sternum - there's a part of me that knows, because of the veritaserum, she speaks the truth. An unbecoming panic spreads through my core because I can feel a new itch scratching just below the surface: a need to let her words impact me. No. I won't let them. I won't let some stupid bitch control me.

I shove her down to the floor, forcing her to topple onto Weasley's shoes. I reach down, grab her by the hair, and twist her around, already reaching for the buckle of my belt. "Do you know what filthy girls who think they're in love with monsters get, Granger? They get a mouth full of cock."

"No - Draco - I don't want-" but the next moment, her mouth is filled to the brim, and she gags on her words. I gather up her curly locks in my hand and guide her to swallow my cock again and again, relishing in the wetness of her tongue and the agony in her strangled cries.

"Shh, wouldn't want to scream, would you? Weasley's watching," I taunt, leaning my head back and closing my eyes. My other senses take over; I can feel her hands push against my thighs, hear her breath through her nose, can smell her fear as it hangs in the air. It's all of my darkest fantasies come to life.

"I think I'm going to be sick," Weasley groans, veritaserum taking hold.

I ignore him, shoving my cock completely down Hermione's throat, burying myself within her until her nose brushes against my pubic curls. She holds perfectly still, obediently giving in. "Look at me," I demand, and her eyes come open, trailing up to mine. "Good girl." I release her head, and she chokes as she comes up for air. "Still love a monster like me?"

Stubbornly, she whispers, "Yes. I do."

My face grows stern. "Why?"

"I don't know why," she admits. "I know I shouldn't. I know I've lost you...but I won't stop loving you, Draco. No matter what you do." She sounds ashamed. As if to mirror her words, Weasley's face grows rose-pink, and a darkness filters into his eyes; that darkness's name is jealousy. Maybe I can work this whole 'love' bit to my advantage.

"Do you love me more than Weasley?" I ask, placing a finger under her chin to tilt her head up. I brush my cock against her lips, glossing them with my precum.

"Yes... but I love you differently." She knows where I'm going with this; it's apparent on her face. Her eyes beg me to stop. She knows she can't resist the truth.

"You would love me, even if I fucked you here, in front of him?"

"Y-Yes." Her eyebrows furrow. "That doesn't mean I condone-"

"-Who fucks you better? Me or him?"

Weasley's ears turn the color of a plum as she whispers, unable to hold back, "Y-You."

"You fantasized about me when you were with him, didn't you?"

"I d-did... "

"What did you fantasize about?" I smirk, brushing my cock against her tongue. I hold it there for a moment, letting the image set in Weasley's skull, before I release her. "Answer me."

Hermione struggles to hold it in, but truth will out, as they say, and especially with truth serum coursing through her veins. "I imagined you kissing me, and... undressing me... "

"Where did I kiss you?" I ask.

"My lips...my chest...my stomach... between my legs..."

"Did you fuck Weasley while thinking about me?"

Silence.

"Did you?"

"Draco, please..." New tears fall down her dirty, dirty cheeks.

"Did you-" I reach down and grab her by the back of the neck, "-think of me-"I jerk her up and into my lap to straddle it, "-while fucking Weasley?"

SMACK. The back of her manacled hand hits my cheek. "Yes! Is that what you want to hear? Yes! I did! I'm ashamed of it, but I haven't been able to get you out of my mind since I began working for you! Happy now?"

Glancing over to the broken expression on Weasley's face, I smirk. "I'm ecstatic."

More darkness next chapter. (Sits and waits for all of the negativity to come rolling in, despite warnings. Also, sips tea.)

~A.

Bleed

Image may contain: 2 people, text

The lovely ectoheart (follow on Tumblr!) made this beautiful mood board for Squirm! Isn't it perfect? XD

Image may contain: one or more people and text

A lot of you wanted to know what kind of tea I was sipping on. Some very delicious pomegranate flavor, thank you for asking!

TRIGGER WARNING: HARD NON-CON and violence ahead. But not pointless. Still, if you're squeamish of these things, scroll down toward the end of the chapter to get the main point.

"Off my lap," I command at once, soaking in Weasley's disheartened glare. The blade against his wrist glistens in the firelight, drawing attention. He backs up a few spaces so Hermione can do as I demand; her feet touch the floor, and she wobbles to stand. I immediately push myself out of the chair and grab her by the back of her hair, dragging her across the room. "Come on, Weasley! You'll want to see this." I pat my leg like I'm calling a dog, and of course the subservient Weasley must obey me. Hermione struggles against my hold as I walk her out of the den and down the darkened hallway. "You're going to learn what it means to make fantasies a reality tonight, Granger."

"Draco—agh!—Let me go!—Fight this! *Fight this!*"

"I love it when they scream, don't you, Weasley?" I grin as I push open the doors to the one place I know will break Hermione's spirit: we were all here that night, inside this place.

"No, I don't," Weasley squeaks out, fighting back a dribble of tears down his cheeks.

"Hermione, I'm gonna find a way out of this—I'll keep you safe—"

"-Will you?" I jeer, and to prove him wrong I slam Hermione up against the door, face first. She squeaks, biting her lip to keep from screaming, because she knows what screaming will cost. "Like you kept her safe *that night*, too?" We all know what I refer to; the night my dear Aunt Bella carved up Hermione like she was a slab of prime beef. Memories flood my mind - some are my own, some are mixed and from a different perspective; one I have no claim to.

I peel the beautiful brunette off the door and march her into the dining room, kicking away one of the chairs to make room at the table. There, I bend her over the wood and command Weasley to take a seat on the other side of the table. Hermione's ass presses up against my trousers as I force her elbows across the table and magic them to stick to it. Her arms cage her breasts within Weasley's view, eyes no doubt on her ex-lover, who still holds the knife to his wrist with a shaky grip.

"You're quivering. Something wrong?," I whisper, kissing between her shoulder blades while running my fingers down her sides. The soft, supple feel of her skin against my lips reflects the innocence in her heart - yet another thing I need to break. My teeth clamp down on her left shoulder, possessive and determined to break the skin. Writhing beneath my touch, Hermione's head falls forward as she yells, "Fuck!" There's a squeak of pain, but she bites back her scream, determined to save Weasley from his fate. I taste the copper in my mouth, and though I've never bitten any of my victims, the blood is familiar on my tongue. I lap at it, eyeing the round teeth marks I've left in her skin. Merlin, yes... "Who knew dirty blood would taste so sweet?"

"F-fuck you..." Hermione snuffles, wriggling beneath me. I smack her ass playfully, earning a hiss of breath.

"That's the idea," I taunt, standing back upright to gather the view. Hermione's skirt has bunched up around her thighs, but she still wears those un-needed undergarments. Easy fix, though. I hook my finger through the soft material and begin tugging. Hermione tries to push her thighs together, but I'm determined to get what I want -what can I say? I'm a spoiled git that way. Her underwear falls to her ankles, and I crouch down to pluck them off the floor and bring them to my nose, inhaling her arousing scent. "Fuck, yes." My eyes flash over to Weasley, who is offering Hermione words of encouragement.

"I'm right here, 'Mione. Shh, I'm here. I love you. Fuck, I wish I hadn't said that, but I can't help it. I'll fucking kill him as soon as I get loose from here." The veritaserum is playing its part well - too well.

"I'd love to see you try," I reply to him, strolling around the lengthy table; I shove the underwear in his mouth and seal them there with a spell. "You always did like to run your mouth." Making my way back to stand behind Hermione, I push her skirt higher over her hips and reveal the object of my desire: that tempting ass and delectable quim. "I'll make you a deal, mudblood. If you can get through the next five minutes without screaming, I'll let you

and Weasley go. No harm, no foul with memories erased." Reaching for belt buckle, I add, "But if you scream, you're mine. I'll kill Weasley and have my way with you over," I untuck myself, "and over again until," I line the tip of my cock against her slickened folds, the radiating heat enticing me like no other, "You beg me to slit your throat." And with that, I shove myself inside of her, nearly coming undone at the warmth and strangling tightness her pussy offers. I rip my shirt over my head and cage her frame with my arms, burying myself inside her. "Fuck..."

I close my eyes for a moment, lost in the feeling of losing myself inside of her. How long have I wanted this? Years... I remember the last time I wanted to shove my cock inside this scrumptious little cunt and bend her over this table. *No. Those aren't my desires, are they?* It doesn't matter. My monster is me, now. What he wants, I want. *Hermione...* is mine. All mine.

My eyes come back open, and they connect with Weasley, who can only watch on in horror as I thrust harshly into the sweltering heat of her pussy. "Look at those tits, Weasley. You said you missed them -well, here they are, bouncing right for you to see." I lean forward and lap at the trail of blood dripping from my given bite; an involuntary shiver forces Hermione to tighten around me, and it's bliss. "Tell him how it feels, Granger. Tell him how it feels to have my cock in you again."

Hermione hangs her head, and I can hear her fighting tears as she's forced to answer, "I hate it...but it feels...mmh, fuck...s-so good..."

"How good?" I encourage, picking up speed as I piston in and out of her while gathering her hair in my fist. I want Weasley to be able to see the tears and the pleasure on her face as I fuck her senseless.

"Please stop... I...need more," she admits, and she rolls her hips back, meeting my thrusts.

A smirk finds its way to my lips. "Which is it, mudblood? More? Or stop?" My palm *smacks* her ass harshly. A moan tumbles out of her mouth, loud and embarrassed. "Does it turn you on, knowing Weasley is forced to watch?"

"N-No!"

"Pity." *Smack. Smack. Smack!* My hand paddles her bottom in time with the snapping of my hips, and I can feel her body tense, trying to focus on the pleasure versus the pain. But if my plan is going to be successful, I need her to, "Scream!" I jerk her hair cruelly while clawing my nails down her spine, drawing blood.

There it is. That melodic sound of torture vocalized in a high pitched wail.

My eyes flash to Weasley just in time to watch the blade run across his skin, gathering droplets of crimson against his wrist.

"Yes..." I shove Hermione's face forward. "Look, mudblood. Look at what your love has cost you."

I don't need to see her face to know the terror that's written there. It's in every shaky breath and the beginning of her denial as I continue to fuck her. "N-No... no, Ron... oh, God, Ron! I'm so-ahh -so sorry... so sorry..." She begins to sob as Weasley pales, extending his slit wrist out for us to see.

Smack. My hand connects with her ass again, echoing in the grand magnitude of the room, and Hermione cries out in frustration, pain, and anger. Weasley brings the blade to his wrist again, cutting deeper into the wound.

"No! Ron! God, No! Stop!" Hermione cries. "Draco, please! Stop! Stop this!"

"What do you think of me now, Granger? Still love me?" I whisper, pressing my weight against her back, still giving her all I have.

"You're a monster!"

"Yesss... say it again." My teeth sink into her right shoulder, giving her a bite to match her left. Hermione thrashes underneath me, and it brings out the animal inside of me. "Say it. Admit you love a monster and I'll make him stop."

She has to tell me the truth; she doesn't have a choice in the matter. What she says next both excites me and terrifies me. "I'm in love with Draco Malfoy! He's no monster! You are!"

"Hermi...one..." Weasley's eyes hang heavy from the loss of blood, and dark circles encompass his eyes. "So... tired..."

"Let's not play games," I curl a hand around her throat and grip tight as I slow my pace, giving her a pleasant, new angle that will surely have her conflicted. "We both know you were never in love with Draco Malfoy. You were in love with the darkness inside of him. You never looked twice at him until I came along."

"You're wrong...God, please... I'll stay. I'll let you do whatever you want to me, just let Ron go. Please. Please..." She begins to plead with me now, sobbing and blubbering on like the pathetic bitch she really is. "He doesn't deserve this."

"Oh, I think he does," I chuckle, giving one last slow burn thrust before picking up my pace again. "I think you both do."

No, please. Stop this.

Shut up.

I don't want this anymore! I never wanted this.

"You don't get a choice in the matter," I grumble, feeling an unfamiliar tingle climb down the back of my neck. It's searing hot and incredibly painful.

Give me your arm, Weasley.

No.

Ron Weasley extends his bleeding wrist across the table, and the heat travels down my shoulder into my left arm, rendering it free of my control. "Stop it. STOP IT." My fingers dip into the blood that drips on the table and begin to write. "I'll fucking kill them both, you hear me!? Stop what you're-"

G. R. E. are already scribbled in crimson.

"That's it, Draco," the mudblood bitch gasps underneath me, "Keep going!"

Y. B. A.

I bite into my shoulder, trying to distract my arm, but it's no use.

C. K.-

"Fenrir Greyb-" she starts, but I clamp my right hand over her mouth and cast a quick *silencio*.

Well done, Draco Malfoy. Well done. Now you're going to pay for your bravery.

We go full circle back to chapter one next chapter. Can Draco and Hermione get out of this one, now that Draco is fighting back? What will be Ron's fate? Find out soon.

~A.

Squirm for Me

 Image may contain: 1 person, text

Here it is. Another chapter. Dark, dark, dark... but full of promise. Will there be a HEA for our couple? I have seen this question floating around a lot in the reviews. I'm never one to give away an ending. Just know, I feel satisfied with how it will end. Guess you'll have to see! Also, if you enjoy this horror, why aren't you reading my original story, "A Dandy World?" go to [authoraetaylor dot com](http://authoraetaylor.com) and start today!

~A.

Brief warning: More noncon. But just at the beginning.

I've had enough the games. I refuse to let some woman come between a good thing I have going. Our world was just fine before she came along, and it'll be fine when she's gone, too. Sure, being able to screw her brains out any time I want has been a huge perk, but I'm a good looking man -I can find another lamb to defile.

"It's your lucky day, mudblood," I torment, my cock still tucked away inside her tight little snatch. Admittedly, the prospect of my darkness being pushed back inside of me had me at half-mast for a moment, but finding control of my arm once again and watching Weasley bleed out in front of us has me ready to go in no time flat. "After I'm done fucking you, I'm going to give you a front row seat into Draco Malfoy's personal dungeon." My hips snap forward, again and again. One hand stays wrapped around her throat while the other moves to her nipples, alternating between them to give them harsh pulls and pinches. I feel her throat flex beneath my palm -she's screaming, but my silencio renders her soundless. I can feel the sweat roll down my forehead, can sense the build up coming to the top of my pleasure.

"Such...a lovely... cunt you have..." Finally, I release all of my sexual frustration and fill her with my warm, sinful come. "Good bitch," I whisper into her ear, "I can feel him, you know. He's crying, just like you." I pull out and watch her drip with my essence. It's glorious, and it drives my lust in ways I didn't know existed. But it isn't a sexual lust - no, it's the prospect of finally having no filter with what I can do to Hermione Granger.

I remove the spell from her arms and toss her forward onto the table, ass up into the air and knees hanging precariously on the edge. Looking at her splayed cunt and knowing she is all mine sends shivers down my spine. It reminds me to take my time and savor life's little moments. I smack her ass hard with my palm, smirking as I say, "Fun's only getting started." Then I flip her over, scoop her up into my arms, and begin to carry her off as she kicks and flails against me. I dig my nails into her shoulder and thigh, warning her to stay still. When she refuses to listen, I hoist her up over my shoulder and bite her thigh. She beats against my back as I carry her out of the room, leaving Weasley behind. Her silent sobs beg me to turn

back for him, but I'd much rather let him bleed out on the floor. The house elves will clean it up later. I'm none too worried about the mess.

Down the steps we go toward my personal dungeon. "Keep struggling, and I'll toss you down," I seethe, and she timidly slows her movements until she renders herself still.

My workspace is clean; I sit her on top of a cold, metal table I procured two years back and begin the tedious process of buckling leather straps across her shoulders and torso. Fuck sakes, she's so beautiful when she fights me - I strike her hard across the cheek as she attempts to bite me. Her head falls to the side, unconscious. When I'm sure she's secured to the table, I retrieve a silk strap from a bag near the steps. I bind her mouth and secure the material tight. Fuck yes. "So beautiful," I whisper while dragging my fingers down her tear-stained cheeks. I glance at the metal cuffs and realize those won't do at all. Such a delicate frame deserves delicate restraints. A quick transfiguring spell makes the cuffs appear to match the silk cloth in her mouth, though they still hold the same spell-dampening properties as before. She begins to come back around, eyes fluttering open. "What do you think? You wanted me to open up to you, didn't you, Hermione? Well, here we are." I gesture around to the stone walls and medical tools on a table nearby. Of course,

I've never been one inclined to speak to my victims -at least, not on a personal level. But tonight, her oversized earth-toned eyes, filled with tears, glisten back at me with such tenacity, I'm moved to words as she struggles against her wrist way she wriggles against them stirs a primal need in me to establish dominance. Hermione Granger has never been -will never be - submissive.

"Struggle all you like. I dare say I rather enjoy watching you *squirm*, mudblood."

She inhales through her nose, poised to answer, but she soon realizes it's all for naught; not only is there a silencing spell placed inside that gloriously slender throat, but a simple, silk strip of cloth also graces between those lush lips. It's aesthetically pleasing, somehow, to know what sort of position she's in. Soon, she figures it out, too. Her eyes skitter down the metal operating table she's bound to, captured by a leather strap across her shoulders and the dip in her stomach. Her legs thrash, free to the world and to me. Big mistake, however, because it only exposes what lies beneath that tantalizing skirt. No panties. Those were removed long ago, before we ever made it to this room.

Granger flails frantically, more tears spilling down her dirty, dirty cheeks. I smirk, taking my time, allowing her to watch my slender fingers trail over the array of various medical equipments I possess. Ones with blades, ones with needles, ones that look seemingly safe but are anything of the sort. It dawns on her what I plan to do when I pick up my personal favorite -a serrated knife with a crescent-shaped, white-bone handle just as sharp as the blade.

"Shh." I flash her a wink, taunting her even though I know damn well she hasn't made a sound. "Easy there, love. We're just getting started."

Hermione's head shakes back and forth frantically.

Please. Whatever you want. Just leave her alone.

What I *want* is already in front of me.

I raise the knife, showing it off to her. Then I step forward and press it against her thigh. Granger stills beneath me, fearing to move. Good. I like fear. "Spread your legs. Wider. Yeah, that's a good little slut." I press the tip of my knife against her skin. "Now, I can either fuck you with this, or you can let me into that stubborn mind of yours. Are you going to let me in?" I coo. Her head nods frantically. "Yeah? Wonderful." With my free hand I reach up and touch my palm to her forehead, closing my eyes. "Let's see what secrets you have on my kind, shall we?"

Images rush across the forefront of my mind. A simple box with a lock of hair and some old letters. A woman who looks like an older version of the mudblood in my clutches stares pensively into a fireplace. There are flashes of Weasley, flashes of her being bent over and fucked by me, flashes of her mother holding a knife to her own throat.

"And you said your mother's Dybbuk wasn't as bad," I taunt, sliding the knife just a bit up her thigh, closer to her warm center. The pressure isn't enough to draw blood, but it leaves a scrape across her skin all the same. I don't have to open my eyes to know. "I can feel you resisting."

Hermione's mother stands with the box in hand, hoisting it above her head. Then she slams it to the ground, and the box shatters. She screams and collapses to the ground.

Interesting...

"You said destroying the Dybbuk box would kill the host. So why would she do it?" I try to penetrate her mind again, but she fights me. Snarling, I slice a thin line down her leg, causing her to thrash. "I'm not in the mood for this, mudblood. You're going to give me answers, or I'll-"

My hand drops the knife. It clatters to the metal table. Granger stares at me in disbelief and hope.

"Well, well. Draco Malfoy's coming out to play, is that it?" I snigger, flexing the muscles in my neck from left to right. "I warned you, boy."

Suddenly, the back of my neck feels like it's on fire. My skin lights up in pinpricks of agony, skittering down my spine and across my back and rippling into my joints. There's a ringing in my ear, and a deafening scream coming from *inside* of me.

Fenrir Greyback.

"No." I clamp my hands over my ears, but it does me no good. All I can feel is uncontrollable, unmistakable fire lit from within my core, flowing out and ebbing my soul in its heat. My mouth forms words I do not command. "Fen...rir...Gr-Greyback."

The feeling is like being born again. Lights shimmer into focus, colors glisten in a once blackened void. My eyes are mine again, and I no longer look at them through prison bars,

sitting on the backburner. I'm myself. I'm Draco Malfoy, and this is my body.

I blink a few times to confirm I haven't lost my mind, but no, I'm here. And Hermione's here. And Weasley is upstairs bleeding to death. And I'm Draco Malfoy, not some puppet to a Dybbuk.

"I don't know how much time I have," I choke out. My voice sounds foreign. Perhaps it's because I haven't used it on my own in so long. Not entirely. "Hermione, shh," I soothe as she thrashes against the table, watching me pick up the knife again. "Relax, it's me. It's *me*." I cut the leather off her stomach and shoulders, and then reach for her wrists. Hermione struggles against me, but I jerk her arms forward and command her, "Stop! I'm trying to help you, damn it!" The moment she calms, I cut away the silken straps on her wrists and untie the one from her mouth, removing the silencing spell. I waste no time, dropping the knife to the floor.

Our eyes catch.

"Draco...?" Her expression is dazed.

"Fuck, Hermione. Fuck, I'm so sorry... Fuck." My hands grasp her, pulling her against me. I bury my face in her shoulder as tears begin to fall, thick and robust from my eyes. I break in her presence, ashamed and horrified. "This is only temporary. I can't hold him back for long. He's right there, pacing. I can feel him..." My fingers twitch. "In the potion's cabinet in my study, there's essence of Dittany. Help Weasley."

"I'm not leaving you-"

"Run!" I shout, shoving her off of me. "I can't hold him back much longer. Get out of here." Her expression is hurt as I reach down, pick up the knife, and wave it at her. *I'm coming for you, boy. You and that mudblood bitch.* "I said go, Hermione!"

"I'm coming back for you," she whispers, sliding off of the table and wincing; blood trickles down her leg from where Greyback - from where *I* cut her. "As soon as I know Ron is safe, I'm coming back."

"Go."

I toss my wand to her, giving her fair advantage. Hermione takes off up the stairs, stumbling a few times from the pain in her leg. When I hear the door shut behind her, I collapse to my knees as a pounding wave of nausea crashes over me. No matter how hard I struggle, I can't hold back the storm approaching in my psyche. There's a flicker of flashing lights, and then comes the onslaught of a migraine, followed by a high pitch ringing in my ears.

"Get out of my head!" My body sways. "Get out!" And then I hit the ground with a *thunk* right before the darkness consumes me.

Draco battles Greyback all out next chapter. Who will win? Find out Friday!

~A.

For Her

 Image may contain: one or more people, text and closeup

So I wrote this and then watched the Vampire Diaries series finale. I'm going to confess, I cried. Lots of tears.

Separate note, I look forward to the reactions of this chapter.

Today, we see the real Draco.

~A.

I awake in a pool of water -no, not a pool. A bathtub. One made of glass and surrounded by a blackened void. A lone spotlight burns above me, though *burn* might not be the best way to describe it...it's cold, morbid even. I'm transfixed on its darkened center which resembles the pupil of a foreboding, yellow eye. The longer I stare at it, the less warmth I feel, and eventually, I tear my eyes away to the water I find myself submerged in. It's clear as crystal at first, but then it begins to take on a different shade, darkening into hues of reds and browns. *Blood* I realize. It's blood.

I reach out to the side of the tub and curl my fingers along the edge, but they slip, and I tumble back into the water again. As if to taunt me, the glowing light above my head grows brighter.

How did I get here? Why am I here?

My memories catch up with me - Hermione, the rape, Weasley bleeding on the floor, my hands curled around a crescent blade as I whisper despicable things into Hermione's ear, they all flood me like a tidal wave, crushing me under their weight and sinking me deeper into the bloody water. I catch my breath right before I'm fully submerged, my hands flailing and grasping at anything I can to keep from drowning.

I'm going to die here. Serves me right, doesn't it?

No. I can't give up - if I do, then *he* gets control again, and it will put Hermione in further danger. I've already royally fucked her life up enough. I won't let her become another victim. I *refuse*. I kick out my feet and beat them along the glass surface of the tub, thrusting with my heels, trying to throw as much force as I can into a concentrated area. The heel of my boots cracks something - the water begins to drain, slowly, but it isn't fast enough. My lungs burn and, for the life of me, I can't pull myself back out of the water. Just when I think I've had enough, I hear Hermione's voice in the back of my head. "*You love me?*" With every breath I have; I must dedicate them to her or die trying. With one desperate pull, I dig my nails into

the sides of the tub, chipping them, clawing at a way to escape. *I'm Draco Malfoy, damn it. And I'm not dying here, tonight!*

My head flies up out of the water, sucking in the sweet nectar of air as if it contained the breaths of gods themselves. My face drips with crimson -I'm entirely bathed in blood. *Every life I've ever taken.* I'm not sure how I know it, but I do. This is all the blood I've spilled.

I clamor out of the tub and land with a soppy *smack* to the floor. My shirt clings tight to my chest, and my pants weigh me down like boulders, soaked through. The floor beneath me is ivory white - the tub is gone, and around me, an image begins to form, piece by piece. A stove. A dining table. Paperbacks stacked three feet tall on top of it. A woman stands over a stove, stirring something steamy in a pot with a wooden spoon. A boy stomps into scene, caked with mud and grime. He's no more than six, if that. But even at his age, I can see something's off about him. He's too calm - too brooding. Ignoring his mother completely, he climbs on one of the chairs and reaches for the book at the top of the pile. Mud drips down his sleeve onto the lacy tablecloth.

The spoon *slaps* against the table. "Fenrir, get down."

"I wan'a book."

The spoon *bangs* again, firmer. "I said down, Fenrir. Or so help me-" Her feet *clomp, clomp, clomp* across the kitchen tile, right in front of me, but she takes no notice. *THWACK*. She snaps the spoon against the back of his knee, knocking him off his balance and sending him toppling to the floor. His head smacks against the table on the way down, and a gash opens up at the top of his brow. "Now look what you made me do." The boy begins to cry, glaring up at his mother, but he doesn't dare say a word. She raises the spoon again, and he flinches. "Go wash up!" she shouts at him. "Oh, look what you've done! You've got mud all over my precious journals! These are special, Fenrir. *Special*. What has Mummy said about touching my journals?"

Sniffing, the boy stands up and wipes at his eyes with his muddy hands. Instead of turning toward the washroom, he takes off from where he came, out the back door and into the night.

"Fenrir! Fenrir, get back here, you! You get back here this instant, or you won't eat tonight or tomorrow! I swear it!"

The scene dissolves, and I tumble down into a nothingness, screaming in fear of my life. There's a howl some ways away, growing louder by the moment. The spotlight blares above me as I fall - I realize now it isn't a spotlight at all. It's a full moon, chilling me to the bone.

I land on my feet in the corner of a child's bedroom. I can tell it is by the Quidditch sheets and small bed in the corner of it, though the rest of the room is sparse. No toys. No posters on the walls. Just white-washed walls and splintered floorboards. The child, who will one day be Fenrir Greyback, stands at his windowsill, staring out at the night sky. He stands half a head taller as he clutches his shoulder, scowling, lost in thought.

I follow him as he leaves his bedroom and stalks down a darkened hallway to another room. In bed, his mother sleeps soundlessly. On her dresser are a bottle of prescription potions,

along with a bottle of sherry, sitting on top of a journal I recognize as my own - the one I stole from the Room of Requirement. Fenrir tiptoes over to the window and draws back the curtains. Moonlight spills in, dancing across the sheets. The boy then crawls on top of the mattress, and then on top of his mother.

"Mummy," he whispers.

"Go away," she barks.

"Mummy, wake up," he coos, a hint of deception in his tone well beyond his years. "What big eyes you have, Mummy..." His eyes shift from a sky-blue to a glimmering shade of yellow. "And what big hands you have..." There's a *crack* as his fingers begin to disfigure and break, reforming and growing larger by the second. Thick, discolored nails begin to grow out of his nail beds. "And what a big mouth you have, Mummy..." He gives a toothy grin, exposing fangs. "But not as big as me. And I'm gonna swallow you up."

"Hmm... what...?" The mother awakes, eyes fluttering open to the sight of her son transforming before her eyes. "F-Fenrir? Oh, Merli-"

Fenrir pounces on his mother, ripping his teeth into her throat.

Blood splatters the bedframe and the sheets.

Fenrir's mother gives a timid gargle as she flails, and soon, she stills.

"Thanks, Mummy," he whispers, wiping his chin as the joints in his shoulders crack and regrow. He winces, but the pain doesn't take away from his joy at all. He throws his head back and begins laughing wildly, arms outstretched. He then reaches for the journal, knocking away the bottles. "Don't worry, Mummy. I'll take good care of your journals."

With a grin, he turns and peers over his shoulder, directly into my soul. I stumble backward, horrified. Can he see me? He's just some memory, isn't he?

"Having fun, brat?"

The scene dissolves, and I'm left standing in a blackened nothing, though, this time, I'm not alone.

Fenrir Greyback - the adult version riddled with scars, fangs, and hair, stands before me, grinning ear to ear and seeing through me just the way he did moments ago as a child.

"You get enough of poking around in my memories?"

I swallow hard, instinctively reaching for my wand. There is no holster on my hip - no wand to be had.

"No magic in this place, kid. We're inside your head. All that's here is quippy one-liners and daddy issues."

My lips purse together in vulnerability. "You're one to talk, considering your mummy issues far outreach mine."

"Touché." He shrugs. "You recognize this place? You've spent a lot of time here. In that case, so have I. Always trapped in here, behind a veil, unable to come out. That is, until you *finally* nuttet up and realized you're better off with me."

"I'm not," I snarl. "I want you *out*."

"Not budging," he smirks. "*You gave me* control, remember?"

"I wasn't thinking... I wasn't..."

"Oh, not just this time, Draco. No, no. You've given me control *long* before now." He tucks his hands behind his back confidently, taking one step closer. "You and me, we've been in sync for years. You only just started to fight it when that little slut came along and messed with your mind."

Rage sparks within me. "You've been fucking with my head for years. All that time, I thought it was me wanting to do those things."

"Wasn't it?" he taunts, another step closer. "Admit it. You relished in the kill just as much as me."

"No."

"You do. Why is it you think you never turned yourself in?"

Sighing, I admit what I've known all along. "I'm a coward. - But I refuse to be anymore. *Get out*."

"That the best you got?" The moon above our heads flickers, and Greyback's lips curl upward in a satisfied grin. "Ahhh... you're so weak, Malfoy. So weak. I'm gonna rip that soul of yours in half and keep the screams to chew on when I get hungry." He tilts his head back and basks in the moonlight, arms outstretched like the night of his mother's murder.

"You can't kill me," I sneer, "You need me."

"Nah. I only need your body." His fingers flex into claws, and his shoulders begin to crack. "I'm gonna take the rest of you and tear it open." Skin begins to stretch and pull over bones as they elongate and reform. His face grows pointed, his ears as well, and the already towering giant grows taller still, daunting in his presence as he shapes into his wolfish state. Snarling, he sets his yellow eyes on me and snaps his fangs in my direction.

"Shit." I stumble backward, tripping over my own feet, trying to figure a way out of the shit I've just stepped in. My heart races. Sweat drips down the tip of my nose. Before I can even think of running, the wolf is on me, tearing its teeth into my shoulder and ripping with vigor.

FUCK! FUCKING CHRIST! The pain is unbearable!

An image forms behind my eyelids as I scream: Irma Leopold, her eyes blood-blotted from broken blood vessels as I strangle the life out of her. I remember why I killed her, now. I fancied a shag with her, and she turned me down. A crime of passion.

Greyback's teeth tear into my collarbone, mincing tissue and skin alike.

More images surround me. More kills. More blood on my hands.

I can't decide which is worse: the physical or the emotional pain.

I squeeze my eyes shut and bash my hands against the wolf's pelt, attempting to free myself. My breath is ragged. *I don't want to die here. I have to get back to Hermione.*

Hermione, with her innocent brown eyes and soft skin. Hermione, with her flirtatious laugh. Hermione, with her quips, and her snark, and her faith, and her beauty, inside and out. I have to get back to her. I can't let the last time *be* the *last* time.

"*I'm coming back for you,*" Hermione's voice rings in my ear.

I'm coming back for her, too.

"GET. OUT!"

Without thinking, I grab the wolf by the scruff of his mane and clamp my teeth down on his neck, just the way he has me. I taste dirt, and copper, and darkness. Fermented darkness cultured from years of pain. *I'm coming back for her.*

The wolf cries out, startled and frightened.

I'm coming back for her.

It releases me and jerks away.

I'm coming back for her.

My body falls through the void, and a ring of white light swallows me whole.

My eyes spring open. I lay on the icy, stone floors of Malfoy Manor's dungeon, gasping for breath as I try to rationalize what's just happened. For a moment, I think I'm free of my dark passenger, but then I feel him, *snap, snap, snapping* away at my psyche. A tingle prickles in the back of my head. He won't be silent much longer.

I reach into my robes and remove the journal, eyeing it over carefully. Such a fragile thing, isn't it? So easily dispensable. *"If one destroys the original tether to the spirit, it will create a new one - a permanent one within the host."*

It then dawns on me why Greyback hasn't tried to tie his spirit to me permanently. If I destroy this book, I destroy the both of us. He said as much to her earlier tonight. *"You said destroying the Dybbuk box would kill the host."*

High pitch ringing blares in my ears. My senses heighten. I can feel him, right there behind me, clawing his way back up to the top.

What will you do, boy?

"Draco?" Hermione calls from the top of the stairs. "Draco, are you alright?"

I'm coming for you. I'm gonna rip her throat out as soon as I'm free again...

I place my hand over the book, solidifying my decision. I close my eyes and concentrate on the spell. *Incendio*.

Flames burst from the top of the book, and I toss it to the floor in front of me, watching the pages already begin to wilt under the fire's touch. Hermione makes it to the bottom of the stairs in time to see the colorful display.

"No!" she rushes at me, but I've always been comfortable with wandless magic. I stop her mid motion and force her to stand in place. My eyes trail over to hers, gentle and knowing.

"It's alright," I tell her. "I'm alright. I came back for you." My eyes close as exhaustion overtakes me. I can feel my life drain from my body like sand through my fingers. "I came back for you, Hermione."

Draco's fate, next chapter.

~A.

Aftermath

 Image may contain: one or more people, text and closeup

Thank you to everyone who has stuck around for this fic! So much love!

There's one more chapter after this one! I promise I won't make you wait too long for it.

~A.

A haze encompasses my vision and blurs my senses. I feel like an ice cube being left outside on hot cement, the warmth around me tickling my nerves as I melt and evaporate. Death isn't a white light at the end of a tunnel; it's a devouring numbness that trickles into the soul and swallows slowly. I wish I could say I was ready - that I'd made peace and found religion or some other trite spiritual endeavor, but one phrase loops, never ending as I fall into the fuzzy void; *I don't want to die*.

And who would? Who actually *wants* to die? Many times I've contemplated the end of my existence, and it isn't the death that calls us, is it? It's the thought of no more pain. Perhaps that makes me a masochist, because of all the times I've ever *contemplated* letting go of life, I was never able to - and I can't now. I cling to the cord of life within my soul, begging for it not to be severed in hopes I can return to the world of the living.

They say your whole life flashes before your eyes, but all I receive are pale imitations of moments. I see myself being held in my mother's arms at the age of three, curled in her lap as she reads me a bedtime story. I see my father teaching me to mount a broom at seven, cursing under his breath when I took to flying better than he did. I see the first time I met Harry Potter in that robes shop in Diagon - the moment my life was ever entwined with his, and, by proxy, Hermione's. I see Hermione in her periwinkle dress robes our fourth year at the Yule Ball. As I recall, it was the first time I ever noticed her - *really noticed her*. Not for her frizzy hair or her buck teeth or her plain face, but for her stunningly brown eyes and genuine smile and kiss-me-not lips. Kiss-me-not because I was on one side of the war, and her the other. Two magnets drawn by the same fate, repulsed by each other - we never stood a chance.

"Draco, wake up."

This is how it ends, is it? Waking up? Into what? Another life? Some other universe where I'm not bound by the laws of physics or time? Will I still keep my memories? Will I still be myself?

"Wake up, you idiot!"

Well, that's not the way I imagined stepping into my next life.

"Wake up!"

Smack! My cheek burns with heat, and my eyes fly open in bewilderment. Perched above me sits a concerned angel, her curls tickling my forehead. Her long eyelashes are matted in tears

as she brushes her fingers down my stinging cheek and gives a relieved sigh.

"I thought I'd lost you."

I take a moment to assess my surroundings. No, this couldn't be Heaven, could it? Not after the things I've done. Hell has a funny way of greeting me. Will she melt if I touch her? What can I say to the woman of my dreams, who I will never see again? This figment of my imagination is so inviting, though. Dare I...

My hand reaches up and cups her cheek. "Hermione." The corners of my lips curl upward. "I like this mirage."

Her eyebrows knit together. "Don't be daft. I'm not a mirage!" To prove her point, she smacks me lightly across the cheek again - enough to get my attention.

Scowling, I purse my lips together and realize there's a searing pain inside my chest. Pain means life. Am I alive? "What...?" My hand on her cheek moves up to her hairline, digging into the soft tresses and caressing them with vigor. My other hand flies up to meet the other side of her head, and then I tug her down and send my lips crashing onto hers, all inhibitions lost.

I'm alive. *Alive*. And I'm *myself*.

Hermione gasps into the kiss, resting her palms on my chest to keep from falling over completely as I dip my tongue in her mouth and explore it like it's my first time. It is, really. This is the first time I've ever been *myself* around her and so desperately, *desperately* in love. My emotions spent years on the back burner, and now they're set free like water through a broken dam, spilling into me at a rate so quick I drown in them. Remorse. Anger. Hatred. Love. Shame. Sadness. They all mix and churn together in my soul, flooding all of my senses. I only pull away to mutter, "How?"

Nose to nose, Hermione blinks back tears and answers, "Electrocution spell to kickstart your heart again. I had to-" *try* is what she'd like to say, but my lips are on hers again, caught up in the elation. I'm alive. I was dead, but now I'm *alive*.

"How did you know you could bring me back?"

"I didn't," she admits. "How did you know to destroy the book?"

A smirk finds its way to my face. "The vision you gave Greyback - of your mother destroying the Dybbuk box," -Merlin, it feels wonderful not to flinch at that word, "-it was a false memory. It was you trying to talk to me, wasn't it?"

"I'd hoped..." she whispers, searching my eyes for something. "Is he gone? For good?"

I take a moment to listen, but all that's in my head are quippy one-liners, daddy issues, and my guilt. "He's gone." Hermione gives a relieved sigh, resting her face in the crook of my neck. She relaxes on top of me, and I draw my arms around her, enveloping her in the first official hug that's all mine to give. I inhale the scent of her hair, muttering, "Are you alright?"

There's a pause. "I'm fine." Her voice trembles.

"No, you're not," I snap, quicker and meaner than meant. I'm still not sure how to control all of my emotions again now that I hold the reins. I focus on my guilt and go from there. "I did...such terrible things to you...you can't possibly..."

"I'm fine," she says again, this time firmer.

"And Weasley?"

"He's fine, too. Upstairs, resting. I fed him a sleeping draught to calm him while he heals..."

I pull her tighter against me. "I was a monster. All of those things...I r-raped you...I almost ki-

"Stop talking," she demands, raising her head up to stare me in the eyes. "I mean it."

All I can muster is a nod in response. She continues.

"That wasn't you." Her eyes drift to my sternum.

"Then why can't you look at me?"

Defiantly, she raises her head and glares at me in the eyes. "Happy?"

"I'm alive. It's a start...Thank you."

After what feels like an eternity, we peel ourselves from the floor and carry each other up the stairs. I tend to Hermione's wounds in silence, afraid that should I say the wrong thing, I might ruin the chances of her ever forgiving me. She says she's fine, but I'm no dolt. Eventually, we find ourselves standing beside the unconscious Weasley on the sofa of the den.

"We should talk," I try.

"No." She shakes her head. "Not...not right now. Please. We need to focus on Ron. He'll be waking up soon. We need to...to modify his memories before then."

"Hermione. Hermione, look at me." I grab her by the shoulders and turn her to face me, determined. Her eyes drift up to mine, filled with tears. "You're not fine." I hold her cheek in my hand, dusting my thumb under her eye to swipe away the tears. "I'm not fine. *We're not fine*. None of this is...all the things I've done...Merlin, the people I've *killed*."

"Greyback-"

"Was only part of the problem," I tell her. "I was weak. I let him in. I put you and Weasley's life in jeopardy all because I couldn't stomach the thought of you putting blind faith in someone besides me. I'm *selfish*."

Hermione is stoic, soaking in my words. She settles on, "You should have trusted me..."

"I know." Now the tears flow from my eyes, and I dab at them with the back of my hand, embarrassed. "Fuck, I know..."

"Ron..."

"Let me take care of it. I burned your wand - mine won't work as well for you. We both know memory charms are temperamental." I offer out my hand between us. Hermione looks reluctant to hand my wand back. "I won't hurt you. Now or ever again." She nods timidly and hands the wand over. I turn my attention on Weasley, focusing on what bits should be stripped from his memory and what should be put in their place. "*Obliviate*." I then focus on weaving together the finer points of his memory, slow and careful, like lacing the tips of a fly's wings together with a needle and thread. Finally, it's done, and my heart aches.

"What will he remember?" asks Hermione softly.

"None of tonight. Or his suspicions. He'll remember we dated - no doubt he's confided in a few chums about his discontentment." Without prompting, I walk over to the potions cabinet and dig out something from the back. "Here." I offer out two vials to Hermione.

"What are they?"

"One is a contraceptive potion," I whisper, "For...you know." My throat tightens, and I clear it quickly. "The other is for the pain."

"I'm fine-"

"-Quit saying that," I snap, and Hermione jumps. I flinch at her reaction, but we both knew it would happen. No matter who dished out her torture internally, it was my body that did it all. My form frightens her, and there's nothing I can do about it. It solidifies my resolve. "Just drink the potions. Please." My arm extends between us, and Hermione reaches out, grabbing the vials with careful measure. She makes her way to the sofa opposite of Weasley and takes a seat; I follow and do the same. We sit together for a time in silence until, finally, Hermione removes the stoppers of her vials and chugs them down together. "What really happened to your mother?" I ask.

"Excuse me?"

"You said she made a deal, but the memory Greyback pulled from your mind—the one with the knife to her own throat—that was real."

Hermione sighs. "I didn't lie. She *did* make a deal with her Dybbuk. Just one that wasn't ideal." When my eyes pry over to hers, she continues, "The elderly woman inside her drove her mad. To free herself from the torture, she agreed to share her body with her Dybbuk...muggles would liken it to Dissociative Identity Disorder. And because far less wizards and witches understand Dybbuks than muggles with myths...she's been held in the Janus Thickey Ward of St. Mungo's for the last two years."

A coldness seeps into my chest and freezes around my heart. I reach over to Hermione's hand, squeeze it, and whisper, "I'm so sorry."

"I thought...if I could save you, it would make up for letting my mother down." She sighs. "I was a fool."

"Why?"

"Because I fell in love with you." Hermione tilts her head slowly, her eyes heavy. "I put everything at risk because of love. I let you get away with far more than I should have..."

I place a finger to her lip to silence her. "You did more for me than anyone has ever done. You're the reason I fought so hard. You're my hero, Hermione."

Her eyes flutter open and shut. "I'm...so sleepy..."

I guide her head into my lap. "I know, love. I gave you a heavy sedative."

"W-why?" Her eyes fall on my wand. "No. Draco-"

"-Shh. Go to sleep, Hermione," I brush her hair out of her eyes and lean over, placing a soft kiss on her lips. One that tells her how very much I love her. "You deserve to have a life free of my darkness."

"P-Please..."

Silver meets brown, begging me to change my mind. But I've never been more sure of anything in my life; "I can never make up for the things I've done to you, but I'm going to try, starting with giving you what you deserve: to be with someone who deserves you. It's always been *him*."

"But I love *you*."

I smile. It hurts, but I smile. "I love you, too, Hermione Granger. And I don't deserve you. Maybe in another life, but not this one."

"Dra..." Her eyes fall closed, and her head lulls to the side. Her chest rises and falls, slow and steady.

"*Oblivate.*"

Epilogue next chapter! I feel confident you'll feel satisfied by the end of this fic.

Please leave your thoughts!

~A.

Another Life

 Image may contain: one or more people and text

Final Chapter. *sniffle*

~A

I close my eyes, listening to the soft hum of the magic beneath my feet as I set on a path through Diagon Alley for the first time in three years. Winter's first snow has taken a liking to the shops, blanketing over the rooftops in a delicate display. The streets are charmed to stay warm, so every step I take is met with heat that tickles up my legs all the way into my bones. I still wrap my cloak tightly around my body to avoid the wind, taking in the twinkling shop lights and children on either side of the street, slinging snowballs and laughing. One is a small child with brown curls - her laugh is infectious, and it reminds me of someone I still love. Someone I haven't seen since *that night*.

It isn't that I've actively avoided her; Malfoy Manor 'accidentally' was burned down in a 'mysterious' fiendfyre two days after I said my goodbyes, and goodbyes I mean Obliviating the one person who knew me better than anyone. There's been many times I've tossed in my bed, regretting the thought as I traveled, looking for somewhere to shrug off my boots and call home. But home hasn't been found. No matter how often I try to find a place that calls to me, I keep diving into pensieves, staring at her as she sleeps beside me. Hermione Granger is an addiction I've come to know, and I'm the world's most terrifying junkie - not in the way I was. I miss her, is all. She's what keeps me going when I think about all of the terrible things I've done; she's what pushes me to continue to try to fix all of my mistakes.

So why have I come back to the start of it all? My pain? My suffering? Why do I feel this is where I belong? Have I gone completely mental? Still, something within me says to drink my sorrows away in The Leaky Cauldron and pretend, if for a moment, she's near. Not to say I know where she is...because I don't. I've purposefully kept myself busy to keep from snooping around to show up at her doorstep and proclaim my undying love for her. It's selfish, really; she deserves so much more than me.

The Leaky is full tonight - patrons of all shapes, sizes, and ages fill up any available space, save but for a few spots directly at the bar. Smirking, I make my way up to one of the high tops and order a firewhiskey to drown out today's lull of emptiness. Why did I come back here? What purpose could this serve?

"Well, I'll be..." the bartender grumbles, setting a shot glass in front of me full to the brim with amber liquid. "Draco Malfoy, in the flesh."

"Cheers, mate," I reply, kicking back the shot. "Another."

I drown myself in alcohol until my vision blurs, and then I order a room up top to rest my head for the night. The old me - the prideful me - would have snubbed my nose at the simple decor and quaintness, but this new me - the broken me - could hardly care less. I take the key from the innkeeper and pay my tab, ready for a night of depressing self-indulgence with my hand when someone sits down beside me and says, "One more drink for the road?"

Despite my altered state of mind, I still recognize that feminine timbre. My breath catches, and my heart speeds its pace. It's official; I've gone completely mental, because there's no way it could be... but it is. Hermione Granger sit next to me on a high top stool, her eyes cautious and bright as they meet mine. She hasn't aged a day, still as beautiful as she ever was. She's bundled in a burgundy peacoat and woolen mittens as warm as her smile.

She isn't supposed to be here. She isn't supposed to see me, or talk to me, or address me in any way.

It's true, I took her memories from her. I couldn't let her live with that burden. Guilt weighs heavy in my heart for it, but there's no regrets. How could I leave her with the image of being raped and her friend tortured seared into her thoughts for eternity? How could I sleep soundly knowing that she would live that experience again and again? So I gave her new memories; ones of me being a complete git, of me breaking her heart. Of her never wanting to speak to me again. It was the best way - the only way to get her to understand; I'm no good for her.

I don't deserve her.

Not after all I've done.

"Hey there, stranger." Her chocolate eyes soften, and she leans a gloved hand under her chin. "Long time, no see." She hiccups, motioning to the bartender. "Roy, another shot for my friend? Please? And I'll take another vodka cranberry, if you can spare it."

I raise an eyebrow, noticing the slur in her speech and the handedness of her eyes as I blurt out, "Are you wankered?"

Hermione narrows her eyes, taking her index finger and poking the end of my nose. "Three years. No letters. No floo conversations. Not a hello-" hiccup, "-how are you, and the first thing to come out of your mouth is 'are you wankered?' You have some nerve!" Her finger slides off my nose and down to my upper lip, where her eyes travel, too. They stare at my mouth with interest. "And for your information..." another hiccup, "I am."

I'm not sure what comes over me (maybe it's the love I still feel for her), but I gesture to the bartender and say, "Nevermind on those extra drinks, mate. Just let me pay her tab."

"Oh, no y'don't," Hermione presses her finger against both of my lips, shushing me. "Y'don't get to...to come here and..." Her eyes begin to fill with tears. Suddenly, she's a blubbing mess. "I looked everywhere for you, you know...everywhere..." She snuffles into her mitten before swiping at her tears. I throw a handful of galleons onto the counter and decide it's better not to make a scene my first night back.

I stand up and wrap an arm around Hermione's shoulder, guiding her off her stool. "Alright, you've made your point. Shh... come on. Let's go somewhere more private." I lead her up the steps of the Leaky's second floor and to my newly-rented room, turning the key in the door. Hermione leans against the wall beside it, still fighting off tears.

"Come in and lay down," I bark at her, harsher than needed, but I can't find the will to let myself be entirely comforting. If I am, I'll want to fall back into bed with her and take her until the morning light peers in under the curtains. I grab Hermione's wrist and tug her into the room with me, careful to lock the door behind us. As soon as I turn around, I'm thrown up against the door with a *thud*, and Hermione's hands dig into my cloak, eyes still puffy but full of fierceness.

"Hermione..."

"I know."

It takes everything within my not to send my eyebrows soaring into my hairline. There's no way she can know I Obliviated her memories. No way... "What do you know?" I mutter.

She gives a soft laugh. "I thought maybe I'd gone around the bend, but..." She raises her left arm and tugs down her coat sleeve, revealing something wrapped around it in diamonds, adorned with a golden snitch. The bracelet I gave her. She's still kept it? After all of this time? "I know I can't stop loving you. No matter what was said... no matter what you thought went on between Ron and I..."

Oh yeah...I'd nearly forgotten the reason I put into her head; jealousy. It seemed fitting. More me than anything else I could come up with.

"But then I remembered..." she pauses, searching my face.

My stomach bottoms out, and it takes everything in me not to bolt out the door. "Go on, then," I challenge.

"I remembered you never asked for this back," she laughs, bitter. "And I began to ask myself *why*. Why would Draco Malfoy, a vindictive twat, not ask back the one expensive item he'd given to me? Why would he be so kind? And then I realized -it's because you love me, too." Her knees wobble, and I reach out, wrapping my arms around her waist just before she falls. I lead the drunken woman to the edge of the bed and sit her down on it. Before I know what's happened, I've been tugged down on top of her as she leans back, and her lips crash onto mine, soft and welcoming. My eyes widen in surprise.

Holy shit. She's kissing me. She's *kissing* me.

I close my eyes for half a moment, unburdening my heart as I begin to move my mouth against hers, tasting the vodka and unmissable essence of *her*. But then I realize what I'm doing, hoisting myself off of her and onto my feet in a flash. My heart races a mile a minute. My cheeks are permanently stained with blush. I've never felt so alive and yet so defeated in my entire life...

"Hermione," I begin.

More tears trickle down her cheeks. "Don't stop."

"You're pissed."

"And you're not?" She raises an eyebrow. "If you being drunk is the only way to get you to look at me..."

Her words strike my heart like a chime, and I find myself back on top of her in a flash, straddling her lap and cupping her cheeks to pull her into the most seductive kiss I can manage. My tongue slides along her bottom lip, begging for access, and she eagerly gives it to me. Her mitten is itchy against my cheek as she soothes it with small strokes, but I'm so happy for the contact I don't care. I move my hands down, down, down to the first button of her coat, working through each one with careful precision. With a rough jerk, I slide the offending coat off her arms and onto the floor before peeling off her mittens, never once breaking the kissing frenzy between us. Off comes my cloak, her shirt, my shirt, her shoes, and I bunch up the lengthy skirt around her hips.

Together, we shift just the right amount of clothing, touching each other and caressing in ways I could never before. Not with *him* inside of me. But it's just me now, and I touch her in all of the ways I've always wanted. It's not long before I'm buried inside of her, moving my hips in time with hers and panting between more smothering kisses. My lips only leave hers to travel to her neck, her cheek, her eyelids, her forehead, bestowing every built up fantasy of kissing her three years in the making. Her arms curl around my neck, digging her fingers into my blond tresses as she moans sweetly in my ear.

"Draco...God, Draco..." Hermione expertly moves her body, angling it just right to take me even deeper inside of her. "Never stop..."

So I don't. I continue to build her up, to give her the sweetest rolls of my hips and angle of my cock inside her quim. Her warmth envelopes me, her voice intoxicates me, and soon I'm lost in the raw ecstasy of making love to the *woman I love*. This has to be a dream, because there's no way she's really here, clawing her nails down my back or arching her spine to angle her breasts into my face.

But then she tightens around me, clutching my hair and mewling the loveliest of sighs, and I know... she's really here.

"Again," I growl into her ear, rolling her over to sit on top of me and moving her hips with my hands. I pick up the pace and grind her clit into my pelvis, eyes roaming over her parted lips and lust-filled expression as I bring her into another, gentler orgasm. Hermione bites her lower lip and closes her eyes, panting. "Again." And then I sit up, kissing under her jaw to let her take control. Another five blissful minutes later, she comes again, tightening around me in the most exquisite of ways, this time with a high pitched sigh of exuberance. I move her hips, even after her release, unable to hold back the words, "I love you," as I spill myself inside of her. Lips crash against mine.

"I love you, too."

Sweaty, panting, and full of spirit, we rest in the afterglow for a time as my eyes find their way to the bracelet I'd gifted her so long ago.

"How'd you...know I'd be here?" I choke out as she rolls over onto her side and snuggles against me.

"Didn't," she yawns, kissing my shoulder. "Coincidence."

"Weasley?"

"Just a friend. Has been for a long time..."

I find myself rolling over to stare at her, pulling her tight against me, intertwining limbs and emotions. So many blasted questions and comments race through my mind, it's a bit of a headache to focus on any particular one. "I never stopped loving you," I admit to her.

"I know. You had things to take care of." Her speech is far less slurred; being shagged must have sobered her up. I know it's done the same to me, which only makes me nervous.

"Things..." I ask.

Hermione begins stroking my cheek with her warm fingers, smiling gently. "I figured out where all of that unaccounted money was going from your business - before you turned it over to Zabini so you could travel." My eyebrows crinkle in confusion, and she must be able to read my expression pretty well, because she continues, "The pink form? The one I made you fill out before I agreed to go on our first date?"

It then dawns on me. "Oh." My heart races some more. "You... you know where the extra money went?"

"To *his* victims' families. You'd been trying to fight him for so long..."

Our eyes catch, and there's a moment of pure understanding.

"You remember."

"Almost everything," she admits. "Though there are pieces... small bits of time that, I think, I've chosen to forget."

Immediately, I sit up, fumbling to pull up my pants and retreat - I can't look at her if she knows...

Hermione's arms wrap around my torso, and her head rests on my shoulder, holding me in place from behind. "Don't you dare leave again." There's a quiver in her tone, but she keeps it strong. "If you leave, I'll crumble apart."

I lick my dry lips, filled with panic and dread. That is, until her lips press against my cheek, melting my heart. "Hermione..."

"You promised me," she continues, "in another life, remember. Why not make it this one?" Her hand slides down my leg and finds my own, lacing our fingers together before bringing our hands up against my chest, directly above my heart. "I'm not taking no for an answer, Draco Malfoy."

"I don't deserve-"

"-Maybe the old you didn't. But the you that's here before me... the one that's been inside of you all along; he deserves this. *I* deserve this."

"I'm broken," I whisper to her, turning my face to meet her gaze.

Hermione Granger smiles. "We are all, Draco. But I'm willing to bet there's enough shards between us to put a heart back together - one we can share."

For the first time in three years, I smile. It hurts, but I smile. "Stubborn little witch..." My insult his half hearted as I lay is both back into bed, drawing the covers around us. There, I kiss her forehead and hold her to me. "There's just no getting rid of you, is there?"

"Afraid not," she teases.

"...Another life, then."

"A better one. Beginning now."

If you liked this story, consider giving it a favorite? Or a nomination in your next award ceremony? Or, you know, push the back button and forget it all lol no pressure. It has been my joy to watch this story blossom and bloom into what it has become. I hope you've enjoyed it as well.

Thank you for reading.

~A.

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