

Silver Bullets & Gold Ribbons

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At Britain's most elite and prestigious boarding school—Hogwarts Academy—Hermione Granger arrives as a brilliant scholarship student with nothing but her books, her good intentions, and her innocence. The halls are ruled by money, legacy, and vice. Power isn't earned. It's inherited. Bought. Taken.

Draco Malfoy was supposed to ruin her—just a cruel game for a bored boy born into power.

But something went wrong.

Now she's in his blood.

His obsession.

He meant to break her.

Now he wants to keep her. Forever.

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/V6ycWX77/Silver-Bullets-1.png>]

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Cruel Intentions

Chapter 1: Cruel Intentions

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

He couldn't stop staring at the stupid red ribbon in her hair. Swallowed whole by those impossible curls. Thick, defiant spirals that moved like they were alive.

He hated the way they were distracting him.

The way the strands slipped free no matter how tightly the useless, offensive ribbon tried to hold them.

The way the light caught in the deep brown, so dark it almost looked black if you didn't look closely. And of course he looked closely.

It was infuriating.

She was already at a desk when he walked in that morning. Right at the front, of course—like the unbearably smug little swot he could already tell she was. Her notebook was open, flanked by an obscene number of pens, so neurotically colour-coded with the kind of intensity that suggested a tragic lack of hobbies.

What a joke.

Professor Vector was scribbling an equation on the board. Something they'd all should have mastered last year if they had any functioning brain cells and even a passing interest in being awake.

As the rest of the class trickled in, he took the seat directly behind her. Naturally. If she was going to be irritating, she might as well be irritating within range.

He glanced down at her notebook—she'd already solved the damn equation. Her foot was tapping, quick and relentless, anxiously awaiting the next problem as if mental silence was some kind of threat she had to outrun.

It was deeply, existentially annoying.

He couldn't stand her. And class hadn't even properly started yet.

He knew a new student would be joining them this term. It was rare for anyone to transfer into Hogwarts Academy so late—seventh form, of all years—so naturally, it caused a stir.

His father, who sat on the school's Board of Governors, had overheard Headmaster Dumbledore mentioning her.

A genius girl from a state school in Hampstead. The sort of thing his father found concerning, and Dumbledore found *charming*.

Apparently, she'd written some bleeding-heart article in her school paper about the exploitation of migrant custodial workers in the public school system—arguing they should be unionised, paid more, and treated with basic human dignity.

Somehow, that article made its way to the Headmaster.

And now, she was here.

Rumour had it that Professor McGonagall, Deputy Head of Upper School, had personally shown up at her flat to invite her. As if she were some once-in-a-generation prodigy, rather than a twitchy know-it-all with a saviour complex and a twenty-pack of ballpoints.

Hogwarts was an institution for the country's elite—old money, old names, and even older rules. Most students had been groomed for this place since birth, funneled through exclusive prep schools, dressed in custom uniforms before they could tie their own laces.

Occasionally, an outsider slipped in. A scholarship, a special invitation, a fluke. Dumbledore had a soft spot for them, claiming it was *good for the ecosystem*. The truth? Most of them didn't last.

Still, there were exceptions. Like Potter—Saint Potter—whose tragic backstory and tragic hair earned him a permanent pass from criticism. The others—like Weasley—were only here thanks to legacy placements and desperation. The Weasleys had somehow always had a seat at Hogwarts, despite their father being a mid-level civil servant.

Dumbledore was a strange man, but no one questioned him. No one dared. He did what he liked, answered to no one, and made decisions as if the entire institution were his personal little social experiment.

Hence the infuriating girl sitting in front of him.

Of course Potter would sit next to her.

These types always found each other—idealists, strays, scholarship kids with something to prove. Which meant Weasley wasn't far behind.

It took precisely three minutes before he started copying off her paper.

Again, the reasons for his continued presence at Hogwarts were utterly beyond comprehension.

"You have to use the trigonometric function—sub in the cosine identity to isolate x ," the curly-haired swot said primly, answering a question that hadn't even finished leaving Professor Vector's mouth. Her hand had shot into the air before anyone else had even uncapped a pen.

"Well done, Miss Granger," Vector said with a rare smile. "I can see why the Headmaster was so eager to have you here."

Beside him, Daphne scoffed under her breath.

“Who does she think she is?” she hissed, leaning in close enough that her perfume—sickly and over-applied—hit the back of his throat like a chemical weapon.

“She’s in for a rude awakening,” Daphne continued, her voice syrupy with disdain. “Poor thing hasn’t figured out this place eats people like her for breakfast.”

Draco let out a low harrumph. He couldn’t have agreed more.

In fact, he was looking forward to it.

To being the one to remind her of exactly where she stood. Of how things worked here. Of the very fine line between invitation and acceptance.

A bit of revenge, really—for distracting him with her ridiculous hair. And her even more ridiculous ribbon.

This year was already starting to show promise. Toying with Pothead and the ginger was growing stale. There were only so many times you could provoke the intellectually unarmed before it felt like cheating.

Class ended in a blink, and Draco blinked with it—snapped out of whatever fugue state he’d fallen into. Everyone was standing, collecting their things, while he’d spent the entire lesson involuntarily memorizing the spiralling geometry of—what had Vector said her name was?—Granger’s curls.

Brilliant.

As the trio moved toward the door, Draco leaned back in his chair, lazily venomous.

“Found yourself a girlfriend?” he drawled, eyes flicking to Potter with theatrical disdain. “Maybe now people will stop assuming you and

Weasley are *experimenting*.”

Weasley turned, red ears already glowing, but Potter kept walking—dragging his furious sidekick with him like a leash on a barely house-trained terrier.

Draco smirked to himself.

As much as he welcomed new material, the dunderhead duo never truly went out of style.

But this Granger girl?

She had potential.

And unfortunately for her, he’d just gotten interested.

But then the girl looked up at him.

Just for a second—barely a flicker—and yet it hit him like a blow to the chest. His smirk faltered, lips parting ever so slightly, and for one humiliating moment, he just stared.

Her eyes were impossibly large, a deep burnished brown threaded with something brighter. Gold. *Gold*. Who the hell had gold in their eyes? It was unnatural. Distracting.

Infuriating.

People had always said his eyes were silver. Cold, sharp, rare. An heirloom passed down through generations of aristocratic breeding. But hers—hers were something else. Not wealth, not polish, but fire. Wild and bright and raw.

The trance only lasted a second. His features slid back into place like a mask, reshaped into something wolfish and smug. He stepped forward—blocking her exit entirely, towering over her with the kind of calculated menace that came easy to boys born tall and entitled.

He had nearly a foot on her, and was broad enough that if someone stood behind him, they'd never know she was there.

Well—except for the hair.

That ridiculous, unruly hair. Curls so thick and defiant they practically announced her presence before she even spoke. He watched them bounce as she dipped to the side, trying to skirt around him.

Quick little thing. Like a mouse, really.

Yes—that's what she was. A tiny, twitchy little mouse scuttling along the edges of the room, hoping not to draw the cat's attention.

Too late for that.

And he was most definitely the cat. Sharp teeth and all.

He pivoted to watch her go, gaze trailing down her back with a deliberateness he didn't bother to hide.

She was small, yes. Delicate, even. He was fairly certain he could wrap his hands around her waist and have his thumbs touch. But she was also—unexpectedly—curved.

Her uniform wasn't altered like most of the girls, but it didn't need to be. The fabric of her skirt rode up slightly with each step, caught on the natural curve of her hips and the round, purposeful sway of her arse.

He hadn't gotten a proper look at her chest—she'd moved too quickly for that, damn her—but the way her blouse pulled at the seams suggested she wasn't lacking.

She was going to get attention.

Not the good kind.

The boys at Hogwarts weren't kind. They were crude and cruel and bored. They'd leer. Laugh. Because here, a girl like her wasn't a person. She was a novelty. Entertainment. A dare.

They wouldn't see her as anything beyond a pair of tits, hips, and a scholarship.

And even if they did, none of them would date her. Not seriously. Not publicly. Not unless they were Potter and his sad little sidekick, who still believed in things like decency and falling in love with clever girls.

He almost scoffed aloud as he realized he had begun contemplating her hypothetical love life. After barely two hours since he first set eyes on her.

Pathetic.

This girl was a disease.

From this moment on, his mental energy would be strictly devoted to putting her in her place. A proper welcome. A reminder that Hogwarts wasn't some daydream where clever little girls got gold stars and happy endings.

It was power politics in pressed collars and polished loafers—cutthroat, quiet, and rigged long before the game began.

And he had no intention of losing.

But first—information.

He turned and locked onto the only person whose brain didn't make him wince.

"Theo," he said, catching Nott just before they left the room. "What do you know about the new girl?"

I Can See You

Chapter 2: I Can See You

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

Hermione never meant to stand out.

She didn't crave attention, or want to be the cleverest in the room. Things just... came to her. Questions bloomed in her mind like wildflowers—fast, bright, and impossible to ignore. Her hand would rise before she realised it, and when she spoke, her voice would shake—not with fear, but with a kind of fierce, trembling care. Like she felt things too deeply to keep them inside.

In Year 4, she saw two boys kicking at a baby bird beneath the hedges. It had fallen from its nest, its tiny body still breathing, its feathers patchy and wet. They weren't curious. They weren't playing.

They laughed when she screamed at them. She begged them to stop. She tried to stand between their feet and the bird, arms spread, knees shaking.

Her voice cracked as she tried to make them understand. That it was cruel. That they were hurting something helpless just because they could.

They laughed harder.

Eventually, they left. Bored.

She stayed until the little bird stilled. Until it stopped shaking. Until one quiet tear slipped down her cheek.

She rushed to tell someone. But she was upset, and her words came out tangled, too fast, too emotional.

No one had listened.

So, she wrote.

A short column in the school's bulletin—'*Impact of Urban Development on Local Bird Populations.*'

No one really read it. But she kept writing.

Little editorials. Short columns. Curious thoughts about things that didn't sit right: the cost of uniforms, the bins overflowing behind the science wing, the custodial staff no one knew by name.

Her classmates rolled their eyes. Said she was too much. Too serious. Too everything.

But one day, her words caught someone's attention.

A strange old man in half-moon spectacles who said she saw things other people missed. Said she belonged somewhere else.

Hogwarts.

A private boarding school in the Scottish Highlands with an admissions process that seemed more like a rumour than a system.

No website. No photos. No open days. Just a name whispered through the academic elite, folded into glossy alumni magazines and obscure registries. It felt like a place people didn't talk about on purpose.

Selective. Secretive. Remote.

And now she was in the middle of it.

Stone corridors that echoed like cathedrals. Classrooms that smelled of chalk and leather and the quiet hush of old money. Students with polished shoes and polished surnames.

She arrived to her first class early—too early, probably—because her anxiousness needed order, and silence felt safer when it was chosen.

Her roommates, Lavender and Parvati, had been perfectly polite when she first arrived. Sweet, even. But their world was threaded with in-jokes and gloss and glances she didn't quite understand. They offered a kind of friendliness that stayed on the surface.

Hermione didn't expect more. She never really had friends. Being an only child meant she'd gotten good at being her own company. Her parents were kind, but busy—dentists with lives full of conferences and clients. She'd learned early not to ask for too much of their time.

She took a seat at the front of the room, folded her skirt neatly, and opened her notebook to a clean page. Her curls—unruly no matter how carefully she brushed them—were half-pinned back with a red ribbon. She always wore one. Hair clips vanished somewhere between the roots and the ends, and elastics snapped like they'd given up trying.

Ribbons, at least, stayed put.

Her mum used to say it while tying one in the kitchen before school: "Ribbons are reliable, Hermione. Like you."

That had stuck with her.

She had a small collection now, tucked in a drawer like pressed flowers—navy, cream, soft pink. The red one she wore on mornings she needed a little extra courage, which lately was most mornings.

When her thoughts got too loud, her fingers would find the end of it, twisting the fabric between two fingers like an anchor.

Today, she'd already touched it twice. Maybe three times.

A chair scraped back behind her. Loudly.

She didn't need to look to know the type—boys who took up space like it belonged to them. A sort of casual confidence like this room, this school, this world had always been shaped around him.

She didn't turn. But she felt his eyes like a chill tracing her spine. Curious. Calculating.

She tapped her foot. Picked up one of her pens. Anything to break the tension crawling up her spine.

When Professor Vector began writing a problem on the board, Hermione dove into it gratefully. It was basic trigonometry—nothing she hadn't already mastered—but her wrist moved quickly anyway, scribbling neat equations like her life depended on it.

"Blimey," someone gawked. "You some kind of maths robot?"

She glanced up.

The voice belonged to a boy with a face full of freckles and a lazy slouch.

Before she could decide whether or not to reply, another voice chimed in—quieter, friendlier.

"Don't mind Ron. He doesn't understand maths unless it comes with pictures."

Hermione turned—and met the greenest eyes she had ever seen.

The boy beside her smiled, a little awkward, but genuine. Hair unruly. Tie half-done. He looked like he hadn't slept in weeks, but his gaze was kind. Soft, in a way people rarely were.

"I'm Harry," he said. "That's Ron."

Ron gave her a less-than enthused half-wave, peering over at her notebook and quietly copying her answers before class had even properly started.

She noticed. He wasn't being subtle. But she let him.

She didn't want to scare them off, not when they were the first boys to sit beside her without being asked to.

She hesitated, then smiled shyly. "Hermione."

It sounded small, even to her.

[img:

<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Class ended in a soft rustle of closing notebooks and the low creak of wood as chairs slid back into place. Hermione blinked down at the last equation on her page. She'd finished twenty minutes ago—proofs neat and framed in the margins, with annotations where Vector's logic could've gone deeper.

It was the kind of class she usually felt alone in. But Professor Vector had smiled at her. Genuinely.

"Well done, Miss Granger," she'd said, lips quirking with something close to delight. "I can see why the Headmaster was so eager to have you here."

That warmth—brief, fleeting—still glowed in Hermione's chest, though it competed now with something else. A feeling like being watched through frosted glass. She hadn't dared turn around, not once, though the back of her neck prickled the entire time.

Beside her, Harry fiddled with his pen and stole glances her way.

His glasses kept slipping. Again.

"Hold still," she murmured. She reached over, gentle and precise. "Your screw's loose."

He blinked. "What?"

“In your glasses,” she clarified. “One side’s tilting. You’ll get a headache.”

She tugged a staple from the spine of her notebook, unfurling it with small, sure fingers. Then, using it like a tiny screwdriver, she tightened the hinge, just enough to hold.

“There,” she said, sitting back. “Symmetrical again.”

Harry stared at her. And then—slowly—smiled.

“Thanks. That was... sort of amazing.”

She looked down at her hands, a little embarrassed. “Not really. My dad’s a disaster with his glasses. He breaks them weekly. We’re not allowed to throw them away anymore—Mum says it’s wasteful. So I fix them.”

Harry’s smile lingered. There was something gentle in his gaze now—something settled. Like he’d just found something he’d forgotten he was missing.

“Still amazing,” he said.

Something about the way Harry looked at her after that made her heart flutter in a way she didn’t understand.

He asked what other classes she had, and when she told him he frowned with exaggerated dismay. “We’ll only share three,” he said, as though it were a real loss. “But you should sit with us at lunch.”

Hermione smiled at him like she hadn’t smiled in a long time.

Like it was the first day of spring.

And then it happened.

A voice behind her—low, cruel, unmistakably deliberate.

“Found yourself a girlfriend, Potter? Maybe now people’ll stop assuming you and Weasley are *experimenting*.”

Ron stiffened, going crimson from the ears down. Harry didn’t even flinch.

Hermione, stunned, finally turned.

And saw him at last.

She hadn’t meant to look. But the second their eyes met, it was like walking into a storm and realizing it was staring back.

He was unfairly beautiful. Almost inhuman.

Everything about him was impossibly pale. His hair, his skin, the crisp white of his shirt. Even his smirk felt colourless—bleached of warmth.

His features were sharp enough to wound: a blade of a jawline, cheekbones carved like architecture. And his eyes—

Silver, like coins. Or bullets.

And he was tall. Too tall. And broad in the way boys often weren’t yet.

Something flickered behind his expression when their eyes met. Surprise? Curiosity? Hunger?

She didn’t wait to find out. She dipped her head, rushed around him, and caught up to the boys without looking back.

“Ignore Malfoy,” Harry muttered. His voice was tight. “He’s... well. You’ll see.”

“Biggest spoiled prick in the school,” Ron added, still a bit red in the ears. “Family owns, like, half of London. Security firms. Underground

clubs. Buy politicians and properties for fun. Super shady. Some say mafia.”

“Don’t be absurd,” Harry cut in, though not with much conviction.

“He’s cruel,” he admitted. “His family’s powerful, and he knows it. Thinks rules don’t apply to him.”

Hermione didn’t answer.

Her thoughts were still back in the classroom. With that look. The way his stare had landed on her—not with admiration, not even with contempt. But possession.

He looked at her like he had already decided what she was worth.

Like he already had plans.

She pressed her books tighter to her chest and told herself not to care.

But her hands were still shaking.

Mouse, Meet Trap

Chapter 3: Mouse, Meet Trap

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

Theo didn't know much about the girl—not anything useful, anyway. She went to a state school. Wrote for the paper like her life depended on it. She had pages on pages about animal cruelty, refugees, polar ice caps. Like she thought caring hard enough would change anything.

Draco thought maybe she should be punished for it. That kind of hope was dangerous around here.

She'd raise her hand in class constantly. Not because she liked the attention. But because she couldn't bear the professors look of disappointment when no one else did.

They ate it up. McGonagall practically glowed every time she spoke. Even Snape stopped sneering for a whole three seconds when she answered one of his more sadistic questions right.

After that first class, she spent all her time with Potter and Weasley. The two of them flanking her like overgrown guard dogs. Potter was tolerable enough, annoyingly noble, but nothing new. Weasley, though—that cretin.

Loud. Greedy. Always angling for a laugh, even if it was at her expense. She gave polite little laughs in return.

She was being nice, that was all. She didn't like them. Couldn't possibly. Not when Weasley leered at her tits like a starving dog at a butcher's window. Draco had caught him, more than once, openly ogling the strain of her blouse across her chest.

Even Crabbe and Goyle had noticed her. Loudly. Drooling, useless pigs. Blaise muttered something about her being 'spank bank material,' and Theo snorted behind his hand.

Draco didn't laugh.

He just watched.

Potter was different. He listened to her. Gave her space to speak. Draco hated that most of all. Hated the way Potter's face softened when she tucked a curl behind her ear. The way he leaned in when she spoke, like her thoughts were gold.

He knew that look.

It was the look of someone who'd found something precious.

Draco wanted to smash it.

Because she was his now. His to study. To unravel. To destroy. She had taken root in his brain like a weed—stubborn and everywhere.

He'd memorized her. Not just her stupid ribbons—though he knew she wore black on days when she was more quiet, and pale blue on days when she laughed a bit louder—but the way she moved. The way her hands trembled sometimes when she spoke up in class—with a passion and force like an unexpected earthquake. The way she always picked the same seat at the same desk, like anything outside her routine might hurt.

She was soft.

Like a quiet summer's day. The kind that makes you forget that the sun burns.

He hated her.

"She's not that bad," Pansy said once. "Actually... she helped me with Snape's assignment. Didn't even have to ask. Just noticed I

kept getting the questions wrong.”

Draco’s turned to look at her, voice low. “You’re joking.”

Pansy met his stare. “No. She’s... really sweet, actually.”

“Sweet?” His voice cold and sharp. “She’s a sanctimonious little swot with delusions of grandeur. A fucking librarian with a superiority complex. That’s not sweetness. That’s a disease.”

Pansy went silent after that. Frowned. Quiet.

He didn’t care.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzVwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

That night in the dorms, Theo had cracked open something stronger than whisky, and Blaise was flicking through the latest mix from some DJ in Camden who sold pills out of his car boot.

“We throw it Saturday,” Draco said, perched on the windowsill, a joint burning lazily between his fingers. “A party. No invites. Word of mouth only. If you hear about it, you’re already in.”

“And what about McGonnagall?” Theo questioned.

“As long as the staff don’t hear it from their quarters and we don’t light anything on fire, no one gives a shit.” Draco rolled his eyes. “Our parents’ll just write another cheque if things get too messy.”

“I want an event,” Draco drawled. “I want euphoria—the sick kind, with smoke and chaos and trembling mouths and bodies.”

“No theme?” Blaise asked, eyebrow raised. “We going full madness?”

“It’s not a fucking sweet sixteen,” Draco sneered. “We let it rot. Lights low. Music loud. Everything hot and dirty. Just limbs and sound.”

He wanted the party to go feral. To become become a beast with a pulse and a voice. To bite. To ruin someone.

“What exactly are we doing to her?” Theo asked, voice light, but his eyes gleaming.

He didn’t answer. Not directly.

“She thinks this place won’t touch her. Thinks she can keep her little sunshine heart intact. But this school—we—we don’t care how kind you are. We chew that shit up.”

The plan had started forming from the first moment she looked at him in class—in that infuriating and mesmerizing way.

She was a mouse.

And he was going to snap her neck.

She Danced on the Altar

Chapter 4: She Danced on the Altar

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

The whispers curled through the corridors like the smoke they weren't supposed to be lighting in the bathrooms.

A party—wild, unhinged, completely unsupervised. Someone had bribed one of the night staff to leave the floor unattended, and the common room for their year would be theirs. No professors. No rules. No reality.

Ron was buzzing about it for days.

"You heard what Zabini said, right?" He leaned in over his morning toast. Mouth full of crumbs. Hermione cringed.

"They're getting in absinthe. Someone's even bringing those party favours from the States. The ones that make your tongue blue and your brain go sideways."

"You're coming, right?" Ron asked suddenly.

Hermione blinked. "I—I didn't think I'd be invited."

Harry nudged her, smiling. "Everyone's invited. It's not, like, exclusive."

Ron grinned. "It's not a bloody dinner party, Hermione. Just show up. We're going."

Hermione hesitated. Her heart was pounding. "I don't know. I've never really been to a party like that before. I don't even know what I'd wear."

Ron's eyes did a slow drag down her uniform. "Just wear that. Or don't."

She stiffened.

Harry chuckled uneasily. "Ignore him. He's being gross." But he didn't say more.

Ron leaned in close. "Honestly, 'Mione, you could wear a bin bag and still pull."

Hermione laughed. Too lightly, cheeks burning. She didn't want to ruin this. This friendship. The closeness. So she said nothing.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The bathrooms at Hogwarts were cold and too bright. She was washing her hands when Pansy Parkinson suddenly materialized.

"Looking forward to the party, Granger?"

Hermione turned, startled. "Oh. I—I guess so. I'm not sure. I don't even have a dress," she mumbled.

"I'll sort you."

"But—"

"Shut up, Granger. I'm being nice. Let me be nice."

Hermione didn't know how to say no, and she wasn't sure she wanted to.

"Come to mine on Saturday after dinner," she said.

Pansy's dorm was lavender-scented and filled with scattered designer bits and lit candles that definitely weren't allowed. Pansy

dug into her wardrobe and tossed something to Hermione. "Try that. It'll make your skin glow. Do you tan naturally?"

It was white.

Tiny.

Sinful.

"This is..."

"It's perfect."

"I can't—"

"You can."

Hermione said nothing as Pansy helped her into the dress—the strapless neckline dipped low, fabric clung to every curve, hemline barely reaching the tops of her thighs. Then matching white open-toed heels. Tall enough to accentuate the shape of her legs, giving her a few inches above her usual five feet.

Hermione didn't wear a ribbon. She let her wild curls fall down low to her back. Uncontained. Untamed.

When she stepped in front of the mirror, even Pansy raised her brows. "You look like an angel."

Hermione flushed, pulling at the hem. "I don't know if I can—"

"You can. Trust me. Tonight, you'll float."

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The common room had become something else entirely.

The air reeked of sweat and something smoky, darker—something Hermione couldn't name. Bass pulsed through the floor. Bodies were loose, sinuous, barely dressed.

People were everywhere—dancing, kissing, drinking.

As Hermione walked in, she instantly felt eyes on her.

She glowed. Just like Pansy said she would.

Ron blinked when he saw her, mouth falling open. "Bloody hell, Hermione."

Harry's attention was on her too. He laughed awkwardly. "You look... different."

"Want a drink?" Ron asked.

She hesitated. "I—I don't really like the taste of—"

"Come on," he whined, already tipping clear liquid into a cup. "You'll get used to it."

She took it. Sipped. Cringed.

Ron laughed.

"I knew you'd make that face."

She was struggling to breathe amidst the chaos. Her dress felt even tighter now. The music louder. People she'd never spoken to were looking at her. Their stares like fingers.

Across the room, Draco watched. His jaw tightened.

She had never felt seen like this before.

Pansy caught her eye and winked.

Hermione blushed and smiled back.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The games started after midnight.

Someone shouted "TRUTH OR DARE," and a circle formed fast, drunk bodies collapsing into cushions and laps.

Hermione didn't really want to play. Content watching from the safety of the wall she had pressed herself against. But Ron grabbed her wrist and tugged her forward.

"She's in," he said.

Malfoy was watching. He hadn't looked away from her all night.

A bottle spun. Questions turned to dares. Kisses. Slaps. A boy had to strip and run through the corridors. A girl had to confess a detailed account of the night she lost her virginity. Laughter, shrieks, hands on bodies, drinks smeared across lips.

Then it landed on Hermione.

"Truth," she said, heart pounding.

Laughter.

"Of course," someone muttered.

Hermione flushed. "Fine. Dare."

Blaise grinned at that. Reached into his pocket and pulled out a pale blue tablet in clear wrapping. "Take this. One of my cousins got it from some guys at the club scene in Soho. It's... enlightening."

She stared. "No. I don't want that."

"Scared?" Daphne purred.

People were staring. Whispering.

Ron snorted. Harry looked uneasy but didn't speak.

Hermione shook her head. "I'm not—I just don't want to."

She moved in an attempt to flee. But, Daphne's hand was suddenly on her shoulder—then her mouth. Fingers pinching Hermione's jaw open, nails biting. The pill shoved between her lips.

It dissolved bitter on her tongue. She tried to spit it out—but someone tipped a shot glass into her mouth. She swallowed involuntarily.

Coughed. Spluttered. The world began to soften.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The edges of things started to shimmer.

Light became liquid. Music became breath. Her body—weightless, not hers. The laughter around her echoed like it came from underwater.

She was spinning across the floor.

Then she was climbing.

The table was wood under her feet. Sticky and slick. When had she taken her shoes off? She didn't care.

She danced. Wild. Disjointed. Like a doll possessed.

People watched. Screamed. Howled.

Someone's drink was poured over her chest. Her dress became transparent in the lights.

People hollered

Laughed.

Pointed.

She didn't know long she was up there—she felt like she was far away in the clouds—until someone started trying to pull her down. Harry. She slapped his hand away, her eyes blown wide and gone.

Ron climbed up after her. Grabbed her hips. His mouth near her ear.

"I didn't know you had this in you. Let me help you."

His hands slid to her waist. Then lower.

She winced. Turning away. But he didn't let her go.

A foreign sound left her lips. A squeak of nervous giggles. Had she been giggling this entire time? Her own voice suddenly felt too loud. Her brain like mush.

"No—Ron—Please." she slurred, suddenly feeling the force of the hands on her growing stronger. "Stop it."

Someone in the sea of bodies moved.

Fast. Precise.

Ron was yanked from the platform. Brutally.

People gasped. Some cheered.

Fists collided.

Blood.

Hermione blinked at the violence—turned—too fast.

Crack. Her head hit the chandelier overhead.

And she faltered.

Fell.

Strong arms caught her.

She was limp. Hair damp with sweat and spilled drink. Her dress was completely ruined.

People were laughing.

She caught some voices. Faraway, but somehow also blaring in her ears.

"What a slag."

"Isn't she supposed to be smart? Can't even hold her liquor."

"Think she'd suck me off tomorrow in that library she's always in?"

Malfoy said nothing. Malfoy—

He was the one who was carrying her.

She burrowed into his chest. Like if she made herself small enough, she could shrink into oblivion. Disappear into him.

She was shaking—her mind foggy—like she had no control over her body. Her face was wet. Sticky with perspiration, liquor, tears she hadn't noticed were falling steadily. An unending stream. Mascara was smeared down her cheeks, covering her freckles in a shadow of darkness.

She could still hear some laughter.

"Freak."

"Slut." A female voice—Daphne—snickered loudly.

Until suddenly they were somewhere quiet.

She turned to look up at the boy whose arms were holding her together. Without them, she thought she might unravel entirely.

Her eyes, wide and glassy, found his.

And his eyes—

Silver. Bright and cold.

Like a gilded cage.

Beautiful. Unescapable.

Something meant to trap. Not to keep her safe.

She blinked. Slow. Then whispered, voice fragile, "You're bleeding."

Never Let Me Go

Chapter 5: Never Let Me Go

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

Her dress was white. Too white. Like some sacrificial thing.

Her skin looked like it had been bathed in molten light. And her hair—fuck, her hair—those wild curls spilled over her bare shoulders and down her back like silk set aflame. It made Draco's throat constrict. Made his fingers twitch with the urge to tear it out. Or bury his face in it until he couldn't breathe.

She wasn't supposed to look like that.

He was going to slit Pansy's throat. That dress reeked of her handiwork.

Draco sat slouched on the velvet sofa, one leg thrown over the other, a half-full glass of something dark and expensive dangling from his fingers.

And he was watching Hermione Granger like she was a hallucination spun from his most wicked dreams.

He'd orchestrated it all. The party. The smoke and shadows. The trap.

When she was finally pulled into the game and sat cross-legged on the floor, he almost laughed.

It was like watching a lamb wander into a slaughterhouse.

And then Blaise pulled out the pill.

Daphne forced it down her throat.

Even *he* hadn't planned that.

Draco stiffened, but said nothing. Waited.

And when it hit her, he watch entranced as the first shimmer of delirium flushed her cheeks.

She was... unrecognizable. Something primal.

Wild and lit from within, like something holy or cursed.

The boys cheered. Girls stared.

He wanted to rip the laughter from their throats and feed it to her. Force her to taste what it felt like to be mocked and revered in the same breath.

He wanted to be disgusted at the sight of her.

But she was radiant.

And then Weasley—

That feral fucking rodent—put his greasy hands on her waist. Touched her like he owned her.

Draco moved without thought. Fire exploded behind his eyes. The crack of his knuckles against Weasley's face echoed like gunfire, and the reverberation of a returning punch to his own jaw rattled his brain.

But then—

A sharper crack. Her skull.

He didn't remember how he got to her. Just the weight of her in his arms. Too light. Too warm.

He carried her out. Through the roaring madness of his own making. Bodies writhed, the music surged. Someone called his name.

He didn't stop.

He took her to the loo just outside the common room. Slammed the door shut with his back.

She looked up at him, dizzy and sweet and ruined.

"You're bleeding," her soft voice whispered.

He let her down to stand barefoot on the cold tile, still glowing. Still devastating.

"I'm sorry," she slurred. Dripping with shame.

His jaw locked.

Then she touched his swollen lip, eyes enormous.

She was worried about him. He—he did not know what to do with that.

He had humiliated her. Poisoned her. Let her be laughed at. Groped.

She was apologizing to her executioner.

Curls clung to her cheeks like ink. He moved closer. Brushed them back, fingers lingering. Possessed.

He had never seen anything so beautiful. Like a fallen angel. All the holiness, none of the mercy.

He wanted her.

Not the way he had before.

Not just to ruin.

He wanted her beneath him. Behind him. In front of him. Always.

He wanted her to never leave his sight.

He wanted her to want him.

And he would make her.

“I can clean it,” she said softly, still focused on his mouth.

He froze. Pulled back from his trance.

“You don’t have to.”

“I know,” she murmured. She turned on the faucet. Letting the water run until it became warm.

She was looking after him?

Drugged, ruined, humiliated—and still tending to him? *How?*

He didn’t notice they were both sitting on the floor until he suddenly felt the stinging of cold tile.

With a wet paper towel, she leaned in and tilted his chin up, her hand light on his jaw. He could feel the warmth of her closeness, her soft breaths against his skin.

She smelled like warm honey and vanilla. Mingled with the sharp and spicy scent of liquor. It was a dangerous and intoxicating combination.

He watched her while she dabbed at his lip. But he didn’t dare let his eyes drift down to the sheer fabric that was barely covering her.

Her pupils were still blown wide, but her touch was steady.

“You really shouldn’t be doing this,” he said.

“Your lip is bleeding. And it’s partly my fault.”

He gave a short, bitter laugh. “You think this was your fault?”

“I fell on you. And Ron wouldn’t have punched you if I hadn’t—”

“Stop.”

She went quiet. Wet the towel again. Dabbed.

When she was done, she pulled away slowly, wiping her fingers on the hem of her already ruined dress.

“You can’t go back like this.” His voice was hoarse. “You’re...”

She waited.

“Too visible,” he choked.

Then he stood. Abrupt. “Wait here.”

He left her.

The party still roared, but he pushed through it like a man possessed. Bodies grinding, lights strobing. Laughter too loud. Daphne tried to cling to him, lipstick smeared, dress crooked. He shoved her off.

He didn’t stop.

Didn’t look at anyone.

His focus was singular.

He tore down the corridor to his room. Ripped open his wardrobe. Heart in his throat. Blood in his mouth.

He grabbed a jumper. Cashmere. Grey. He hated it. Didn’t matter.

When he got back—she was curled up exactly where he left her.

“Put this on.”

She didn’t argue. Just pulled it over her head. The fabric swallowed her.

She looked smaller than ever.

He helped her up.

“Thank you.”

He said nothing.

Then suddenly— “Please don’t leave again—I don’t...” her voice shook. “I don’t want to be alone.”

He stared.

“The drug—it’s still in me, I can feel it. And everything is catching up to me. Everyone looking. Laughing. Touching. It’s too much—I don’t...”

Her voice broke.

And her breathing got shallow.

He caught her shoulders. “Hey. Hey. Breathe.”

“I—I can’t—”

He pulled her close. “You’re fine. I’m here.”

Her body against his felt breakable. Damp from tears, from the chaos he’d put in her veins. He should have felt guilt. And he did. Somewhere deep.

But darker—even deeper—was desire.

He liked her like this. Shaken. Needing him.

She trembled.

He whispered to her—he didn't know what—nonsense and quiet things, promises he didn't know he'd made in order to quiet her.

“Come on.”

He led her to the dorms. Hers was empty, roommates still at the party. Would be for hours.

The room was dim, untouched by the madness downstairs. He guided her to the bed. She curled into it like something small and wounded, dragging the jumper over her knees.

He stood there, unmoving. Unsure. But then—

She looked up at him. Eyes too wide. Still bright even now, even ruined.

And then—slowly, like the motion wasn't hers—she reached for him.

Her hand, tiny and warm, wrapped around his wrist.

It sent lightning through his spine.

The drug was still thrumming through her, flooding her with something raw and unfiltered. She shouldn't have touched him. She shouldn't have wanted to. But she did.

He didn't hesitate.

He climbed in beside her. Drew the canopy curtains closed around them like a secret.

The world shrank to the space between them.

He didn't touch her at first. Just stared.

At the gentle slope of her nose. The curve of her mouth. Her lashes, thick and still wet at the ends. Cheeks blotched and flushed. He memorized each soft feature. Wanted to sketch her from memory until his fingers bled.

She trembled again.

So he finally wrapped his arms around her.

And she let him.

A hand at her waist. An arm sliding under her shoulders. He pulled her into him, until her breath hit his throat.

And still—she didn't resist.

She was too tired. Or too broken.

Or worse—she trusted him.

Her body curled into his side, legs tucked beneath her, head against his collarbone.

He could feel the thud of her pulse. Soft. Stuttering.

He held her like something precious.

He held her like she was his most prized possession.

Outside, the party still roared. The walls shook with it.

But in here—there was only breath.

Only the wet sound of her sniffing once, quietly. Only the rustle of fabric as she curled tighter.

Draco closed his eyes.

He didn't speak.

He didn't move.

Just held her.

Not out of kindness.

But because he could.

Because no one else could reach her here. No one else would ever be allowed to.

Because in this moment he had her.

And he wasn't going to let her go.

Not now.

Not ever.

He was the cage.

And she was inside him now.

Soft Things Don't Survive Here

Chapter 6: Soft Things Don't Survive Here

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

He was hard. Excruciatingly so. Rigid and aching.

The moment her thigh draped over his leg—bare, soft, her knee slotting just under the ridge of his hip—he knew he couldn't survive it for much longer.

And the worst part?

She didn't even know what she was doing.

Didn't know how she tempted, even in her sleep. Oblivious to the depravity she inspired.

Every cell in his body screamed for movement, for friction, for the unbearable tension to break. He wanted to rut against her, just once. Press himself into the heat between her thighs and feel the sweet resistance of innocence and untouched skin.

But he didn't.

Not while she was asleep.

No. That wasn't how he wanted her.

He wanted her awake. Wanted her watching. Looking up at him with those wide, drowning eyes. Her lips parted. Her pulse fluttering like a bird under his hand.

Wanted to hear her whimper his name.

Fuck.

He needed to get out of this bed. Now. Before he did something—

He peeled her off him with care that bordered on reverence. As if she might crack.

Her expression was peaceful now. No trace of the chaos she'd worn earlier. No tears. No panic. Just soft, warm stillness. The way she looked—bathed in moonlight—reminded him of a cherub. Some sacred thing, plucked from a church ceiling and dropped into this bed.

His little angel.

He brushed a curl stuck to her lips—rising and falling with every breath she took. He could watch her forever.

And he would.

There would be time.

But he stood. Prowled around the room.

On her dresser—one lone photo. A fat orange cat blinking sleepily at the camera.

Not of friends. No one laughing beside her. No love notes, no Polaroids, no clutter.

Just the cat.

Perfect.

She didn't need friends.

She had him.

Weasley?

That walking sack of filth would never come near her again.

And Potter—

Well, Potter was a problem.

Not because he touched her. But he was always just close enough to make Draco's teeth ache.

He opened the top drawer.

Ribbons.

A box of them. Lined up. Carefully tied. Touched every morning by her small hands.

He was hard again.

He used to think they were pathetic. Now, just looking at them made his pulse pound behind his eyes.

Would she let him choose which ribbon for her to wear each day?

Would she sit between his legs while he tied it for her, obedient and soft, pressing back against his chest?

He pulled one out. White.

It smelled like her.

Honey and vanilla and warmth.

He pocketed it.

Next drawer.

Knickers.

Plain cotton. Sweet. Unpretentious.

He let his fingers ghost over them, cock pulsing painfully.

He'd rip them off of her one day. With his teeth.

He picked a pair—white with a pale pink bow at the waistband.

Even her panties had ribbons.

He groaned low in his throat. His vision blurring with desire.

He curled them in his fist. Pocketed them, too.

Then—

A shuffle from the corridor. The soft creak of girls' voices drawing nearer.

He looked once more at the bed.

At her.

Still buried in his jumper, limbs curled, nearly swallowed whole by the wool. Just a hint of tanned skin.

It made something dark and sick twist in his chest.

He wanted to put her in his pocket. Carry her with him. Keep her safe.

Keep her his.

The voices got louder.

He turned and slipped out of the door like a shadow.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

He moved through the wreckage of the common room.

The place reeked of sweat, alcohol, smoke, and something sour—

It was almost empty now, the storm passed, the damage done. Only a few bodies remained. Those who couldn't make it to their dorms. Too far gone to move.

They had, as always, bribed the custodial staff to come through just before dawn. Quiet money and sealed lips scrubbing out the sins of the night. At Hogwarts, no one asked questions as long as the stains didn't last past breakfast.

In the dorm, Theo was gone. Typical. Probably buried in some sixth-year, panting into another boy's mouth in the Prefects' bathroom. Draco didn't care.

Blaise was collapsed on his bed, shoes still on, shirt open, bottle of whisky limp in his hand.

Draco didn't spare him more than a glance.

His thoughts were elsewhere.

He stripped in silence. Reached into his pocket.

The soft press of cotton and satin.

His cock twitched.

He tied the white ribbon to the post of his bed. He smirked at how small it looked there—delicate and out of place against the black iron.

Now she'd always be in his bed. Even if she wasn't truly.

Yet.

And once she was, he would never let her leave.

He pulled the curtains shut.

And sank into the mattress.

Pulled his aching cock free. Already weeping.

He dragged her knickers over him. Sliding like heaven around his length. A sinful reprieve, filthy and perfect.

He stroked himself harder, faster, her name a silent chant in his throat. The way she'd looked at him tonight—confused, terrified, entranced. The way she'd curled into him like she belonged there—

Fuck—

He came hard into the soft cotton, hips jerking, a sharp groan breaking past his clenched teeth.

The sight of it—his come soaking the fabric that had once clung to her cunt—nearly sent him spiralling again.

Limp and satisfied, he let exhaustion drag him under.

He fell asleep with the gold in her eyes seared into his mind.

And the promise of her carved into his dreams.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

The school woke late. Hungover. Draco passed students with downturned eyes, sunglasses slung on, stinking of regret and perfume.

Weasley wasn't in the Great Hall.

Neither was she.

Blaise leaned over at the table, whispering something about how wild she'd been. "You should've seen her," he said. "She was dancing on the fucking table, mate. Dress barely covered anything. Goyle got Polaroids. I think someone had their camcorder out."

Draco went still. Said nothing.

The others caught the shift in the air like blood in the water.

"You carried her out, didn't you?" Nott smirked. "All knight in shining armour, sweeping the little slag away from danger. What did she give you for it, eh?"

Blaise leaned forward. "Bet she got on her knees and thanked you properly."

The laughter was harsh and braying.

Draco didn't laugh.

He didn't even blink.

His voice was ice. "Say one more word about her—"

Daphne laughed. "You can't be serious. You don't actually think she belongs here. *Do you?* Just because she probably gagged on your cock in the boys' loo doesn't mean she's—"

Draco turned his head toward her. His smile was a thing carved in glass.

"You think I'd touch a girl like her without planning it?"

Silence.

"She's mine," he said dangerously. "That's the reason she belongs. Not because she fits. Not because she's worthy. But because I decided she is."

Daphne's lips curled. "So what? We're all just supposed to pretend she didn't make a mess of herself in front of half the school?"

His eyes burned.

"No," he said. "You're going to pretend *none* of it happened. No one will speak about this. Not about the party. Not about the drugs. Not about the game."

He leaned over the table, voice low, dark, unraveling.

"Because if she ever finds out... if she ever starts crying again because one of you tells her..."

He bared his teeth.

"I'll make you wish you never crawled out of your mother's cunt."

No one breathed.

"This is how it's going to be," he said, voice calm. "She sits at this table. She eats beside me. You don't look at her. You don't talk to her. You don't fucking breathe near her unless I say you can."

His hands were steady now. Composed.

"She's mine. My pet. My responsibility. I broke her," he added, almost fondly. "Which means I get to fix her too."

Across the table, Pansy sipped her tea, watching him.

She didn't say anything.

Just gave him a strange, almost knowing look.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

He found them in the courtyard.

“Where is she?”

Potter’s head snapped up. His jaw was tight. “Why the fuck do you care?”

“She wasn’t at lunch,” Draco said.

“So?” Weasley stepped forward. “You think you’re some kind of hero now? That’s rich coming from you, Malfoy.”

“She told you no,” he said, voice low and sharp. “And you didn’t listen. I should’ve done more than break your fucking nose.”

“She doesn’t want you,” Weasley spat. “She’s terrified of you.”

Draco’s grin sharpened. “Doesn’t mean she’d ever want you either.”

“Enough,” Potter snarled. “She doesn’t need either of you.”

But Draco was already walking away.

He found her hours later buried in the farthest corner of the library, tucked away behind ancient shelves in the restricted section. Her knees were pulled to her chest.

The sight of her wrecked him.

She looked up. Smiled. Just barely.

“You missed lunch,” he murmured.

“I didn’t feel well.”

He crouched beside her.

“People have been saying things,” she whispered. “I walked into the common room and they started clapping. Mocking. Cheering.”

Someone said I should've charged admission. They asked if I do private shows."

Her throat bobbed. She blinked hard.

He reached for her.

Brushed the curls off her tear-streaked face. She leaned into it. Soft. Trusting. Like he hadn't been the architect of her pain.

"I'll make them stop," he said.

"You can't," she murmured.

"I can do anything."

She looked up at him, wide-eyed and warm and glowing, even in her brokenness.

"Thank you," she whispered. "You were so gentle with me. After everything..."

Her voice drifted off.

He leaned in, trembling with control, with restraint, with want.

He kissed her.

Her lips were soft and sweet. He slanted his mouth over hers, drawing her in slowly, thoroughly, his hand tightening into her impossible curls, the other cradling her jaw.

She let out a noise—something between a gasp and a sigh—and he took it as an invitation.

His tongue slid against hers, slow, deliberate. She tasted like toothpaste and salty tears.

He tilted her head back, deepened the kiss, his mouth pressing harder, demanding. She whimpered into him, her hands clutching his shirt, her chest heaving as he explored her lips like he was starving.

He wanted to press her into the dusty wood and never let her breathe without his mouth.

But he pulled back, her lips pink and swollen, her breath uneven.

And then—

She started giggling.

He stared at her, stunned. “You’re acting like you’ve never been kissed before,” he muttered, dazed.

“I hadn’t,” she said, laughing, cheeks going pink.

Something dark and possessive tore through his chest. Good. No one else had touched her like this. No one else would.

He laughed with her, low and real, the sound strange even to himself.

His thumb traced her bottom lip.

“I’ll ruin you,” he whispered.

He kissed her once more. Slower this time. Worshipful.

When he pulled back again, he said, “Come to dinner with me.”

She hesitated. “I... I promised Harry and Ron I’d meet them.”

His jaw locked. He smiled with no warmth.

“Of course.”

He stood.

“I’ll find you later.”

She nodded.

Her cheeks flushed, pupils blown wide looking up at him, curls wild around her. She looked ruined and blessed all at once.

Draco had to walk away.

If he didn’t, he’d never let her go. He’d take her right there, in that forgotten corner.

You're Mine

Chapter 7: You're Mine

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

She woke to quiet.

The kind that hangs heavy.

Her head ached, softly, like something bruised beneath her skull. Her mouth was dry. She tasted something like sugar and metal and smoke.

Her body didn't feel like her own.

She blinked up at the ceiling, and for a moment, she wasn't sure where she was. Her sheets—they smelled wrong. Masculine. Clean in a dark way. Not like the floral detergent scent she was used to.

She sat up.

Her legs were bare. Her dress—ruined. Shoes, gone. She was in someone else's jumper. Her curls were hopelessly tangled.

Her heart stuttered.

Her breath caught.

Hazy images rose like smoke. A cruel game. The drug. Laughter. Ron's hands—too close. The crowd watching her like she wasn't real. Like she was a thing. Something on display.

She remembered falling.

And then arms.

Strong. Cold and burning all at once.

She curled in on herself, wrapping the jumper tighter.

It was Malfoy.

She remembered now.

She shivered.

She had let him hold her. She had curled against his chest like a child. She remembered the warmth of it. The comfort. The terrifying safety.

And she hated how badly she wished she could feel it again.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The halls were cruel that morning.

People stared. Whispered and laughed when she passed.

In the loo, a Polaroid had been taped to the mirror. It was blurry. She was on a table. Her head thrown back. Her dress barely brushing the tops of her thighs.

Hermione tore it down.

She skipped breakfast and lunch. She couldn't bear the vicious stares. Couldn't bear to see Ron and Harry—not after last night. Not after how small and foolish she felt.

But they caught up to her later.

“Y’alright?” Ron asked. “You... really went for it last night.”

Harry elbowed him. “She’s not alright, you git.”

Hermione's cheeks flamed. Her voice was barely a breath. "I—someone gave me something. I didn't know what I was doing."

Ron nodded. "Yeah. But you know, that kind of thing—it just happens at parties like that. You'll be fine."

"You should eat something," Harry added. "Come down to dinner with us. People'll forget about it soon."

"Will they?" Hermione whispered.

Will she? Because she wasn't sure she'd ever forget the feeling of being watched like prey. Of laughter sticking to her skin. Of eyes that undressed and dissected her.

She didn't belong here. Not really. She was a guest in their glittering, brutal world—and now, they'd torn her open just to see what she was made of.

The boys didn't answer. Maybe they didn't know how.

She told them she'd think about it.

She lied.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The library was dim and still, safe. She tucked herself between two ancient shelves in the restricted section and drew her knees to her chest.

She didn't hear him coming. But she felt when he approached her.

Like a cat stalking its dinner.

He was staring.

Not with pity. Not with cruelty. But something worse—something she didn't have a word for.

His hair fell perfectly across his forehead, pale and shining under the library sconces. He was impossibly clean, like the chaos of the party hadn't touched him at all.

Hermione's breath caught.

She wished he hadn't seen her like that last night—unhinged and out of place, unraveling—but it had felt so good to be in his arms. Too good. Too right.

And then—his lips.

His fingers brushed her jaw. Slid into her curls.

She could feel his breath against her—cool and minty, but laced with something darker.

His mouth was soft. Warm. Certain.

She didn't know what to do—so she let him teach her.

His kiss was gentle but deep. Like he'd waited forever for it.

His fingers slid farther into her hair.

She could feel the shape of him through the kiss. The tension in his shoulders. The restraint in the way he didn't press her back against the shelves.

When he finally pulled away, she opened her eyes slowly—like waking from a dream.

There was silence between them. Just her heart stammering wildly inside her chest.

And then—she started to laugh.

A strange, breathless sound spilled out. At the absurdity of it all.

Her cheeks were on fire.

Draco's mouth curved. "You're acting like you've never been kissed before."

"I hadn't," she replied breathlessly.

His whole face softened. And he laughed too. A low, surprised sound that felt like a secret.

And then—he kissed her again. Like he couldn't help himself.

"Come to dinner," he said quietly.

Reality was crashing back in. "I—I told Harry and Ron I'd meet them."

His jaw clenched.

The softness vanished. A shadow passed behind his eyes. Something colder. Tighter.

But all he said was, "Of course."

He stood. "I'll find you later."

And then he was gone.

Hermione sat there, her fingers ghosting over her lips, mind racing faster than her heart. The kiss lingered—warm, electric, impossible. She could still feel it, the strange certainty in the way he touched her.

But nothing else really made sense. She had been humiliated—a punchline to a joke she didn't understand. And yet... Draco had found her. He had held her, touched her like she was precious.

And now he had kissed her like she was his.

She knew she should be careful. That she should run.

But she didn't.

She just sat there, lips tingling, heart fluttering, and thought about how dangerous it was to be wanted by someone like him.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The next morning Hermione walked quietly toward Maths.

The cruel jokes had died down, strangely. No one said anything to her outright anymore. Just looks.

Then—

“Granger.”

She turned. Pansy was gliding toward her, dark hair ghosting above her shoulders in sleek bouncy waves.

“I was hoping I'd run into you,” she said, linking their arms without asking.

Hermione blinked. “I—um—Pansy. I'm so sorry. About the dress. And your shoes—”

“Don't be stupid,” Pansy waved it off, her voice light but not unkind. “I could buy a hundred more dresses. I'm not worried about the clothes.”

She squeezed Hermione's arm a little tighter.

“You're alright, though?” she asked, tone low now, a little serious.

Hermione hesitated.

Pansy's expression was unreadable. "Boys can be... intense, sometimes. Especially ones who aren't used to wanting things they can't immediately buy, steal, or destroy."

Hermione frowned. "You mean Draco?"

"I mean," Pansy said, smile vague and sharp, "just be careful. If he decides you're his, he doesn't really take no for an answer."

Before Hermione could reply, Pansy was tugging her forward again. "Come on. Don't want to be late."

They reached the classroom. Draco was already there.

And he was sitting in her seat.

He grinned when he saw her and tilted his head, motioning to the seat beside him. His pale fingers tapped the desk slowly—confident, expectant.

Hermione glanced at Ron and Harry who had just now sauntered in.

Ron's face twisted in disgust. Harry just looked confused. Like he was trying to work out what was happening and hated how little he understood.

They took a different row.

Hermione sat beside Draco. Slowly. Like she was testing the air.

"Morning, Mouse," he murmured, voice low.

"Good morning, Draco." Hermione's cheeks were pink.

He kept his gaze on her throughout the lecture. His eyes burned like coals. When she whispered an answer before the professor could even finish asking the question, he smirked.

"You're fucking brilliant."

She didn't know what to say to that. No one had ever said it like that before. Like it was something unholy. Like it made her dangerous.

At lunch, she was cornered by Ron and Harry outside the Great Hall.

Ron crossed his arms. "You're hanging around Malfoy now?"

"He's—" she started, but didn't know how to finish it.

Harry tried to interject. "We're just worried—Hermione, he's not a good guy."

"We saw him with you. He's just trying to mess with your head." Ron snapped.

Hermione's throat closed. "I—I'm fine."

"You're not fine," Harry interjected. "We just want to help."

Then the air changed—cold and thick.

Draco was there. "She said she's fine."

"Better than ever," he drawled, smirking like a cat that got the cream.

Ron's face twisted. "Piss off, Malfoy."

Draco didn't even look at him. His hand went around Hermione's waist, tight and possessive.

He looked to her. "Let's go."

She couldn't resist when he led her away. Her heart thundered in her ribs.

"Here," Draco said, guiding her forward. "Sit with us."

Theo gave a lazy nod as she approached. Blaise arched a brow.

Pansy looked pleased.

"This is Granger," Draco said to the table. "Try to behave."

"She's prettier up close," Theo muttered, grinning.

Hermione flushed.

"She's a bit shy," Pansy said fondly, "but you'll like her."

She was grinning.

Draco poured her water, his hand grazing hers. "You should hear her talk about quadratic equations."

Theo smirked playfully. "That so?"

Hermione gave a small, nervous smile. "I don't just talk about maths all day, I promise."

Daphne scoffed.

Blaise smiled. "Alright, then what do you talk about?"

Hermione tilted her head, considering. "Well... mostly everything. I'm terribly nosy."

Theo laughed.

"Not on purpose," she said quickly, cheeks pink. Then softer, "But—well—it's a wonder what you hear in the library when people think you're reading and not listening."

"Like what?" Blaise asked, intrigued.

Hermione glanced sheepishly around the table and lowered her voice. "Apparently, Anthony Goldstein told Tracey Davis he loved her in the middle of tutoring."

"Romantic." Theo drawled sarcastically.

Hermione continued. "Tracey said it back, but later told Millie she only did it because he looked like he was going to cry. She didn't want a repeat of... last weekend."

Blaise looked amused. "What happened last weekend?"

Hermione hesitated, tucking a curl behind her ear. "She didn't explain, really. Just said he got really emotional. That it kind of... ruined the mood."

Theo leaned forward, wicked and delighted. "The mood?"

Hermione flushed. "Well—let's just say that Goldstein cries during—" She couldn't finish the sentence.

"During what?" Theo teased, grinning like a maniac.

Hermione's voice was barely above a whisper. "Maths. Obviously."

He chuckled low.

"You're going to be fun," Blaise told her.

Draco's hand slipped to twirl the ends of the ribbon in her hair. Possessive. Almost reverent.

Across the room, Ron and Harry were watching.

Draco grinned like a wolf.

He leaned in close, the scent of his cologne—something dark and expensive—curling around her. His breath was warm against her ear when he whispered, "What are your plans this weekend?"

Hermione blinked. Plans? Unless Snape's upcoming chemistry assignment counted, she hadn't made any. Perhaps it could wait.

Draco didn't give her time to answer. "Come with me to Hogsmeade."

She looked at him puzzled.

"It's the nearby city," he said. "Nothing extravagant, considering we've been exiled to the wilderness of bloody Scotland."

"But they've got a proper bookstore," he added. "And a decent pub."

Hermione broke into a bright smile. "You had me at bookstore."

He smirked. "But no buying any of that bleeding-heart rubbish you usually read," he added.

She lifted a brow, a bit taken aback, incredulous. "And how do *you* know what I read?"

"You always have a book, Mouse. You think I haven't been watching?" he said casually. "You read like someone trying to fix the world. Like if you just understand enough, it might start behaving."

Her lips parted slightly, but she said nothing.

He leaned in again, his voice low. "Try Machiavelli. Start understanding the kind of power that doesn't wait to be invited in. The kind that takes up space and doesn't ask for permission."

Hermione blinked at him. "I don't know if I want to think like that," she murmured. "Like everything's a game. A war."

Draco's smile was slight. Taunting "Oh but it is."

His eyes didn't move from hers, like he was trying to memorize the shape of her thoughts before she could speak them.

"Books should make you feel," she whispered.

"They should make you dangerous," he replied.

Hermione hesitated, then looked up at him through her lashes. "I don't think you want me dangerous."

His gaze flicked down—to the curve of her pink lips as her tongue darted out to wet them.

He didn't smile this time. "I want you exactly as you are. Dangerous or not. But don't pretend you aren't already halfway there." His stare was intense.

Theo's voice cut across them, calling for Draco. And within seconds, they were locked in conversation, their laughter folding into the chaos of the table, leaving Hermione quietly to her thoughts.

She wasn't sure what to think about Draco's friends. They looked at her a bit like an experiment. A novelty. And Hermione couldn't tell if she was being welcomed or tolerated.

They weren't cruel—but there was an edge to their politeness, a performance in their warmth.

But Pansy... Pansy had helped her. Been kind to her.

Maybe they weren't quite friends. But they weren't nothing.

And Draco—Draco made her feel like she was something rare. His attention wasn't gentle. It was consuming. It should have scared her. But it didn't. Not exactly.

She felt steadier with him near.

Across the room, her eyes landed on Harry and Ron. They were her friends. She fit with them. But they had always been a pair, hadn't they?

She was more of an afterthought.

And Ron... Ron was loud. Crude. His gaze lingered too long, made her skin crawl. His jealousy wasn't subtle anymore—it pulsed off him

like heat. And Harry—Harry just looked the other way.

When lunch was over Draco reached for her shoulder bag.

“I’ll walk you to class,” he said simply.

He stood tall beside her. His pale hair caught the light, just slightly messy at the crown. She found herself wondering what it would feel like. If it would be soft or silky or cool under her fingers.

Hermione followed, soft-spoken. “Okay.”

They hadn’t even reached the doors when he suddenly turned and pulled her in by the waist. The kiss was sudden—brief but purposeful, the pressure of his mouth commanding, hot.

Someone whistled.

She flushed crimson, but it was nothing like the ache of humiliation from the party. That had been derision—mocking, sharp, cruel. Eyes like knives. This... this was something else. Something heavier.

In her periphery, she saw Ron’s face redden, jaw clenched like he might snap. Harry just looked... tired. Disappointed. His eyes met hers and held—for a second—and then dropped.

She didn’t stop. Didn’t look back.

Draco didn’t let her.

They walked together down the corridor. Her footsteps echoed beside his—softer, quicker, trying to keep up.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The week passed in a blur of stolen kisses with Draco. She had never imagined kissing could be like this—breathless and fevered

and greedy. Like drowning, and somehow wanting more.

Every time their lips met, it was like something came undone inside her. A flutter, low and deep, blooming heat through her ribs.

Draco couldn't seem to get enough. He kissed her in corridors, in alcoves. He kissed her like a man starving, like she was air.

Sometimes, when he didn't care who saw, he would tug her toward him with a sharp glance and just claim her mouth in full view of the common room. But more often, he liked the dark. The thrill of pulling her out of sight—pressing her against cool stone walls with one arm braced above her head—his hands splayed over her hips, up her spine, fingertips ghosting the edge of her blouse. His touch was firm, demanding.

She never wanted it to stop.

It terrified her how much she liked it. How much she needed it.

Because Draco still felt dangerous. Every look, every touch—too intense, too focused. Like he was trying to possess her, swallow her whole.

But she felt safe in his arms. Held. Seen.

Sometimes, when she was reading in the library, she'd look up and find him there. Just watching her. His gaze steady, unreadable, like he was memorizing the slope of her neck or the movement of her fingers across the page.

He didn't speak. He didn't have to.

Theo occasionally joined them, lounging beside Draco with a kind of elegant nonchalance. He had a dry wit, the sort that made her laugh in spite of herself. He teased her, yes—but there was something soft in it.

Blaise was quieter. Observant. A little aloof at first, but he lit up like a fuse during debates, especially in Politics. Hermione found herself drawn into long conversations with him about voting systems and constitutional loopholes. He was sharp, thoughtful, and carried himself like someone who understood how to win wars without lifting a sword.

Pansy watched everything with sharp eyes. But when Hermione caught her gaze, she'd either smile—slow and knowing—or wink, like they were in on the same strange joke.

Daphne, on the other hand, glared openly. Bitter, burning glares like knives.

Harry and Ron were avoiding her. Or more accurately—Ron was. He stared at her from across classrooms with something dark in his eyes, and when she passed him in the corridor, he muttered things she couldn't quite hear, but didn't want to. His gaze made her feel cold. He looked at her like she was something rotten. Harry just looked sad.

He still smiled when she passed, but it didn't quite reach his eyes.

By the time the weekend rolled around, Hermione was buzzing with something close to joy. Or maybe madness.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Hogsmeade shimmered under a soft, wintry sun.

The scent of old pages hung in the air as Hermione wandered through the narrow aisles of the bookshop. Draco stood beside her, unusually tense, his arm wrapped around her waist like he was holding her in place.

He hadn't spoken much on the walk there. His eyes kept flicking toward alleyways, his jaw rigid. He didn't seem at all interested in books today.

Then a man appeared.

He slipped into the store like a crack in the world—older, tall, with dark shoulder-length hair, face sharp and cold. His eyes found hers. Measured. Calculating.

Draco's hand tightened around her waist.

"Two minutes," the man said.

Draco's voice was flat. "One."

He pulled away from her, then paused, brushing a kiss to her temple.

"Stay here. Don't move."

She watched him go. Around the corner, deeper into the back of the shop, the man trailing behind him like a shadow.

They were gone too long.

She was just about to go look for him, heart fluttering, when she heard someone behind her.

"Well, look who it is," Ron's voice said. "Figures you'd be here."

Hermione froze.

He looked the same but not. His face was red from the cold and something else—something feral. His eyes roved over her, lingering in a way that made her skin crawl.

"You think you're too good for us now, is that it?" he said, stepping closer. "Too good for me?"

“Ron, please don’t—”

He laughed. “Don’t what? Don’t remind you that I was there when no one else gave a shit about you? I cared about you.”

Hermione took a step back. “You didn’t—”

“I did. I do, Hermione. But you threw it all away for him?”

Ron’s voice darkened, syrupy and mocking. “Do you really think he likes you? You’re just his little game. His conquest. He’s going to get bored and toss you aside, and when he does, I’ll be there.”

She shook her head, panic rising. “You’re scaring me.”

He surged forward.

“If you’re going to whore yourself to Malfoy, you might as well give it up for someone who actually likes you,” he snarled.

He shoved her hard against the bookshelf. Her back hit the wood. She whimpered.

Ron pressed into her, gripping her hip so tightly it hurt.

Hermione turned her face away, trembling. “Stop—Ron—please—”

He leaned in, lips grazing her neck. Biting, sucking. She jerked back, but the shelf behind her offered no escape.

“You smell so good, so sweet,” he whispered. “Bet he likes that. Bet you moan for him.”

“Don’t—”

He grabbed her chin and tried to kiss her.

Then—

“Hermione?”

Pansy.

Sharp. Clear. Like a siren.

Ron turned slowly.

She stood there in the entrance to the aisle, her face unreadable, eyes like glass.

Ron hesitated.

But then he let go.

Not before sneering, “You’re pathetic.”

He turned and left.

Hermione dropped to the ground. Shaking. Crushed. Her arms around her knees.

Pansy didn’t speak. She just crouched and touched her shoulder. And when Hermione flinched—

“I’ll get him,” Pansy whispered. “Stay here.”

Draco found her a minute later.

He didn’t stop to ask what happened. He saw her face—red and blotchy, the start of a bruise on her neck—and something inside him shattered.

He didn’t speak.

He just turned and ran.

Hermione stumbled after him, out of the shop, onto the street. It was snowing now—soft, quiet flakes that didn’t belong in this moment.

By the time she reached them, Draco had Ron on the ground.

She didn't see how it started—just the sound of bone against bone, Ron screaming, Draco's voice low and lethal.

“Touch her again, and I'll cut your fucking hands off.”

He beat Ron into the dirt. Again and again. Blood spilled into the snow. Ron tried to crawl away. Draco kicked him in the ribs. Hard.

“You don't speak to her. You don't look at her.”

“Draco—please!” Hermione cried. “Stop—he's—he's not worth it—”

She ran to them, tried to pull him back, tiny hands on his shoulders, sobbing. “Please—please—just stop—”

Ron's elbow flew blindly.

Caught her in the face.

She screamed.

And then—nothing.

Draco went still.

He turned, saw her curled on the ground, clutching her face.

“Fuck,” he whispered.

Ron stumbled away.

Then Draco was beside her. Pulling her into his arms. “It's okay. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I've got you. I've got you.”

He didn't take her to the nurse.

He took her to straight to his dorm.

The room was cold and dark. He sat her on the bed and fetched a towel damp with cool water.

She watched him in silence, as he iced her cheek, skin burning beneath the cold.

And when he leaned in to kiss her, she let him.

It started soft. Careful. His fingers ghosting over her bruises like he was afraid to break her further. But then she whimpered, and his control shattered.

His mouth crashed into hers, hot and hungry.

“God, you’re perfect,” he murmured. “So fucking sweet. I’ll ruin you, little Mouse. I swear I will.”

Her breath caught.

He pushed her back into the pillows, lips trailing reverent and desperate. “You don’t know what you do to me. You have no idea.”

Hermione gasped as his hand found the bare skin beneath her jumper.

“Mine,” he whispered. “All mine.”

He kissed her like he was claiming her.

When she looked up at him, eyes wide and dazed, he groaned.

“You’re so good. So fucking good. I’d kill for you.”

“Draco,” she whispered.

He leaned down, nose brushing hers. “Stay with me tonight.”

It wasn’t a question.

She nodded.

Then she whispered, "That man at the bookstore. Who was he?" Her fingers traced his jaw.

He stiffened.

Before he could answer—

The door creaked open. Theo stepped inside.

"Well, fuck," he said. "That's a hell of a bruise, Granger. Makes you look tough."

Hermione smiled weakly. "Thanks."

Draco didn't move. "Is it handled?"

Theo nodded. "Blaise is dealing with it. Nurse got paid. No record."

Draco grunted. "Good."

Theo gave Hermione a wink and vanished again.

Draco pulled her into his chest, wrapping his arms around her.

"You're safe now," he said. "No one touches you but me."

And somehow, despite everything—

She believed him.

All I Ever Needed Is Here in My Arms

Chapter 8: All I Ever Needed Is Here in My Arms

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

He'd shared a bed with her before.

The night of the party.

But this—this—seeing her in *his* bed, was something different.

She looked too soft for the black silk sheets. Too pure. An angel trapped in the devil's den.

He felt his the front of his trousers tightening.

He was almost constantly hard now. Miserably. Obsessively.

Every time she looked at him with those wide eyes and fluttering lashes—like he was something good—his cock strained painfully. He had to sneak into the dorms, hand tight around himself, biting his fist just to keep from moaning her name too loudly.

Because she didn't even know. How much he wanted her. How much he suffered.

He showed restraint that bordered on madness. He would kiss her senseless—pin her against the corridor wall, slide his hand up her thighs until she whimpered—but then pull back, trembling, panting like a dog, because if he didn't, he'd break her. Fuck her until she sobbed. Mark her so deep no one else would ever dare touch her.

But he couldn't. Not yet.

She was so goddamned innocent. And it fed the sickness in him like blood in water.

He wanted to worship her and devour her in the same breath.

He dragged a hand through his hair.

He couldn't touch her. Not tonight.

Not after Weasley.

He would kill him. He almost did. A blur of fists, bone, and blood, a snarl of violence that felt like coming home. He'd heard the cartilage crunch under his boot and kept going. Would have caved his skull in if—

If she hadn't screamed. Soft. Terrified.

And he'd turned to her—cupping her bruised cheek, lips trembling—and everything inside him collapsed.

She still looked so beautiful.

He'd wiped the blood off his knuckles, then wiped the tears from her cheeks. Pressed her to him. She'd buried her face in his chest like he wasn't a monster.

That was the worst part.

Because he was.

He didn't take her to the nurse. Fuck that. He didn't want Pomfrey's hands on her. Didn't want anyone touching her.

She didn't need anyone but him.

He pressed a cold cloth to her cheek.

Her legs curled under her on his bed like a kitten. Fragile. Dazed. Still blinking like she didn't understand any of it.

Then he kissed her. He couldn't help himself. Deep. Possessive. He slid his hand under her jumper and just held her there, palm warm against her belly, feeling the hitch in her breath.

"Stay with me tonight," he growled. It wasn't a question.

She nodded, lips parted. So fucking good.

But the day had been ruined before all of this.

Dolohov.

He slithered into the bookstore like the stench of old blood.

"You're not hiding very well," Dolohov said, smirking. "Or maybe you're just stupid."

Draco stiffened. "Not here."

"Lucius fucked up," Dolohov hissed, voice low. "And now you're on the hook, pretty boy."

The Malfoys had always danced on the edge of the abyss—importing illegal pharmaceuticals, trafficking weapons through shell companies, laundering dirty money through Malfoy Industries. But Lucius had misstepped. Interfered with a shipment of synthetic opiates headed to Eastern Europe. And now the British Parliament had begun sniffing too close.

The Death Eaters were not just some old boys' club—they were a syndicate, a sprawling criminal machine with fingers in global trade, finance, and murder.

"You think your name protects you?" Dolohov sneered. "We own you now. And we collect what we're owed."

Draco gritted his teeth. "What do you want?"

"A demonstration of loyalty. You've been too clean for too long. It's time you got your hands dirty. Show us you're useful. Otherwise..."

His eyes flicked past Draco.

To her.

Bent over a stack of books, completely unaware.

Dolohov's smile curved like a blade. "Or maybe your little girlfriend can help pay off your family's debt. A few weeks on the market should clear Lucius's books clean."

Draco saw red. "Don't you fucking touch her."

Dolohov just laughed. "You think this is a threat? No, boy. This is a warning."

And he left him there, shaking, fists clenched, skin burning with rage.

If they touched her, he would paint the walls with their insides.

No one would touch what was his.

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He woke up with her soft breaths warming his neck. Her fingers curled lightly in the hem of his shirt.

It made something twisted bloom in his chest.

He looked down at her. Kissed the top of her head. Her hair smelled like warm honey and fucking innocence.

She blinked awake slowly, eyes hazy with sleep. When she saw him, her lips curved.

"Hi," she whispered.

Draco didn't say anything at first. Just stared. Devoured her with his gaze.

She winced when she lifted a hand to her cheek.

"Oh god, how bad is it?" she asked, voice small.

He hadn't noticed. He'd been busy counting the freckles dusted across her nose like constellations. He dragged his thumb across her jawline.

"You're beautiful," was all he said. It came out low. Dark. A vow.

She flushed. That sweet, pink glow that drove him fucking insane. He wanted to smear that blush all over her.

She moved to sit up, eyes catching something on the bedpost.

"Is that my ribbon?" she asked, finger brushing it.

Draco smirked.

"What if it is?"

She raised a brow, still too sleepy to be indignant.

"Why do you have it?"

He leaned in, his voice a gravelled whisper by her ear. "Because those little ribbons of yours drive me insane. And every time I'm in this bed, I like to think of you."

She froze. Her breath hitched.

But he only kissed her cheek.

“Come on,” he said. “Let’s head to breakfast.”

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The Great Hall was loud.

Theo and Blaise were already at the table, mid-argument.

“We need to have another party before winter hols,” Theo declared.

“We just had a party,” Blaise groaned, rubbing his temple. “I’m still recovering.”

“That was weeks ago.”

Draco slid into his seat with Hermione. She stiffened slightly at the mention of a party.

His arm draped over her shoulder, fingers lightly stroking her skin.

Theo turned toward them. “What do you say, Drake? Fancy another rager?”

Draco’s eyes didn’t leave Hermione’s face. Her lashes were lowered, jaw tight. Still haunted by the last party, clearly.

He leaned in, kissed the shell of her ear.

“I’ll be there with you the whole time,” he whispered.

He turned to Theo. “Yeah, fine. I’ve been needing an excuse to get pissed.”

Across the table, Daphne sneered. “Let’s hope you wear more than a glorified napkin this time, Granger.”

Pansy rolled her eyes. “Shut up, Daphne.”

She turned to Hermione. “You looked stunning that night.”

Hermione smiled at her gratefully, still shy.

Theo clapped his hands. “Perfect. We’ll do it Friday. We’ll black out the whole common room, cover the windows, candles only, and bring in UV lamps. It’ll look like the end of the world.”

Draco barely heard them. He was too focused on the soft curve of Hermione’s jaw, the way her fingers trembled ever so slightly when she reached for her tea.

He needed this party.

Not for fun. Not for release.

But to distract himself. From the deal he hadn’t yet made. From Dolohov’s voice in his ear.

He needed a night where he could touch, watch, and keep his sweet girl close.

Because she was so damn soft. And the world around them was growing sharper by the day.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

Hermione had left him for Pansy’s room. Some ritual of hair and borrowed clothes, all of which tested his patience like a blade under his skin. She’d said she’d meet him there. And he had nodded—too tight, too forced. He didn’t like when she was out of his sight for long.

Draco hadn’t slept. Not really. Not since the bookstore. Everything in him buzzed like faulty wiring. His blood screamed. His nerves itched.

He downed half a bottle of whisky in four jagged gulps.

Then stalked into the common room.

Theo had kept his word. Thick blackout fabric suffocated the last traces of the outside world. The only light came from flickering candle clusters and the twisted ultraviolet strips strung like veins across the ceiling. Faces melted into shadows. Tongues and teeth glowed. Sweat sparkled like diamonds under their skin.

Draco dropped into the velvet sofa like a king descending his throne, drink in hand, waiting.

Then he finally saw her.

The last time he watched her walk into the common room like this she was a vision in white. A dove dipped in light.

But tonight—tonight she was bathed in darkness, wearing all black.

Her strapless top barely clung to her chest. Her stomach bare, tanned and impossibly soft, shimmered in the dark. Her skirt was a whisper of fabric, sinfully short.

She smiled sheepishly when she saw the look on his face.

Then she crossed the room.

And he grabbed her waist, pulled her into his lap with one sharp motion. She giggled—light, soft, utterly unaware of what she did to him.

“You’re trying to kill me, Mouse,” he whispered, his voice all gravel.

His fingers skimmed the line of her waist, just above her skirt.

She nuzzled shyly into his neck, hiding from his praising stare.

Across the room, Theo was laughing through his nose, wiping coke off from under it. Blaise had someone's lipstick smeared all over his mouth and a hand down a girl's pants.

Everything blurred at the edges. Everything except her.

Then he saw Potter walk in.

And Weasley.

Fucking parasites.

Harry's eyes landed on Hermione. Of course.

He made his way over—like he had the right.

“Hey,” he said awkward and stiff in the glow. “It’s been awhile, Hermione. Want to grab a drink?”

Draco's fingers curled into her side. Possessive. Dangerous.

Hermione touched his wrist, trying to soothe. “It’s just Harry,” she whispered, in that sweet, soft voice of hers. “I’ll be right back.”

His jaw clenched. But he let her go.

He watched her like a hawk. Like a hunter. Potter didn't touch her. But the way he looked—like he thought he knew her.

Draco ground his teeth.

Where the hell was Weasley?

Then Draco finally spotted him.

With Daphne.

His eyes narrowed.

Greengrass was whispering something to Weasley. Leaning in. Her hand brushing his pocket, slipping something in—what the hell was she doing?

Draco stood. His drink forgotten.

He stalked toward the back of the room, searching for Hermione. A sense of unease blooming into full alarm.

Daphne intercepted him before he could reach the corridor.

She blocked his path, fingers against his chest.

“Dray,” she purred. “Finally. Thought you’d forgotten about me.”

“I did.”

She laughed, sticky sweet. “You’re tense. Come to my dorm. I’ve got something new—it hits you fast, makes you feel *everything*.” She said suggestively.

“I’m not interested.”

She leaned closer. Her perfume was headache-inducing.

“Oh, please,” she hissed. “Stop pretending with that charity case. Didn’t you call her a librarian once? There’s no way she’s satisfying you.”

Draco’s face didn’t move. “Back off. Now.”

“Come on,” she whispered. “You miss me—I know you do. That mouth of hers can’t possibly compare to mine.”

He shoved her, harder this time.

“Touch me again and I’ll break every finger on your bony hand.”

Daphne's eyes went wide, then narrowed into slits. "Fine. Run along to your precious little whore. But when you finally get tired of her, don't come crawling back."

And then he heard it.

Faint. Weak

"Draco," a strained whimper.

His heart stopped.

His whole body snapped into motion.

He sprinted down the corridor, rounding the corner—and froze.

She was in Weasley's arms. Barely upright. Her legs dragged limply behind her. Her head lolled back, skirt rucked to her waist. Her knickers—pale pink—flashed in the hall light.

Her voice came again, softer. Cracked. "Draco..."

Weasley's arms tightened around her. Draco snapped.

He lunged.

"WHAT THE FUCK DID I TELL YOU, WEASLEY?"

The bastard dropped her like she burned him.

Hermione crumpled, knees buckling like a newborn deer, then flat to the floor. Her fingers scrambled uselessly to pull her skirt down. Her cheeks were wet. Her lips trembled.

She whimpered pitifully again, broken and dazed.

"Draco..."

He was already there.

“I’ve got you. I’ve got you, baby.” Scooping her into his arms.

He started towards his room, mind racing. That bitch Daphne. She must’ve slipped Weasley something to give her.

“You’re always rescuing me,” she said, voice fragile, sing-song. “I can walk you know...”

“Shhhh,” he soothed, kissing her damp temple.

“Draco—I—I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” she stuttered.

She was rubbing her thighs together desperately. Seeking friction.

Tears streamed down her face.

“It’s okay. I know. I know, sweetheart. Hold on.”

He picked up speed.

Her small hands started trailing down her thighs. A pained expression on her flushed face. Small almost imperceptible moans escaping her pink lips.

She was driving him mad.

Finally, he kicked his door open with unnecessary force.

Her back hit the sheets. Her skirt still rucked high.

Her knickers were soaked. She was aroused to the point of pain. The poisonous drug flowing mercilessly through her system.

She looked so vulnerable. Confused. Scared.

Her hands clawed at her chest like she wanted to tear her skin off.

“Draco,” she cried. “I don’t know why—it hurts—it’s—”

She writhed. Rubbed herself against the sheets. Whimpered loudly, and the sound went straight to his cock.

Her fingers started reaching for him. Her hands, so soft and delicate, were dragging hotly across the skin under his shirt.

He had never been so hard in his godsdamned life.

“Stop moving, love,” he groaned. “I’ll take care of you.”

Her body didn’t listen. Her hips bucked jerkily. Her moans were frantic now, chasing something she didn’t understand.

“Draco—please” she sobbed.

He closed his eyes.

Then—slowly—he reached for the ribbon on his bedpost.

Unwound it.

And tied her wrists with deft fingers. Like a priest preparing an offering.

He pinned her hands above her head.

“Shh. It’s okay,” he murmured. “Just let me help you.”

He leaned over her, his lips catching one of the tears that slid down her cheek. The salt of it melted on his tongue. God, the sound of her crying—soft little hiccups, so helpless—made something dark and possessive curl hot in his stomach.

She needed him. So much. Her soft thighs pressed together, her hands reaching for skin—she didn’t know what to do with herself.

But he knew.

He knew exactly how to make it better.

He reached under her, dragging down the zipper of her top, as her back arched up into him.

He slowly peeled off the dark fabric.

The cold air assaulted her bare breasts. The sensation making her gasp.

The sight of her delicate pink nipples—the smooth, tanned skin of her chest—made him moan boldly.

He grasped her, squeezing firmly and feeling his fingers dig into her flesh. Her tits were spilling out of his hands.

He was a man possessed as he lowered his mouth to them. Looking up at her as he did.

Her eyes were squeezed shut. Mouth agape.

He began kissing all over as if mapping the surface of her perfect chest with his lips.

She whined painfully.

He finally latched onto a nipple, tongue flicking, sucking lightly.

“D—Draco,” she panted.

Finally, his hands drifted lower.

“Lift your hips, love,” he urged gently, as he rid her of the fabric at her waist.

Tossing it aside, he let his fingers brush lightly over her core.

She gasped.

He could feel how wet she was even through her knickers.

He teased her slit, fingers dragging up and down.

Until he finally had mercy on her and pulled them off.

The sight of her glistening pink cunt almost made him choke.

He dipped a finger into her wetness, dragging it up to her red and swollen clit.

She cried.

He stroked her gently. With devotion. In soft little circles.

Her hips were bucking incessantly. She was whimpering his name.

He slipped a finger into her tight heat, and groaned as he felt her walls pulling him in.

He would live in her sweet cunt if he could.

Moving his finger in and out, thumb brushing over her clit, she came, chanting his name like a prayer.

He withdrew his hand, dripping in her essence.

He watched as her cunt continued to pulse around nothing. As if begging for him to fill her with something more.

FUCK—

He untied her wrists, thin red marks from her struggle adorning her skin like some sick kind of jewellery.

He kissed her softly. Stealing her heaving breaths.

Until she collapsed into exhaustion, boneless and flushed.

Draco sat beside her, staring. His heart still racing. His cock a painful weight.

He began jerking himself off, head buried into his pillow to keep from waking her.

His movements became more aggressive, frantic. His knuckles brushed against the soft skin of her stomach as he lay next to her—continuing to squeeze his aching cock with brutal intensity.

His eyes drifted to her sleeping face. His. He came explosively all over his hand. Body spasming with the force of it.

He wiped himself off with the fabric of her forgotten skirt.

Then slid them both under the covers, curling around her like a shield.

He was going to kill Weasley. No—worse than kill. He was going to peel him apart, strip him to nerves and marrow and feed him to the dogs.

And Daphne. That sick, venomous bitch.

Her claws always buried in something rotted. She knew. She fucking knew what she gave him.

They'd drugged her.

Touched what was his.

Thought they could and walk away breathing.

He'd burn the world down first.

What Have You Done To Me?

Chapter 9: What Have You Done To Me?

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

Hermione woke with the sour, silent conviction that she would never attend another party again. Ever.

Her head felt like it had been pried open and left in the rain. Her skin was flushed, tight with some strange heat.

When she turned, Draco was already awake.

He was staring at her.

Hermione flushed from the tips of her ears to the hollow between her thighs.

Everything returned in waves: the music, the panic, the desperate ache she couldn't explain, the way he held her—touched her—until she forgot her own name.

Her gaze dropped.

She was completely naked.

And Draco—only in his black boxers, his pale chest rising and falling beside her.

"I—I—" she began, scrambling for the duvet.

But he laughed, soft and unbothered.

"It's okay, sweet girl," he said, brushing his lips against hers. His voice was still husky from sleep. "Do you feel better this morning?"

She did. She shouldn't, but somehow she did. Her body had never felt so loose, so light, as though he had rung every drop of tension out of her.

She just nodded.

His eyes darkened suddenly, something furious and unholy curling behind his irises. "I want to skin them alive," he murmured, voice too calm. "I want to peel their fucking faces off. Those sick, pathetic rodents. What they did to you—"

Hermione flinched. "Please," her voice trembled. "Please don't. You have to promise not to do anything to Ron. Please, Draco. I—I don't want anyone getting hurt because of me. He won't do it again. You won't let him."

Draco stiffened.

She had seen it before. The switch. The pure, simmering rage marring his pretty face. When he bloodied Ron that day in Hogsmeade. When he spoke of his enemies like they were already dead. Sometimes his anger was so sharp, it made her shiver.

"I never want to hear his fucking name come out of your mouth again," he said sharply.

Her lips parted.

"Potter's either," he added, voice dropping to a snarl. "Where the fuck was he when while you were being poisoned, used, left alone? He doesn't deserve to breathe the same air as you."

His voice cracked with fury.

Hermione reached up slowly, brushing a lock of blond hair from his forehead, her fingers lingering in the strands. His morning hair was wild, soft and chaotic. She loved seeing him like this—unmade.

He softened at her touch.

She spoke slowly.

“Harry and I went to get drinks, and... there were so many people around. I could barely breathe. I felt something sharp—like a pin prick—in my side. He was talking to me, but the music was so loud, and my head...” Her voice shook. “It started to feel strange. The edges of my vision were getting blurry.”

She wrapped the sheet tighter around herself.

“I took a sip of my drink. I couldn’t finish it. I got dizzy. Sick. So I told him I was going to the loo. I just wanted to get away.”

Her voice collapsed.

“And then Ron found me.”

She looked away, ashamed.

Draco’s rage melted. He pulled her to him, arms locking around her like chains made of velvet. His body was solid, grounding.

“Shhh. It’s okay,” he murmured.

He kissed her cheeks. Her jaw. Her tears as they began to fall. He kissed the salt from her skin as if it was holy.

She needed him.

So much.

He was the only one who could make her feel better.

“It’s okay. You’re okay now.” His voice was low. Absolute. “You’re mine now. I’m here. And I always will be.”

Hermione shivered—but not from fear.

“I’m never leaving you out of my sight again,” he whispered.

[img:

<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Draco was different after that night.

More tightly wound. More watchful. He followed her like a bodyguard—one with wandering hands and a penchant for kissing her neck in the middle of corridors.

He waited outside her dorm in the morning, escorted her to meals, hovered outside classrooms.

When they didn't share a class together, he was even more tightly coiled. When they reunited, it was like exhaling.

He'd walk her to the library and sit there for hours, eyes fixed on her like she would somehow vanish if he looked away.

Then he'd walk her back to her dorm and kiss her slow and hard beneath the doorway, only leaving once he saw the door shut behind her—and even then, he lingered.

They hadn't yet shared a bed again.

Hermione was shy. She didn't know how to ask for things.

But her heart pounded whenever he pressed a kiss beneath her jaw, when his hands slipped around her waist, when he whispered her name like it tasted sweet in his mouth.

Everyone noticed.

Draco was acting like a dragon guarding his treasure.

Pansy watched them more tensely than usual.

Daphne had all but disappeared.

One look from Draco was enough to silence anyone. His stares were poison-tipped daggers. And they worked. Ron and Harry kept a wide, shameful distance.

Ron barely looked at her anymore. Good. He was vile. How could he have believed she owed him something? Just because he'd talked to her when no one else would?

It made her stomach turn.

Harry—she couldn't help but miss him.

But things were different now.

Her world had shifted.

Her new reality was filled with gleaming, filthy-rich boys with teeth like wolves and names that had been echoing through British institutions since the 1500s. They were entitled and unpredictable, prone to quoting Sartre while doing molly, or discussing global markets between games of strip poker.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Sometime later, she noticed a shift in him. Draco was more tightly wound than ever.

He smoked too much. His shadows deeper. He snapped at Theo. Ignored Blaise.

He looked like he hadn't slept in days—eyes bruised with exhaustion, jaw sharper, cheekbones hollowed.

She hated seeing him like this.

She had to do something.

Especially after everything he'd done for her.

After the way he held her when she cried—through every dizzying, humiliating moment. He saw her at her worst and never flinched.

She'd begged Pansy to take her roommates to the library—somewhere, anywhere else for the night.

She needed space. To make something soft. Something sacred.

She strung up battery-powered lights she'd brought from home, tucked away all term in a biscuit tin, never quite brave enough to hang them until now.

Then she drew stars.

An exact rendering of the night sky—because of course it was. She was Hermione Granger.

When she traced the Draco constellation, her mouth tilted into a quiet smile.

She drew in gold ink on thick parchment, pinning them above her bed like a secret sky.

Then she brewed peppermint and lavender tea, the kind her mum used to make when nightmares clung to her like cobwebs.

And when Draco led her back to her dorm for the night, shadows thick under his eyes, she reached for his hand.

“Come inside,” she whispered.

He hesitated.

But followed.

And stopped dead when he saw it.

The empty dorm. The glow of the lights. The paper constellations.
The steaming cups waiting on top of her dresser.

His throat moved once.

Twice.

“What... what is this?”

“My mum used make me this tea. On nights when I couldn’t sleep,” she said, voice barely a murmur. “She used to say the stars only grant wishes when there’s something warm in your belly—like they’re listening better that way.”

Draco didn’t move.

He stared up at the glowing canopy.

Then down at the tea.

Her.

“No one’s ever...” He stopped. Swallowed again. His voice cracked.
“No one’s ever done anything like this for me before.”

He stepped forward, slow.

Hermione’s heart pinched.

He sat on the bed like he didn’t trust it to hold his weight.

“My father...” He exhaled sharply. “He thought softness was weakness. Comfort was a lie you told children to keep them quiet.”

Her breath caught. She moved closer.

“My mother—” He broke off, jaw tightening. “She was... fragile. Like glass. Always walking barefoot through the wreckage he left behind.”

He ran a hand through his hair. "I used to break things on purpose just to see if they'd notice. A vase. My arm, once." He laughed, but it sounded hollow. "They just sent for someone else to deal with it. Never asked what happened."

Hermione reached for his hand.

"None of it was your fault."

She watched his face carefully, her heart aching. Of course he was like this. Of course he was obsessive and cruel and watchful. When she first met him, he had no softness at all. Just sharp expressions and cold eyes. It was like the first taste of warmth he ever got—and he wanted to burn in it. To be consumed. To never be cold again.

"You deserved so—so much better."

He looked at her like she'd stabbed him and kissed the wound.

He reached for her as if she might vanish.

"Stay with me tonight," she said. "If it would help you sleep."

And so they curled into each other under the paper stars, the soft hum of warmth filling the space between their bodies.

Draco lay on his back, one arm behind his head, the other holding her against him like she was a secret he'd bleed to protect.

Hermione rested her cheek on his chest, listening to the frantic beat of his heart.

Then her fingers began to explore him gently, as if reading him like the most delicate page. Every inch of skin beneath her touch felt alive—the sharp plane of his hipbone made her breath catch.

Her mouth followed the path of her hands, feather-light kisses pressed to places she somehow knew no one had ever been gentle

with before. The hollow beneath his ribs. The small scar just under his collarbone. The faintest freckle near the sharp line of his jaw.

She kissed it all like a prayer.

And then she looked up, eyes wide and warm.

Draco turned his face to the side as if her tenderness was too much, too bright. Like he couldn't bear it.

But he didn't stop her.

When she ventured further down, lower along the length of him, she paused. Her fingers trembled against his thighs. Her voice barely a breath.

"I—I don't know what to do. Tell me what to do," she whispered.

Draco let out something between a strangled sigh and a choked groan. His head thudded back against the headboard.

She took his reaction as motivation to continue.

She began unbuckling his belt with trembling fingers, her breath shallow as she opened his trousers, careful and slow.

His boxers strained with the shape of him.

She hesitated. Swallowed.

Draco's jaw was clenched, his chest rising and falling too fast. He looked like he was on the edge of coming undone just from her gaze, like the sight of her might break him.

"Touch it," he rasped, voice low and wrecked. "Wrap your hand around me—slow, angel."

She reached for him shyly, curling her fingers around him. He was so warm, so heavy in her hand it made her gasp.

He groaned—raw, guttural.

She began to stroke him slowly over the fabric, tentatively, her palm smoothing down the length of him and gliding back up.

The way his breath caught—how his head tipped back just slightly, the muscles in his stomach tightening—made something flutter low in her belly.

“Just like that,” he said through gritted teeth. “God, yes—Hermione. Good girl. Such a good fucking girl.”

Her touch grew more confident with every sound he made, her strokes firmer, more fluid. She watched him unravel under her hands, her lips parted in awe.

“FUCK—you can take it out—take it out.”

She looked up again, unsure. The expression on his face was devastating. Pupils blown, jaw slack.

She let her eyes wander back down. Tentatively dragged the waistband of his boxers low enough to free him.

It sprang out against his navel, impossibly thick and flushed. Her breath hitched.

Draco's hands threaded into her curls, trembling. “Just—look at me. Take it in your mouth. A little at a time, baby. That's it. Like that.”

She kissed the tip, then again. Her tongue flicked out experimentally, and he nearly buckled.

“Open wider. Fuck, you're so good—yes, like that. Let me see how those pretty lips stretch around my cock.”

Her lips wrapped around the head of him, slow, careful, so sweet it nearly shattered him. Her lashes fluttered against her cheeks, her fingers splayed on his thighs for balance.

Draco growled. “You’re killing me. You don’t even know what you’re doing to me, do you?”

She moaned softly—startled by the weight of him, the taste, the sheer heat—and the vibration made his eyes roll back in his head.

“More,” he begged, voice hoarse. “Take more of me—fuck. God, you’re perfect. You’re so good. You were made for this. Made to be mine.”

She gagged slightly, trying to go deeper. Her eyes watered. And he swore, feral, holding her hair back.

“Don’t stop. You’re doing so good, angel. Look at you. Fuck—don’t hide your tears from me.”

Her pace was untrained, but so determined. She kept going even with tears slipping down her flushed cheeks. She wanted to please him.

His hands tightened in her curls, anchoring her. “You’re mine,” he said low. “Say it.”

She looked up, lips swollen, glassy-eyed and flushed, her voice a breathless whimper. “I’m yours.”

Draco groaned like she’d stabbed him.

“Say it again,” he demanded, trembling. “Say it while you’re crying around my cock.”

“I’m yours,” she whispered against the head of him.

His hips jerked. Unraveling like thread in her hands.

“I’m gonna come—fuck, I’m gonna—can I?”

She bobbed her head, cheeks burning.

He didn't last another second. He came with a choked cry of her name, everything in him snapping, spilling hot and thick down her throat. His entire body locked up, shuddering, then collapsed.

Hermione blinked up at him, lips red, tears still clinging to her lashes, and Draco thought he might never recover.

He dragged her up into his arms instantly, burying his face in her neck, kissing her hair, whispering her name over and over.

"You're so fucking good to me," he breathed. "I don't deserve you. I don't fucking deserve you."

Her hand brushed his jaw, tender. "I just wanted to make you feel better."

"You make me feel like I could be someone else," he whispered. "Someone good."

"You already are," she said quietly, fingers tangled in his hair. "With me, you are."

He didn't answer.

His eyes stayed open long after hers shut.

Watching her chest rise and fall.

Making sure she was breathing.

Making sure she was still his.

Because something inside him had cracked and started to bloom—and it was terrifying.

But he wouldn't run from it.

He couldn't.

Not from her.

Not when she was the only thing in his entire life that had ever been kind.

Love is a Losing Game

Chapter 10: Love is a Losing Game

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

He couldn't breathe.

Not properly. Not deeply. Not without choking on it—the pressure, the panic, the pulsing weight behind his ribs that threatened to crack him in half.

His hands fisted the note.

No signature. Just five words, scrawled in rough black ink: *Meet me in Knockturn. 10:00 p.m.*

No name. Because none was needed.

He knew.

His heart thudded once, a thick, wet sound inside his chest. He swallowed back bile.

Knockturn Alley. The sewage vein of Hogsmeade.

His father had taken him once. A lesson. A warning.

And now he was being summoned back.

Draco rose, joints stiff, throat dry. He moved like a ghost through the castle. The corridors stretched and shivered in his vision, but no one would stop him—not him.

But before he went, he had to see her.

He found her in her dorm, delicate and glowing beneath the dim sconces, wrapped in her cardigan and surprise. She hadn't expected him. Her soft voice lifted with a hello—but he didn't respond. He only pulled her close. Crushed her.

His arms locked around her small body like a vise, squeezing until she gasped against his chest. Her fingers gripped his sleeves in confusion, concern.

He devoured her.

Kissed her like he was starving. Like he was trying to consume her, bruising and desperate, tongue thrusting past her lips, pulling whimpers from her throat as if her soul was something he could suck out and carry with him.

She was too soft. Too good. She didn't understand.

He kissed her until her knees buckled. Until her little hands clutched helplessly at his chest. Until her cardigan slipped off one shoulder like silk.

When he pulled back, she blinked up at him, dazed and flushed and so tragically trusting.

He didn't say anything.

Just barely whispered her name against her lips and left.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

Knockturn Alley smelled like blood and piss and rotting fruit. Each stone beneath his feet groaned like a curse.

Dolohov was already waiting. Leaning against a broken lamp post like a drunk with something worse than alcohol in his veins. The man's mouth curled in a grin when Draco approached.

“You look like shit,” Dolohov said by way of greeting.

Draco didn't respond.

Dolohov spat near Draco's shoe. “Right. Let's get to it.”

They moved into a nearby passageway.

“What do you want?”

Dolohov's grin widened. “Straight to business. Alright. We need those files.”

Draco's jaw tightened. “What files.”

“Don't be cute. Dumbledore's got something on Tiberius Nott. Something ugly. He's using it to twist arms, keep us out of the school. Thinks the kids are too violent. Like he didn't design the goddamn system to breed them that way.”

Draco stayed silent, but the words burned.

“Dumbledore's always been a problem,” Dolohov went on. “Too powerful. Too connected. He's got friends in government, international committees, watchdogs. And he's clever. He doesn't move unless he can twist the whole board beneath him.”

A pause. Then, lower, “He's trying to burn it down. The whole structure. Everything we've built. He's gutting the old families. Quietly. Slowly.”

Draco's heart was pounding now. He knew all this. Not in specifics, but in instinct. The tension. The silences in his father's voice.

“But there are other ways, if you want off the hook,” Dolohov said.

He turned, slowly. Smiling like a man picking a scab.

“I remember your pretty little girlfriend from last time.”

Draco's blood went cold.

Dolohov cocked his head, tone mockingly thoughtful. "Bet she's sweet. Bet she'd make such pretty noises if you hit her."

Draco lunged.

But Dolohov only laughed.

"Relax, boy. I'm just saying—you've got options. Let me have a go, and maybe I take it easier on you."

"Fuck off," Draco hissed. "She's not getting anywhere near this."

Dolohov brushed him off with a snort. "Alright then. You've got a week."

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

Every time he closed his eyes, he couldn't stop picturing it—Dolohov's hand on Hermione's throat. Her tears. Her small voice begging.

She was too fragile. Too breakable. And this world—his world—was sharp enough to cut bone.

He stared at the ceiling above his bed and wanted to scream.

Hermione was the only thing in his life that made sense.

That night in her dorm had undone him. The stars painted above them. Her hands—so gentle. He hadn't felt cared for like that in his life. Not once. Not ever.

When she had taken him in her mouth—

When he fed her his cock like it belonged to her, watched her cry around it, choke on it, swallow him like she was born to do it.

It had calmed him. For a moment. For a night.

But still—

Every step he took felt like a countdown to disaster.

He was violent, yes. Cruel, yes. But he'd never touched the kind of darkness Dolohov trafficked in. Never been part of blackmail or torture or execution.

And now he was going to let them in to wreak it all over the school.

He had to.

Because if he didn't, they would retaliate. And she would be the first to pay.

His sweet, brilliant girl. The one who hummed when she read. Who made little notes in the margins of her books in tiny, looping script. The girl who tried to understand everything.

He didn't deserve her.

But he would burn down the world to keep her.

If anyone tried to take her from him—he would skin them alive, keep their screams in jars, bleed them in the marble bathtub of the family estate and laugh.

He would lock her away if he had to. Where nothing could ever touch her.

She was the only thing that mattered.

The only light he'd ever known.

[img:

<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

That night she'd come looking for him. She'd caught a glimpse of him ducking into the corridor past curfew.

She recognized the man who was with him. From the bookstore. Who was he? Why was he here?

Something was wrong.

And so she'd followed—too clever for her own good.

He didn't even hear her. His tiny, delicate little mouse.

Didn't know she was there until—

She gasped.

Dolohov turned first.

Hermione blinked at them all—at the Headmaster behind his desk, gagged, with his hands bound behind his back, blood dripping from a gash at his temple.

It was supposed to be a simple meeting. *That's what Draco told himself.* Just a few men. A bit of intimidation. A warning to the Headmaster, who had grown far too bold for someone supposed to be wise. Dumbledore was a relic—untouchable in the way old kings are. The Death Eaters weren't fools. They knew they couldn't kill him outright. But they could bleed him.

He knew too much.

And now, so did she.

Hermione.

Dolohov moved.

He caught her by the hair, and slammed her into the desk. Her body folded like paper. “What did I say, boy?” he growled, eyes on Draco. “You’re useless. Just like your father. Can’t do a fucking thing right.”

Draco couldn’t breathe.

“Now we have to kill her,” Dolohov said, pulling a black pistol from his coat and pressing it to Hermione’s temple. “Fucking waste. Such a delicious little thing.”

His other hand moved down. From her throat, to her chest, to her breast—squeezing. Hermione whimpered.

“Stop,” Draco gasped. “Stop—please, wait, WAIT—”

She was crying. Her arms pinned behind her, her legs shaking, her mouth wet with tears.

“Let me have a go at her,” Dolohov said, eyes wild, “and maybe I’ll let her live.”

His hand groped between her legs.

Draco almost vomited.

His voice cracked. “Please. Just let her go. I’ll do anything. Just don’t—don’t hurt her.”

“Enough,” came a cold voice.

Lucius Malfoy.

His father emerged from the shadows. Calm. Immaculate.

“We don’t need to kill her. She’s just a girl,” he said. “It her will raise too many questions. She’s known. A good student. There will be noise. We need silence.”

“Then we kill her quietly,” Dolohov muttered.

“No,” Lucius said. “She won’t speak.”

“Because she’ll be one of ours.”

There was a pause.

Lucius turned to his son. “You’ll marry her.”

Draco’s blood turned to fire.

Hermione froze. “What?” she breathed.

His eyes didn’t leave Draco’s. “You’ll marry her. She’ll be protected. Bound by family. No outsider will question it. The old families do this all the time. Keep secrets close.”

Dolohov scowled. “She’s a fucking schoolgirl.”

Lucius’s eyes sharpened. “So were half our brides. It’s not about desire. It’s about control.”

Hermione’s eyes went wide. Her lips parted in disbelief. Draco watched the horror spread across her face like ink in water.

“No,” she whispered.

Draco’s mind fractured.

And yet—

It’s not like he hadn’t thought about it. Of course he had. Her in his bed, in his life, forever. He already owned her. But this would make it permanent.

And still. The idea made his stomach churn.

But there was no choice. Dolohov still had the gun.

And now—

Marriage.

It would mark her. Protect her. Bind her to him forever.

He thought of how she tasted. How she wept when she came. How she kissed like it meant something. How her fingers trembled when they touched his skin.

He realized he loved her. Madly. In a way that scared him.

It wasn't just obsession. Not anymore.

It was love. Real. Sickening.

And now he could keep her.

He would never let her go.

"She won't say a word," Lucius said. "Because she won't be able to."

Dolohov hissed between his teeth.

"Fine," he said at last. "Keep the slut. But if she speaks, I won't just kill her—I'll take my time with her."

He shoved her. Hermione stumbled. Draco caught her.

She collapsed into him. Shaking.

He held her like she was made of glass, and something inside him snapped.

She was everything. The only person who had ever looked at him like he was something good. Her softness undid him. Her kindness gutted him. The way she saw beauty in the world—and in him—was unbearable.

"Let's finish this," Dolohov muttered.

"Get her out of here," Lucius said.

Draco didn't speak. He just pulled her with him, down the hall, through the dark. She could barely walk. He carried her when she stumbled.

She looked up at him with broken eyes.

He kissed her forehead. "I love you," he whispered. "And now no one can take you from me."

Cold As You

Chapter 11: Cold As You

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

The grand iron gates had parted for the black car in silence, not a creak, not a groan, just a mechanical sweep across the frostbitten drive. The manor beyond was less a home and more a mausoleum—tall, cruel, vast. Stone carved like judgment, frost clinging to the edges of the marble steps. Even the sky above it seemed to know what kind of place it was. Grey. Unmoving.

Draco grasped her hand firmly as they approached, his expression unreadable. There was no warmth to the way he led her up the steps, only the sense of inevitability.

She was to be married here. *Soon.*

Inside, the manor was quiet, but not peaceful. It hummed with a kind of waiting. Not empty—never empty—but haunted by the quiet presence of legacy. Of power. Of sin.

The walls were lined with dark portraits, gold frames that gleamed like polished teeth. Chandeliers glittered icily overhead. A fire burned in the hearth, but it felt like a performance. The kind of fire that warned you it had no interest in keeping you warm.

And Draco's mother...

Hermione hadn't expected her. Not like this.

"Call me Narcissa, dear. We are to be family soon, after all," she had said, placing a cup of jasmine tea into her trembling hands.

Narcissa's beauty was elegant and refined, but so clearly forged by the brutality of her life. Every movement she made carried weight. Every word chosen like a weapon.

"I always hoped for a daughter," she said softly. "Lucius and I tried. But we were only blessed with Draco."

Hermione blinked, unsure what to say. "You raised a remarkable young man," she murmured, voice tight around the edges. "He... has more to give than most people know."

Narcissa studied her. The firelight caught a sheen in her eyes, but she didn't blink.

A pause.

"I worried," Narcissa said, her gaze far off. "That I failed him. That this family had turned him into something cold and cruel beyond redemption."

Hermione swallowed. "You didn't."

Narcissa looked at her—really looked—and something softened.

"You're not anything like what I expected."

Hermione flushed.

"You see him so clearly" she said, almost in wonder. "Not just the boy he shows the world—but what's beneath."

Hermione's voice was quiet. "He's... trying. He wants to be better."

"And you think he can be?"

"Yes."

The fire cracked.

“Then maybe I didn’t fail him after all.”

[img:

<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Later that evening, the air grew colder. Hermione was summoned to Lucius’s office.

It was a room of power and punishment. Mahogany walls lined with books and weaponry, a chandelier like the crown of some dead god casting icicle shadows across Persian rugs. A mounted stag’s head watched them from above the fireplace, its eyes glassy, its antlers like a warning.

Lucius stood behind the desk, hands folded, rings glinting like polished threats. Draco sat to his right, sharp-jawed and silent. He didn’t look at her.

“It’s not the kind of political match we were hoping for,” Lucius said dryly, not bothering with a greeting. “But she will do. She’s intelligent. Decorative. She’ll make a suitable enough wife for you.”

Draco’s expression didn’t change. “When?”

“The sooner it’s done, the better,” Lucius replied. “We’ll have it here at the manor, New Year’s Day.”

Hermione’s heart stuttered. “I—”

Lucius cut her off with a look. “Dolohov has been sniffing around all year, and the other associates are restless. They won’t be satisfied unless this happens soon and that it’s legitimate. And I wouldn’t put it past Dolohov to come for you if he thought we were bluffing.”

A silence fell.

Hermione called her parents that night, sitting on the edge of a velvet chaise, the manor looming like a cathedral around her.

“Mum?” her voice trembled. “It’s me.”

Her mother gasped softly. “Hermione! Sweetheart, what’s going on? We got your letter—are you... *Are you pregnant?*”

“No! Mum—stop!” she said, too fast, too high. “It’s nothing like that.”

“Well then what is it?” her father’s voice cut in. “You’re getting married? At eighteen?”

Hermione’s hands shook. She closed her eyes. “Draco’s family... they’re very old-fashioned. It’s complicated, and I can’t really explain everything. But I need to do this.”

“You’re scaring us, honey,” her mother whispered. “Is someone *making* you do this?”

Hermione hesitated. Her throat burned. “No,” she lied.

“Well, this Malfoy family is something else,” her father muttered.

“Are you sure, darling?” her mum asked gently. “Couldn’t it wait? Until after you graduate, after you’ve gotten into university—got a job lined up?”

She wanted to scream. To sob. To *explain*.

“Please Mum. I—I want you there. We’re getting married on the first,” she said, numb.

Her mother hesitated. “We’d have to arrange something at the practice...”

“I’ll move patients,” her father interrupted. “We wouldn’t miss our only daughter’s wedding.”

Hermione choked back a sob. “Thank you.”

She missed them. She missed her old life. Quiet dinners, walks through her neighbourhood in the evenings with a scarf pulled up to her nose. She missed the world before things bled red and silver and black. Before she learned how far power went. Before a man put a gun to her head in the Headmaster's office.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Hermione was curled up in the window seat of the sitting room, hugging her knees as the snow began to fall in a world too quiet for how loud her thoughts were.

It had only been a few days.

But it wouldn't stop replaying in her mind.

The click of the gun was soft, almost elegant. Like a piano key.

Hermione had frozen. Her heart had stuttered. And then those fingers were at her throat.

She should've screamed. But she hadn't. She'd just stood there, trembling, while the world bled out around her.

She didn't remember how they got out. Or how Draco had begged her to look at him, to breathe.

He began telling her everything. The truth about his family. The threats. The deals. The violence.

And why the engagement mattered.

"It's the only way to keep them away from you, Mouse." He'd said that again and again. "You belong to me now. They won't touch what's mine."

As if that was a comfort.

But part of her... part of her was comforted. And that scared her more than anything else.

She had been drugged. Assaulted. Humiliated. Pushed around like a pawn in some brutal, beautiful game she didn't understand. And somehow—somehow—Draco's arms were still the safest place she knew.

Because when he looked at her—

It was devotion. Worship. Madness.

He loved her.

He kept saying it like a confession and a curse.

"I love how you look at me like I'm not some fucked-up monster. Like I can be saved. Like you want me. Want me to be your ruin."

She wanted to tell him she didn't *want* to want him. But she did. God help her, she did.

Even if it meant being tied to this world forever.

She let her forehead press to the glass, the frost kissing her skin, and watched the snow dance like ashes, soft and slow.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Draco found her there later.

He didn't speak. Just crossed the room, slow and silent, like some long-limbed shadow in a dream. Then he sat beside her—close—and pulled her into his lap like it was his right.

And it was. That was the terrifying part.

She didn't resist.

His hand moved to her hair, fingers combing through her curls with unexpected delicacy. As if she were something precious he could still break.

She felt him find her ribbon—the pale blue one she'd worn all day, knotted low—and begin to wind it around his fingers. Again. And again. A slow, binding gesture. As if he were looping a leash he intended never to untie.

With one deliberate tug, he pulled it free.

Her hair spilled over her shoulders.

He kissed her.

Not gently. Not politely. But like he needed it to live.

His mouth dragged down hers, across her jaw, into the hollow of her throat. She felt his breath in her bones. His lips burned into her collarbone, her temple. She made a small, broken sound.

"Thank God you're here," he murmured against her skin, voice a frayed whisper of silk and sin. "I would've gone mad without you."

"Draco..." she breathed, already undone.

"This place is always so cold..." His voice darkened, dropped like a match in a dry field. "But now I have you here to warm me right up."

He groaned into her neck, pulled her tighter into him. Her thighs framed his hips. His hands roamed beneath her jumper, fingers sliding along her skin with greedy reverence.

Hermione whimpered, clutching at his shirt, her whole body trembling from the heat pooling inside her. His hands were everywhere—palming her thighs, teasing her waist, sliding under the band of her knickers and brushing places that made her vision blur.

“I’m glad you’re here,” he repeated, voice thick now.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen my mother so alive,” he added. “She’s smitten with you.”

Hermione flushed and buried her face in his throat.

His chuckle was low, wicked. “Don’t hide from me, Mouse.”

His hands hooked under her thighs and dragged her impossibly closer. Her jumper hiked up. His belt buckle pressed hot against her.

“What would you like to do for Christmas?” he asked, nuzzling her jaw, his mouth trailing open kisses up her throat. “Any Granger family traditions I need to prepare for?”

Hermione’s voice came soft. Breathless. “We… we usually go pick out a tree. Decorate it. With garland, and lights, and bulbs. And an angel on top.”

Draco’s mouth curved against her neck. He pulled back just enough to look her in the eyes—those gunmetal irises blown black with hunger.

“*You* are my angel, Hermione,” he said, voice like velvet dragged through ash. “We won’t need one for the tree.”

Then he kissed her again—harder. Possessive. She felt him in her teeth, in her lungs. He kissed her like a man starving, and she let him devour her.

“I’ve never decorated a tree before,” he admitted in the heat between kisses. “The staff always had it done. I’d come downstairs and it would already be there.”

Her breath hitched. “That’s—awful.”

He shrugged, like it meant nothing.

But it meant everything. She could feel it in the way he held her. Like he had never been taught how to ask for joy, only how to steal it.

“I wouldn’t mind doing *it* with you,” he said—but his voice had gone darker again.

“Decorating trees, I mean. Or maybe...” He leaned close, his breath hot against her ear. “I’ll just string you up in lights. Tie you up with tinsel. Watch you wriggle in nothing but bells.”

“Draco—” she gasped, her body already arching into his.

“I want you,” he growled, sliding a hand between her thighs. “On every floor of this cursed house. On every surface. In front of every window. Wearing nothing but my name.”

He kissed her like a threat.

“I want to unwrap you, like my own personal gift from heaven,” he whispered, “until you’re trembling. Until you forget there was ever a world without me in it.”

Hermione whimpered, clutching his shoulders. His teeth scraped down her throat.

“I want you in front of the tree, flushed and bare,” he whispered. “While the lights blink red behind your eyes. While the whole house hears you cry for me.”

She shivered violently, but not from the cold.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

When she woke, the manor was blanketed in white.

A storm had rolled through in the night, leaving everything hushed and glistening. Hermione stood by the tall glass doors, wool coat

over her jumper, mittens clutched nervously in her hands. The snow looked untouched. Pristine.

She felt him behind her before she heard him. That unsettling, magnetic stillness he carried.

“You ready, love?” His voice was low, amused. Dangerous.

She turned, and Draco was already dressed in a sleek black coat, collar turned up, pale hair tousled like frost. His boots gleamed. His gloves were leather. He looked like something pulled from a gothic painting—opulent and cruel.

She nodded.

They stepped outside.

The cold bit instantly, needles of wind against her cheeks, but he stayed close. His hand slid over her lower back, guiding her. The trees loomed ahead like silent witnesses, their bare branches dripping with icicles and frozen fog.

They walked in silence at first, boots crunching through the snow. Her breath puffed in soft clouds; his came slower, heavier.

“There,” she said after a moment, pointing to a cluster of evergreens nestled in a dip in the woods. “That one’s perfect.”

He smirked. “I’ll have someone fetch it.”

Then, his hand curled around her waist and he pulled her behind one of the taller trees.

“Draco—” she gasped with the force of his movements.

He kissed her—hard. Biting. His gloved hand slid up under her coat, beneath her jumper. Cold leather met hot skin.

She gasped.

“I couldn’t stop thinking about you last night,” he murmured. His lips brushed her jaw, her ear, the pulse at her throat. “The way you taste. The way you sound when you come for me.”

“Draco—someone could see—”

“There’s no one here.” His breath misted over her neck. “Just trees and snow and me. And I’m starving.”

He groaned, then reached beside them and broke a slender icicle from a low-hanging branch. It snapped like glass in his hand.

Hermione blinked, heart thudding. “What are you—”

He inspected the icicle slowly, then wrapped his lips around the tip. Closed his mouth over it.

Hermione’s breath caught.

He held it there, warming it with his tongue, the hollow of his mouth, until it glistened.

Draco’s eyes found hers—dark, glowing, mad with hunger.

“Don’t be scared,” he whispered. “I’ll make you feel so fucking good.”

Her back met the bark of a tree. Cold bit through her coat. His hand was already dragging her tights and knickers down, baring her to the icy air. She gasped, tried to speak—but he was already kneeling.

The icicle touched her.

She screamed—softly. The shock of cold made her hips jolt. The ice slid against her folds, teasing, circling. Not entering. Just stroking.

Her thighs trembled.

“Please,” she whimpered.

Draco smirked. His breath fanned across her, warm where the ice had kissed. Then his tongue replaced it—hot, wet, greedy.

She sobbed out a breath.

The contrast burned. The cold and heat. The sting and melt. The swirl of sensation until she couldn't tell what was pain and what was pleasure.

He alternated—ice, then tongue. Cruel, then kind. Precision, then indulgence. Her moans echoed off the trees, soft and desperate. Her mittens scraped against the bark behind her as she tried to hold on.

“Such a good girl,” he rasped, voice filthy and reverent. “Look how you're dripping for me.”

The icicle traced a slow circle around her entrance, and just as it began to slip in—he pulled back. Replaced it with his mouth again, sucking now, devouring.

She came with a strangled cry, her body convulsing, her thighs shaking against his shoulders.

Draco moaned into her.

When he looked up, his lips were wet, cheeks drenched, eyes completely feral.

“You're mine,” he growled, rising to his feet.

He pressed her harder against the tree, kissed her neck, her jaw, her mouth. His fingers slid up under her jumper again, not to tease this time—just to feel her warmth.

“You're going to stand beside me,” he whispered. “Wear my ring. Take my name. The whole fucking world will know it.”

His mouth found her ear.

“No more hiding, Hermione. You don’t belong to them anymore.”

Her heart skipped.

“You belong to me.”

The snow fell around them like confetti from a godless sky. The world was silent but for their breaths. She leaned into him—breathless, boneless—still shaking, still burning. He held her tighter.

And in that quiet, sacred ruin of snow and sin, Draco Malfoy smiled like the devil had finally won.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The next morning, a tea table was waiting for her, set with fine porcelain and silver spoons shaped like blooming vines.

Narcissa was already there, wearing cream cashmere and pearls, her pale hair pinned back with an antique comb.

“You look rested,” she said, and kissed Hermione’s cheek with a warmth that still surprised her every time.

Hermione smiled shyly. “I feel like I’ve woken up in someone else’s life.”

Narcissa poured the tea with grace honed by generations. “You haven’t. You’ve simply stepped into your own.”

And then the planning began.

It was a blur of white linen portfolios and tiny, glittering samples of fabric and flowers. Hermione tried to keep up, but it felt like standing at the edge of a blizzard. Narcissa was speaking in a language of legacy and luxury she didn’t quite understand.

“What kind of ceremony would you like?” she asked.

“I... I don’t know.” Hermione bit her lip. “Something small, maybe? Intimate?”

Narcissa’s expression softened. “We can keep it as quiet or grand as you’d like.”

“Tilly’s already sent the invites,” she added, almost absently, referring to Lucius’s assistant. “You only gave her the names of your parents. And Draco’s close friends—Pansy, Blaise, Theo...”

Hermione nodded slowly. “That’s all. That’s everyone I’d want.”

Narcissa nodded, as if she understood.

Later, she took her to her dressing room. It was a suite carved out of time itself—mirrored walls, silk curtains, a chaise that looked like it had witnessed queens. Dozens of gowns floated around her like clouds, carried in on silent arms, each more lavish than the last.

But only one stopped Hermione’s breath.

It was strapless, impossibly sleek. It clung to her body like a secret, boned and corseted. It shimmered like snow beneath candlelight, but without a single sequin or stitch of lace. Just satin. Pure, savage simplicity.

It reminded her of that first party in the common room. The way she’d trembled in Pansy’s borrowed white dress, eyes wide, mouth dry. She’d been nervous then—innocent, soft, afraid.

Narcissa’s hands adjusted the bodice with silent precision, fingers smoothing the fabric at Hermione’s ribs.

Hermione flushed at her reflection. “I still feel like I don’t quite belong here.”

“You do.” Narcissa met her eyes in the mirror. “You belong here more than anyone.”

Eventually, she ushered the remaining staff away. She curled up beside Hermione on the tufted velvet chaise more like a sister, than a mother. There were faint creases near her eyes, and for the first time, Hermione noticed the softness in them. The exhaustion too.

“Draco. I gave him everything—every advantage, every inheritance—but I didn’t know how to give him gentleness.” Narcissa mused.

“He was born into a world where love is weakness. Where vulnerability is something to be punished.” She reached out and tucked a curl behind Hermione’s ear. “But then you came along. And he looks at you like you hung the stars.”

Hermione flushed, throat tightening.

“He’d burn the world for you,” Narcissa added, voice quieter now. “I see it in him. I see it in the way his hands clench when you speak. The way he looks at anyone who gets too close.”

Hermione swallowed. “He scares me sometimes.”

“Good,” Narcissa said, with a hint of pride. “That means he won’t let anything touch you.”

Somewhere in the manor, Draco was pacing. Waiting.

And Hermione... Hermione felt a strange, secret bloom in her chest.

A hunger for the life she was stepping into.

A hunger for him.

A hunger for the name that was about to be hers.

Hunger

Chapter 12: Hunger

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

Hermione could never have imagined herself somewhere like this.

She was wrapped in a pale wool cardigan over a silk slip, her bare feet pressed to the cold, ancient marble floor—so pristine it reflected the glow of the chandelier overhead like a frozen lake. Towering above her, an evergreen tree stretched toward the vaulted ceiling of the manor’s drawing room.

Draco had been useless at first. Just standing there, watching her—until she, emboldened by the warmth of cider in her blood, handed him a box of ornaments and told him playfully, “You don’t get to just lurk and watch me do everything.”

He’d quirked a brow. Smirked.

He helped her climb up onto his shoulders to reach the higher branches, giggling as her calves tightened around him, her toes curling in the cool air. Her slip rode up shamelessly, and his hands braced her thighs with greedy reverence. The higher she leaned, the warmer his breath got, until—

“Can’t concentrate,” Draco muttered, low and gravel-edged. “Not with you wrapped around me like this. Your fucking delicious cunt so close to my face.”

She gasped. Laughed, incredulous. “Draco!”

And then—suddenly—sharp teeth sunk into the plush skin of her inner thigh. She squealed. Wobbled.

He lost balance. She screamed—but he caught her, of course. He always caught her. She landed in his arms, slip tangled up around her waist, breathless and pink-faced and glowing. He kissed her there, by the half-decorated tree. Kissed her like a man starved, kissed her until she forgot what room she was in, what century, what name.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

Christmas morning was quiet.

They were still in bed when Draco handed her a thin envelope.

“I know you hate waste,” he said, watching with pale, fevered eyes. “So I didn’t wrap it.”

Inside was a single parchment with a simple message:

A donation of £500,000 has been made in the name of Hermione Granger to:

The End Street Refuge for Women and Children

The Southbank Youth Education Fund

GreenBridge Environmental Justice Project

In honour of her compassion, her voice, and her heart.

Her hands shook.

“These are the causes I...” she swallowed. “I wrote about them. Years ago. In my school paper.”

He nodded once, jaw tight. “I read them.”

He reached across the table, brushing his knuckles down the inside of her wrist. Possessive. Reverent.

Hermione felt it before she truly understood it. This was love. Not the sort with flowers and poems. But the kind that listens. The kind that sees. The kind that cares about what you wrote when you were fifteen and furious and believed the world might still change.

She looked up, tears trembling like stars in her lashes.

“Draco,” she said, voice full and breathless and cracked, “This is—”

She couldn’t speak.

She just kissed him, slow and soft, on the mouth and the cheek and the sharp line of his jaw, until he melted under her like snow under sunlight.

Then—he smirked. “Pansy also sent you something.”

It arrived in a powder-pink box, tied with velvet bow. Hermione opened it and immediately went scarlet.

Lace. Ivory. Sheer.

A note fluttered out: “*It’s for him too, obviously. Merry Christmas. Love, Pans.*”

Draco reached over her shoulder, lifted a strap of the lace with one long finger.

“You should put it on,” he murmured, “now.”

“Draco—!”

But she was laughing, already flushed, already drunk on him. He pulled her into his lap, hands under her slip, dragging it slowly over her thighs.

“I have something for you too,” she whispered.

She handed him a small black box.

Inside was a photograph in a carved dark wood frame. Simple. Elegant.

It was a picture she’d taken weeks ago—one he hadn’t known about.

In the courtyard at dusk—Blaise and Theo had their heads thrown back in laughter, Pansy in sunglasses she refused to take off, and Draco... leaning against the wall, unsmiling, unreadable, and breathtaking.

She watched him study it.

Then she said softly, “Open the frame.”

He raised a brow. Looked at her, something stirring behind his eyes.

“Just do it.”

He did.

And found the second photo, hidden behind the first.

A Polaroid.

He froze.

Hermione.

Naked.

Her hair spilled around her, wild curls resting against her flushed shoulders.

Her wrists were bound behind her back in one of her own ribbons—soft pink silk, knotted delicately, cruelly, arching her posture forward.

She was kneeling on the bed, thighs pressed tight, back curved. The soft underside of her breasts caught the light.

It was *holy*.

It was a girl who had given herself away—*willingly*.

Sweetly.

Dangerously.

Who wanted to be owned. Kept. Worshipped.

Draco didn't move. His fingers hovered at the edge of the photograph. His jaw had gone rigid. His pupils blown wide.

She felt like she might die.

"It's only for you," she whispered, her voice cracking in her throat. "No one else will ever see it. You can burn it if you want. I just—I wanted you to have the one thing I really have to give. *Myself*."

A long, unbearable silence.

His knuckles went white. His jaw ticked. And then—

He was already on her.

Mouth on her throat, her collarbone, her chest, trailing heat and worship and filth—

"Fucking mine. *All Mine*. Look at you."

She whimpered, head tipping back. Her skin already burning. Already damp between her legs.

Her hands scrambled for his belt buckle.

"No, greedy girl," he growled. "I'm not going to fuck you."

She blinked, dazed.

He pressed her wrists to the mattress, whispering darkly against her skin.

“I want the first time you come around my cock to on be our wedding night. I want you in white. And I want to ruin you with my ring on your finger.”

Her heart spasmed. Her hips lifted of their own accord, seeking friction.

“Shh. Don’t worry, baby.” he smirked against her chest, “I’ll still take care of you.”

He slipped one finger inside her. Slow. Cruel.

She cried out, hips jerking.

“So fucking tight,” he murmured, watching her fall apart. “You can barely take my finger, sweetheart.”

He added another. Her body clamped down, trembling with sensation.

He dragged them slowly in and out of her soaked heat. “Such a good girl for me. So good. Open up. Let me have you. Let me stretch you nice and good for my cock.”

She was gasping now. Hands gripping the sheets. He crooked his fingers just right—dragging them along that devastating spot inside her—and her whole body arched. The pressure was molten. *Too much*. Not enough.

“Draco—oh my god—”

“That’s it. You’re going to come on my fingers like a good little slut. You love this. You love how filthy I make you feel.”

She nodded helplessly, breath broken.

“Say it,” he demanded, lips brushing her ear.

“I— I love it,” she whispered. “Please—don’t stop—”

“Good girl.”

But just before she was about to come undone, her trembling hands dipped into his waistband. Her fingers found him—hot, heavy, twitching in her palm. He hissed.

She stroked him slowly, trembling, wet and desperate, dragging her thumb over the head, teasing him back as her legs began to shake.

He cursed, forehead falling to her shoulder.

“Fuck, you touch me like that, I’m not going to last. You want to come with me, angel? All over my fingers while you milk my cock with your little hands?”

She whimpered something unintelligible. He growled and shoved his fingers deeper. Her vision went white.

She came with a cry, body clenching, hips stuttering against his hand.

He followed a moment later, panting, broken, spilling hot across her stomach, her thighs, the sheets.

His breath still hadn’t evened when she scooped up a bit of the thick cum painting her belly—brought it to her lips—and sucked her fingers clean with wide, reverent eyes.

“Hermione—” His voice was strangled.

She giggled.

Actually giggled. And stormed off to the loo with his come drying on her thighs and his voice wrecked behind her.

And Draco lay back on the bed, half-blind, heart stuttering, a ruined man.

[img:

<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The wedding was in the ballroom.

Candles flickered in wrought iron candelabras, their flames casting shadows against obsidian floors and towering mirrors. The flowers were white. White lilies. White roses. The floor glowed. The music was brittle, baroque, unrelenting.

Lucius had filled the back rows with what he called his “business partners”—men in tailored coats with cold eyes. Here to see that Lucius’s promise was fulfilled.

Dolohov was, mercifully, absent.

Theo, Blaise, Pansy, and Daphne arrived late.

“Do we object now or after the vows?” Theo asked, slipping into a chair with a grin.

“Now,” said Blaise. “More dramatic.”

Pansy rolled her eyes. Daphne looked like she smelled something sour.

Her parents were already seated. Her mother’s hair was pinned in soft waves, eyes glassy with the effort of calm. Her father’s hand trembled slightly as he held her mother’s in both of his, knuckles white, jaw set. They looked like people watching their daughter walk into a fire and praying she’d emerge unscathed.

But Hermione wasn't looking at them.

Her eyes went straight to *him*.

He was in a matte black suit. Tailored within an inch of sin. Sharp as a razor, dark silk lapels that caught the candlelight like a promise. No tie. Just the violence of restraint. The collar undone at his throat like a threat. His posture perfect, predatory.

And his eyes.

Cold fire. He watched her walk like a man his tracking prey.

Her breath caught—audibly. As if the sheer sight of him had taken something from her.

The world narrowed as she reached him. Time splintered.

His hands were pale, cold, elegant, dangerous—when he took hers.

The touch was soft. His thumbs brushed the insides of her wrists. Worshipful. Like he was learning her pulse for keeps.

She thought she might collapse.

He didn't smile.

When the officiant asked them to repeat the vows, he said her name like it wasn't a name at all.

"Hermione."

It sounded like a curse.

And when he leaned in, voice low and cracked and laced with venomous devotion, he whispered—

"You're never getting away from me, Mouse."

She didn't flinch.

She *burned*.

And the room, the world, the ceremony—they all dissolved into that one look, that one vow, that one impossible moment.

Where a girl with trembling hands and a boy with a bloodstained name said *yes*.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

In their room everything was glowing low and gold. The bed was turned down. The lights dimmed. And he was standing in front of her.

Draco.

Her husband.

The buttons of his shirt already undone. His collarbones sharp. His mouth unspeakable.

He looked like sin, and she felt so small. She was trembling in her dress, the silk of it clinging to her skin like water. Her curls had fallen loose. Her cheeks were still pink from champagne, from nerves, from the way his hand had held hers through every vow and every kiss and every look that had made her dizzy.

She stood before him, almost shy.

He reached out. Cupped her face with a tenderness so at odds with everything else about him. His thumb brushed the corner of her lip.

"You're mine now," he murmured, voice molten and low. "In every fucking way that matters."

She gasped as he stepped closer. His hands moved slowly, almost reverently, to her shoulders. He began unfastening the buttons at the back of her dress, each one undone like a secret. It took time. Painful, exquisite time.

"I've imagined this," he whispered into her hair. "Every fucking night since I first saw that bloody red ribbon in your hair. You. My sweet little virgin bride."

The dress slipped down her arms. Her nipples peaked from the cold. She flushed, and his eyes darkened as he stared.

"You're already trembling. You know what that does to me, don't you?" he murmured, dragging his knuckles slowly down her side. "I'm going to make you beg, Hermione. Make you sob for it."

She swallowed hard. Her thighs clenched.

His lips trailed down her neck, slow and possessive. His hands were on her waist. Her hips. Her thighs. He sank to his knees before her, mouth brushing just above where she needed him most.

"I want you to remember this," he said. "The moment your husband ruined you."

He peeled the lace of her knickers down. Her knees nearly gave out.

Draco's breath hitched as he stared, groaned low in his throat. He kissed the inside of her thigh once. Twice. Then bit, hard enough to leave a mark.

She whimpered, hands in his hair.

He didn't touch her where she wanted. Not yet. Instead, he lifted her and laid her out on the bed, climbing over her, caging her in with the sheer mass of him. His fingers brushed over her centre, teasing, circling, never giving her what she needed.

"Draco," she gasped, voice desperate.

"What is it, wife?" he whispered, nuzzling against her throat, fingers finally dipping just enough to make her gasp. "Say it."

"Please—I need—"

"Tell me what you need."

"You."

He chuckled darkly.

His mouth kissed down her chest, teeth grazing sensitive skin, his breath hot and cruel.

"You're going to take all of me tonight," he whispered. "Even if it splits you open. Even if you cry. Even if you can't breathe—I'm going to bury myself in my sweet little wife and never come out."

Her breath was ragged. Her legs shook.

But she wanted him undone too.

Her hand, shaking but certain, reached for him. Found him already hard and leaking.

She wrapped her fingers around him and stroked, slowly.

Draco's eyes snapped shut. He cursed under his breath.

He growled low. And then—he was between her legs.

She felt the blunt pressure of him, thick and impossibly hot, nudging at her entrance.

He didn't give her time to think—

With one sharp thrust, he was inside her.

She screamed.

The stretch was unbearable. White-hot. Her hands clawed at his back, her thighs clenched, breath punched from her lungs.

“Good girl,” he gasped, face buried in her neck, sweat beading on his skin. “You’re taking it so well, so fucking tight—”

Her eyes watered. Her body adjusted. Slowly. Barely.

When he finally pulled back and thrust again, she sobbed—but not from pain anymore.

“Look at this,” he whispered.

He reached down and pressed on her lower stomach.

“Fuck—Hermione—I can see the shape of my cock pushing inside you.”

The pressure was unbearable. She screamed again. And clenched around him like a vice.

He started moving faster. Harder. His pace was unrelenting, his grip bruising, every thrust a command.

He pulled back just enough to grab her jaw, fingers digging in. “Open your mouth,” he snarled, breath ragged. When she did, he spat—quick, filthy, frantic. “Good girl,” he growled, voice breaking.

Then his fingers shoved past her lips, deep, rough, until she gagged around them. He hissed, yanking them free, slick with spit and desperation.

He didn’t waste a second—his slick and wet hand dropped between her thighs, rubbing her clit with a brutal, relentless rhythm.

“Come for me,” he demanded. “Milk my cock with your virgin cunt. Be a good little wife for me—”

She shattered around him, thighs locked, mouth wide open but no sound coming out. Eyes squeezed painfully shut. And he followed with a strangled grunt, spilling deep inside her, still moving as he groaned her name.

She felt him pulse inside her, again and again.

Her whole body trembled.

She didn't even realize she was crying until he reached up, kissed her wet cheeks, and whispered, "You're the most beautiful thing I've ever fucking seen."

He stayed inside her for a moment. Then pulled out slowly.

She gasped as his come spilled from her. He watched, fascinated. Possessed.

Held her legs open and just stared. As she twitched with the aftershocks and his essence leaked out of her in spurts.

Then grabbed his shirt from the floor and wiped her gently. Then himself.

Afterwards, he pulled her into his arms. Pressed his mouth to her hair.

"Fuck, Hermione—" he whispered. "I'm going to fuck you every day for the rest of your life."

And then he kissed her.

Like it was the first time.

Like it would never end.

Wicked Game

Chapter 13: Wicked Game

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

Draco lit a cigarette with fingers that trembled slightly—not from nerves, but from restraint. Every second he spent away from her was starting to feel like a punishment.

He barely turned when Mulciber appeared beside him. One of his father's oldest business partners. The man reeked of clove smoke and rot, smiling like a vulture.

"You'll be at the warehouse next month," he said flatly, eyes scanning the crowd. "Shipment's coming in heavy—opium, arms, high-stakes. Your father said you're ready."

Draco exhaled slowly. "Did he?"

"You did good. Tiberius is clear," Mulciber said, voice low and full of gravel. "Dumbledore's got nothing. Files disappeared."

He clapped Draco's shoulder once, hard enough to sting.

"Nice job, boy." His mouth curled. "And looks tonight like you'll be getting a nice reward... sweet little thing in that dress."

Draco jawed clenched.

Then Mulciber laughed and drifted off, muttering something about *young blood* and *tight little brides*, but Draco wasn't listening anymore.

The moment the bastard mentioned *her*, he tuned out. Because Hermione was standing across the room, champagne glass barely

touched, curls tumbling loose, her white gown hugging every soft, perfect curve. She was smiling, shyly, at the floor. At nothing.

Mine.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

He took his time undressing her. Not because he was gentle. But because he wanted to *savour* it.

Every button down her spine felt like a promise. Every inch of satin peeled away was a piece of restraint stripped from his body. She stood before him, pink and trembling, and he swore he could smell her nerves—heady and sweet and *ripe*.

He cupped her face, and she leaned into it with so much trust and affection. Sweet little fool.

She whimpered when he touched her. A sweet, startled noise. His favourite fucking sound.

But even as he teased—slow, circling, drawing it out—he knew he wouldn't last long. Couldn't. Not with her legs spread, her eyes wide, her innocence gleaming like blood on snow.

And when she reached for him—brave, soft little hand wrapping around the base of his cock—he snapped.

He shoved into her with a brutal thrust, and *fucking hell*, the sound she made—

She screamed.

And he didn't stop.

The stretch of her around him was unbearable. Tight. Raw. Wet. It dragged a guttural sound from deep in his chest. He barely gave her

time to breathe before thrusting again, harder, more frenzied.

She clawed at him. Sobbed. Cried. He kissed every tear and whispered filth against her open mouth.

"Look at this," he growled, pressing a hand to her stomach. "You feel me there? See it? That's me inside you. That's your cunt stretched to take your husband's cock."

His thrusts turned feral.

She was limp beneath him when he came—wrecked and beautiful. He growled her name into her neck as he emptied himself inside her, every last drop hot and claiming.

And then he held her open.

With his ringed fingers on her thighs, wedding band catching in the low golden light of the bedroom, he watched—mesmerized.

His come slipped out of her in thick, wet spurts. She twitched with the aftershocks, eyes glassy, lips parted.

He just stared.

Soaking it in.

He wanted to fill her again. And again. Until she *kept* it. Until no one could ever *not* know she was his. Breeding her. Marking her. Knocking her up so thoroughly there'd never be a question of who she belonged to.

But she wasn't ready for that. Not yet. She was already so overwhelmed. Fragile and sweet, curled against his chest like she still couldn't believe they were now husband and wife.

So he didn't say it.

Didn't tell her how much he wanted to own her womb the way he now owned her.

Instead, he kissed her temple and whispered soft praises "*You did so well,*" and "*You're perfect,*" even as he stared down at her ruined body with sick satisfaction.

She was completely, and utterly his now. His bride. His property.

And he would protect her. Worship her. Cherish her.

And fuck her senseless every day of her life.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

He woke before dawn, heart pounding like he was being hunted—but it wasn't from fear.

It was *her*.

Hermione was curled against his chest, bare and soft and warm with sleep. And all Draco could do was stare. Stare and *feel*—the ache in his chest, the fire in his veins, the way his cock pulsed just from the sight of her.

She looked obscene in his bed. Too perfect. His innocent little wife.

And *fuck*, those tits.

He couldn't stop looking. Couldn't *not* touch.

They were full and heavy, soft in a way that made his hands itch with need. Her nipples were still tender from the night before, marked and used, and he wanted to do it all over again. Harder. Deeper.

He hovered over her like a starved animal, breathing heavily as he let his fingers ghost over the curve of chest. She twitched in her

sleep, barely stirred.

So he opened his mouth and sucked her nipple between his lips.

She whimpered, waking slowly, lashes fluttering. “Draco?”

He groaned, sinking his teeth in lightly. “You’re unreal,” he muttered against her skin, voice rough, guttural. “These tits—fuck.”

He nipped her again, harder this time, and she gasped, squirming.

“That’s it,” he growled. “Look at you—my perfect angel. Fucking made to be ruined by me.”

He rolled on his back, yanked her on top of him, ignoring her sleepy protest.

“Get on top,” he ordered, low and dangerous. “Right now. I need to see those tits bounce while you ride me.”

She blinked, dazed and flustered, straddling him with uncertain hands on his chest. Her thighs trembled as she tried to position herself, still sore from the night before.

But he didn’t let up. He gripped her hips hard, dragging her down onto his cock inch by inch, hissing between his teeth when she sank around him.

Fucking tight. Fucking perfect. Fucking his.

“That’s it,” he groaned, eyes locked on her as she moved. “Show me. Let me see what’s *mine*.”

She moaned, arms trembling as she tried to keep rhythm.

“Such a good girl for me,” he gritted out, eyes devouring her every bounce. “You’re taking me so well, baby.”

He cupped her tits again, squeezed, slapped them lightly. She gasped, breath hitching, and he laughed—low and filthy.

“You love this,” he said, cruel and reverent. “You *love* when I touch you like this. You were made for it, baby. These tits, this body, this cunt—*all mine*.”

She was unraveling already, face buried in his neck, breath catching.

“You want to come?” he snarled, fucking up into her now, using her body like it belonged to him. Because it did. “Say it.”

“Draco—” she moaned, helpless.

“Say. It.”

“Please,” she choked, broken and perfect. “Please, I want to come.”

He snapped, rolling her under him, pounding into her like he had no sanity left.

“You’ll come when I tell you,” he growled, dragging his teeth down her throat. “You breathe when I *let* you. You’re *mine*, Hermione. Every fucking inch.”

He was barely hanging on—

“Come for me, angel. *Now*.” He growled.

And when she came, wrecked and crying his name—he came with her. Chest pressed to hers, mouth against her skin, whispering, “I love you. I love you. I love you. I’ll kill for you.”

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

The winter holidays ended too fast. There was no honeymoon—how could there be? The wedding was rushed. Political. Shadowed by

the Death Eaters and veiled threats.

Still, it hurt to leave.

His mother had taken to Hermione like snow to frost. Narcissa clung to her at the gates, eyes soft in a way Draco rarely saw. “You keep him in line,” she’d whispered, pressing a kiss to Hermione’s temple. “And write to me.”

Draco felt a stab of guilt as they walked away. His mother would be alone again. With Lucius. And Hermione’s absence would only make the manor colder.

But they had to go back. Back to school, to everything that was somehow exactly the same—except now, everything was different.

Hermione never went back to her dorm.

She lived in his bed now. In *his* space. His territory.

Her belongings had slowly begun collecting in his corner of the room. Her books spread like ivy across the desk they now shared. One of her cardigans hung off the back of his chair, and he found her slippers tucked under his bed next to his shoes.

No one really mentioned anything. There was just an almost imperceptible shift. A realignment of the school’s quiet, ruthless social hierarchy. Hermione Granger was now Malfoy’s wife. And that meant something.

To everyone.

Theo and Blaise, of course, were insufferable.

“How’s the missus, Malfoy?” Theo grinned one morning over breakfast. “You shag her through the Chemistry exam too, or did you actually study for once?”

“I tutored him,” Hermione replied cheekily, barely looking up from her textbook.

“Oh, *tutored*,” Blaise said, raising a brow. “That what we’re calling it now?”

Draco just smirked, leaning back in his chair. “She’s an *excellent* teacher. Very... hands-on.”

Hermione turned pink, but didn’t deny it.

She still flushed beautifully when Draco said filthy things to her. Still looked too innocent for what he did to her every night.

There were days when Draco woke up early just to look at her. To make sure she was still there.

Nights when she shifted in his arms and murmured his name in her sleep, and something in his chest clenched so hard it hurt.

He still walked her to every class. Waited outside every door. Kept a hand on her hip or the small of her back in crowded corridors like a silent warning to anyone who might forget who she belonged to.

She was adjusting.

But Draco? Draco was drowning in it.

Utterly obsessed.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

They were supposed to be studying.

That was the deal. A quiet hour in the back corner of the library, no distractions, no touching—Hermione’s rules, of course. She’d said it with a tight little frown—clearly displeased with his endless

distractions—pulling out her notebook and ridiculous number of coloured pens, sitting so close to him in that fucking delicious pleated skirt.

She didn't know what she did to him just by existing.

Her leg brushed his under the table. Innocent. Barely there. And then she leaned over, reaching for one of her books—her soft chest grazing his arm in a way that was *absolutely* not accidental.

He saw the flicker of a smile she tried to hide.

Draco's lips curved slowly.

Oh, sweet little mouse. Bad move.

With no warning, he hooked an arm around her waist and dragged her into his lap. She squeaked, breath catching as he pressed her down—hard onto his thigh, muscles flexing beneath her. She squirmed instinctively, trying to protest, but he grabbed her hips with both hands and held her still.

He grinned. "That was cute, what you did just now. Real subtle."

"I wasn't—"

"Shh. Don't lie to me," he murmured.

"Draco—stop—what are you doing?" she whispered, breathless.

He leaned into her ear. "Revenge. For always driving me fucking insane. With your fucking ribbons, and skirts, and tits—"

Then, lower, "You're gonna fucking ride my thigh. Rub your pretty little cunt on me so you know what it feels like—how it feels to be so desperate—" he pushed her down harder, dragging her hips roughly against him— "every—fucking—time you look at me."

Her head whipped around. "Someone could see—"

“Good,” he murmured, guiding her hips into motion. “Let them.”

Her hands gripped his shoulders, trembling. Her face turned scarlet, eyes darting toward the edge of the bookshelves—but she didn’t stop moving. She *couldn’t*. Not with the way he held her. Hands firm on her hips, forcing her to feel every inch of him, every flex of muscle. “That’s it, baby. Take what you need. Make a mess of me.”

And she *did*—right there, in his lap, her face buried in his neck to muffle the sweet sounds she made. He felt it when she came, the way she clenched and stilled and *shuddered*, legs twitching around him.

He stroked a hand up her spine, savouring how soft she was after.

“You’re dangerous, you know that?” he murmured, mouth brushing her cheek. “Tease me like that again, and I’ll fuck you under this table next time.”

She pulled back just enough to glare at him through her lashes—but her smile gave her away.

“You’re insane,” she whispered.

Draco smirked. “And you married me.”

She rolled her eyes, trying to collect her things again with shaking hands, and he let her—*barely*. Kept one arm wrapped around her waist, thumb stroking her ribs, just to remind her who she belonged to.

“Still got fifty minutes of study time left,” he said, deadpan. “Want to practice *oral* comprehension next?”

She threw her pen at him.

He dodged it—barely—laughing sinfully.

And then he kissed her cheek affectionately, watching as her face slipped back into a mask of focused determination.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

He'd told her not to follow him. That he was only going to be gone for less than an hour.

He'd told her *specifically*—don't get curious. Not when one wrong step could mean a bullet in the back of the head.

And yet.

There she was.

Tucked behind a pillar. Wide-eyed. *Shaking*. Her curls a mess, cardigan slipping off one shoulder, like she hadn't just wandered into the mouth of the lion's den. Like she hadn't *almost died* last time she got too close.

She didn't know that Dolohov had been *seconds* from walking back out. That his mood had been black, that he'd mentioned her—her *name*, like he was still thinking about her.

And if he'd seen her?

Draco didn't know if he could've stopped it.

He watched her from the shadows. Watched the stupid, brave, reckless tilt of her head. Watched her sneak closer like she was in some school play and not a goddamn war.

She was going to get herself *killed*.

And he—

He saw red.

When Dolohov was finally far away—

She didn't get a warning. He *grabbed* her. A fist in her sweater. Dragging her all the way back to their room, door slammed so hard the frame cracked.

"Are you fucking insane?" His voice came out strangled. Half-shout, half-sob.

She blinked at him, stunned. "Draco—"

"No." He was shaking. Shaking. "What the fuck were you doing?"

"I was—I was worried—I didn't want you to be in any trouble, and I just—"

"You just *what*? Thought you'd tail a known killer?" His voice cracked. "You thought it'd be fine this time, that maybe Dolohov wouldn't remember what it felt like to hold a gun to your fucking head?"

Her lips parted, but he was already in motion.

He shoved her against the wall.

Her breath caught. "Draco—"

"You are the most precious thing in the fucking world to me," he snarled, his breath hot against her skin. "Do you get that? Do you actually understand what that means? Because it doesn't seem like you do."

"I do—Draco—I do!"

"No, you don't. You wouldn't have followed me if you did. You wouldn't have been anywhere near him. That man would've killed you just to send me a message. You can't do shit like this, Hermione. You don't get to be brave."

His grip tightened on her, jaw clenched like he might snap his own teeth.

“Not if it puts you in danger. Not when you’re *mine*.”

Her eyes were wide, glassy.

“I love you,” he breathed, shaking. “I love you so much it makes me fucking sick. I wake up every day terrified something’s going to take you from me. That someone’s going to touch you. Hurt you. That I’ll blink and you’ll be *gone*.”

He dragged her toward the bed.

“And you—you just—walked right into danger. Like it’s nothing. Like I’m nothing.”

Her knees hit the edge of the mattress. He forced her face-down.

His voice dropped to a growl. “So now I have to make you remember. What you are. Who you belong to.”

Her breath hitched.

Draco bent over her, fists pressed into the mattress beside her head. His body was vibrating with adrenaline, desperation, *rage*.

“I’m not doing this to be cruel,” he said low, trembling. “I’m doing this because I fucking love you. Because I can’t survive the thought of losing you. So I need to *burn* it into you.”

She gasped as he grabbed her hips.

“That you’re mine. That your life isn’t just yours anymore.”

And so he made her *feel it*. His fury. His devotion. His fear masked as fury. His obsession.

He ripped down her skirt and knickers—tearing the seams—in one aggressive tug.

Then his hand cracked across her arse—loud, sharp, but measured. A jolt. A warning.

She gasped. Shaking.

“Count,” he growled.

“W-what—?”

Another slap.

“*Count.*”

“O-One.”

Again.

“Two.”

And again. Each strike harder. Measured. To mark. To claim.

“Three.”

By five, her eyes were glassy. Her voice broke. She was screaming and sobbing.

Her round cheeks were a sick shade of red. He could see the shape of his hand slowly fading into her flushed skin. And Draco groaned loudly.

But he wasn't done.

He flipped her onto her back, spread her open. She was wet. Shaking. Needy.

His voice rasped against her skin. “You want to make reckless choices? Then I’ll remind you what happens when you don’t listen to your husband.”

He devoured her.

Fingers, mouth, tongue—over and over. Brought her to the edge, pulled her back. Again. And again.

Until she was sobbing, screaming, begging.

“Draco—please—I can’t—”

“Yes, you can,” he growled. “You will. You’ll come for me, Hermione. You’ll come until you remember who the fuck you belong to.”

And she did. Twice.

Then again.

And this time, he thrust his fingers into her with reckless, brutal force, endlessly abusing that spongy spot deep inside of her.

She screamed, trying to pull away.

But he kept going, holding her down, pressing hard on her lower stomach so he could feel his fingers curling aggressively against her inner walls.

“DRACO—please—no—I’m—nurghhh—”

She gushed all over his hand, the sheets, a steady stream of hot liquid pouring out of her.

She was broken, soaked, and trembling in his arms, hiccuping into his chest.

Only then did he pull her close. Wrap around her like armour. Fingers in her hair, lips against her temple.

“Shhh. It’s okay now, sweetheart. I forgive you,” he whispered, softer now.

And then added with more intensity, “But I swear to God—if you ever do something like that again...”

He didn’t finish the sentence.

He didn’t have to.

She buried her face in his neck, sobbing, and he rocked her like something fragile.

Like something *precious*.

Because that’s what she was.

His most sacred thing.

She cried for long afterwards. And he held her through it, continuing to stroke her hair, whispering that he loved her more than anything. That she was his entire world. That he couldn’t survive if anything happened to her.

That he *would* destroy anyone who tried.

And that was a promise.

Tainted Love

Chapter 14: Tainted Love

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

She woke up in pain.

The kind that settled deep—bone-deep, soul-deep—like she'd been cracked open and only just stitched together again.

The early morning light spilled through the curtains in watery gold, but she couldn't feel its warmth. Not really. Not with her thighs trembling beneath the sheets, not with her muscles aching like she'd been thrown through a storm. Her breath hitched as she shifted, the burn on her backside flaring up—hot, tender, the ghost of his handprint still scorched into her skin.

She winced. Bit her lip. Swallowed down the noise.

Last night played like a fever dream behind her eyes—Draco's voice like broken glass, fury rising off him like smoke, his hands shaking with rage as he held her down, made her take it. Every strike had landed with terrifying precision. Not out of cruelty. Not even truly out of anger. But because he had been *terrified*.

Because she'd scared him.

And somehow, heartbreakingly, that made it worse.

She hadn't meant to follow him. She just—she couldn't help it. Something had felt wrong.

And she'd paid for it.

He hadn't hit her in anger. Not once. But he'd *punished* her. Dominated her. Bent her over and forced her to feel it—to remember that she mattered too much to him to be reckless.

Her cheeks burned with the memory.

She could still hear his voice, hoarse and choked, whispering against her neck afterward. And she had cried into his chest, soft hiccupping sobs as his hands stroked her hair and he rocked her like she was breakable.

Maybe she was.

She curled tighter into the sheets. Her arse still throbbed, skin burning from the memory of his palm. Her thighs pressed together instinctively. She was raw. Shaky. Marked.

But she wasn't afraid of him.

She never had been.

What scared her was the way she had *wanted* it. Needed it. Needed him to claim her like that.

She didn't understand it.

Didn't understand herself.

Because even now, even sore and aching and wrung out, she loved him. More than she'd ever thought it was possible to love anything.

And that terrified her most of all.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

He'd kissed her goodbye in the library. Brushed the hair from her cheek with a tenderness that made her ache more than his hands

ever had.

“I’ll be gone an hour,” he murmured. “Just some business with Theo and Blaise. Don’t stay too late. Promise me.”

She’d nodded. He kissed her temple like it was holy. Sacred.

She had meant to go straight back to their dorm.

But her mind wouldn’t stop racing.

So she walked instead. Through the cold marble corridors. Past the windows fogged with frost. Her legs were still shaky, her steps hesitant.

She didn’t expect the ghost in the hallway.

“Granger.”

Hermione flinched.

Daphne Greengrass stepped from the shadows like something out of a nightmare—sleek and cruel and smiling like a snake. Her uniform blazer was cinched tight, unnaturally blonde hair twisted into a perfect knot, her eyes bright with some kind of secret.

“Got a second?”

Hermione hesitated.

Everything in her screamed *no*. But she’d always been polite. Too trusting. Too kind.

So she nodded.

Daphne led her down a side hallway, quieter than the rest. Hermione’s nerves prickled.

“Where are we—”

“Just... a walk. Girl talk.” Daphne said, voice like silk over venom, and turned.

She smiled. Her lip curled.

“You really think he loves you?”

Hermione blinked.

“What?”

“Malfoy,” Daphne said, drawing the name out like it tasted bitter. “You actually think it’s real?”

“I—of course—what are you talking about?”

Daphne’s smile didn’t reach her eyes.

“I used to think you were smart.”

Hermione’s spine stiffened.

Daphne leaned in. “You remember that first party? The one where you danced on the table like a little whore in front of the whole school?”

Hermione’s breath stilled. Her stomach twisted.

“Don’t—”

“You were high. Off your tits. Remember?”

Hermione’s throat tightened. She did. God, she did.

“You think that was an accident?” Daphne purred. “You think it *just happened?*”

Hermione shook her head. “He—Draco—he helped me. He carried me out—”

“He *planned* it, you pathetic, naive little moron.”

Hermione froze.

Daphne’s eyes glittered. “He told Blaise to give you the pill. Told us all to make sure you took it. Said you needed to be taught a lesson. Said you were a self-righteous, prissy little swot who didn’t know her place.”

“No,” Hermione whispered.

“Yes.” Daphne’s voice turned sharp. “He watched you. Watched you stumble, shaking your arse like some pathetic joke. We took *pictures*. Everyone saw. Everyone laughed. And he just stood there. Because it worked. You were *humiliated*. Just like he wanted.”

Hermione shook her head harder. “Stop—”

“He *used* you,” Daphne said. “Comforted you after. Wormed his way in like a twisted little knight in shining armour. Like some tragic protector. But it was always about control. You never meant anything to him.”

The ringing in Hermione’s ears turned deafening. Her heart felt like it was cracking.

“And now look at you,” Daphne sneered. “Living in his room. His own personal whore.”

Hermione choked.

Something snapped inside her.

Her knees buckled, her stomach turned, and she vomited—right on Daphne’s pristine boots.

“EW—what the *fuck*—!” Daphne shrieked, stumbling back.

But Hermione was already running.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

She didn't stop.

She ran back to the dorms. Grabbed her bag. Her coat.

She left, breathing heavy and ragged.

The bus was cold. She sat at the back, knees drawn to her chest, forehead against the glass. The trees blurred by, her eyes burning with tears she couldn't blink away.

Her heart was in pieces. Her body still ached. And she couldn't tell which pain hurt more.

All she wanted was to go home.

Back to her childhood bedroom. Back to her bookshelves and pink bedsheets and the smell of lemon polish on the staircase. Back to tea with her mum and crossword puzzles with her dad.

Back to a world where people didn't lie to you. Didn't drug you. Didn't *pretend* to love you.

Back to a world before she became an eighteen-year-old bride. Before secrets curled like smoke under her skin. Before she watched her own Headmaster bound and bloody in his office. Before she felt cold steel of a gun press against her temple.

Before she lived each day wrapped in luxury and danger, silks and lies, all stitched with the same golden thread.

Before she realized that love, in this world, could look an awful lot like pain.

The bus rolled to a stop at the corner. Her house was just down the street.

She stepped off, heart in her throat.

And then—

A car.

Black. Sleek. Silent.

Pulled up to the curb, slow and smooth.

Hermione paused.

The back door opened.

She took a step back.

Then hands grabbed her.

A cloth pressed to her face. Sharp. Chemical.

She tried to scream.

But the world tipped sideways.

The door slammed shut.

And Hermione Granger disappeared.

Born To Die

Chapter 15: Born To Die

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

The mirror cracked.

Draco stood over the sink in the bathroom, chest heaving, blood on his knuckles, breath caught somewhere between a sob and a snarl. The jagged edge of the glass caught the light, fractured his reflection into a hundred shards.

He couldn't find her.

She was gone.

She was gone and he didn't know where the fuck she was.

His hands trembled. He slammed them against the sink, over and over, the porcelain cracking beneath the force. White-hot rage thundered through him, edged with something far worse. Fear.

Not fear for himself.

For her.

Hermione.

The only fucking thing he'd ever cared about.

He turned and punched the wall. Again. And again. Blood smeared on the beige plaster. Blaise's voice was calling him, muffled through the door, but Draco didn't hear it—not really. Not until the door burst open.

“Draco!” Blaise shouted. “Mate, stop—what the fuck is going on?!”

“I—I can’t find her—she’s not here—she—” Draco hissed, stumbling forward.

Theo appeared behind Blaise, paler than usual. “When did you last see her?”

Draco dragged his hands down his face. “Library. This morning. I told her—fuck—I told her I’d be back in an hour. I kissed her goodbye. Said she was going back to the dorm—”

“Maybe she’s in her old room,” Theo offered, but he didn’t sound convinced.

“She’s not,” Draco snapped. “I checked. I checked every floor. Every corridor—”

The room went still.

Theo swallowed. “Drake, maybe she just needed some space—”

“No,” he growled. “No. Something’s wrong.”

He turned, shoved his books off the desk, papers flying. He kicked over a chair. Shattered a lamp.

“She’s gone,” he said, voice cracking.

Silence stretched thin across the room like a noose. And then, from the doorway—

“I heard yelling.”

Pansy.

She stepped inside, arms crossed, brow furrowed.

“I—” she started, but then looked at Draco. Really looked. “What happened?”

“She’s missing,” Blaise said softly.

Pansy blinked. “Missing?”

Theo nodded. “No sign of her.”

Draco’s fists clenched again. He couldn’t breathe. Couldn’t think. All he could see was the way Hermione looked when she slept on his chest. The way she giggled and looked up at him with her big trusting eyes. The way her bottom lip trembled when she was scared—but she still stood her ground.

“I told her to stay put,” he said again, to no one in particular. “I told her.”

“Do you think—” Pansy hesitated. “Do you think someone took her?”

“No one would fucking dare,” Draco barked. “They were told—she’s mine. She married in. She’s off-limits.”

But his voice broke on the last word.

Off-limits.

Like his mother was.

Like so many of the other Death Eater wives supposedly were.

“Oh my god,” Pansy whispered. “Oh no...”

Draco turned, saw her expression shift.

“What?” he demanded. “What is it?”

Pansy shook her head, stepping back. “No. No, it—it can’t be—”

“Pansy,” Blaise said gently. “What?”

She rubbed her arms like she was cold. Like she couldn’t quite catch her breath. “I saw her. This morning. Daphne was with her.”

Draco stilled. His blood ran cold. “Daphne.”

“Look, I—I didn’t think anything of it. When I asked Daphne about it later she said they were just talking—”

Theo hesitated. “I—I overheard Daphne earlier. She was bitching about Hermione. Saying she needed to wake up. That she thought Draco actually gave a shit about her. That someone needed to remind her that she didn’t belong here—that she’s just a charity case in over her head.”

Draco’s entire body locked.

“Do you think...” he turned to Blaise, eyes wild, “do you think she *told her*? About the party?”

The silence was the answer.

Theo looked sick.

Pansy went pale.

“We should call her parents,” Blaise said, ever the voice of reason.

Draco blinked. “What?”

“If she’s ran, she’d go home.”

Draco fumbled for the landline, blood still sticky on his fingers.

The phone rang.

And rang.

And then—click.

“Hello?”

“Mrs. Granger—” Draco’s voice broke. “Is Hermione there?”

A pause.

“She called,” Mrs. Granger said. “Said she was coming home for a few days. Needed to clear her head. That was hours ago. Her father went to the bus stop but... she never arrived.”

The world tilted.

“I thought maybe she changed her mind. Is she with you?”

Draco’s hand shook.

He couldn’t answer.

He hung up.

He threw the phone across the room.

Then he screamed.

It ripped out of him, deep and guttural and broken, as he staggered backward and slammed his fist into the wall again. He collapsed to his knees.

“They took her,” he sobbed. “They fucking took her.”

Theo grabbed his shoulders. “Who?! Who would?!”

“They said they wouldn’t touch her,” Draco rasped. “She married in. She was protected. They swore—”

Silence fell again.

Then—

Pansy stared at him, then snapped.

“You stupid, selfish bastard!” she screamed, storming across the room and shoving him hard. “You dragged her into this!” She pushed him again. “She was a good girl, Draco. She didn’t belong in this world!”

Draco didn’t push back. He just stood there, taking it.

“I’ve watched you,” Pansy said with unconcealed fury. “Watched how you look at her. Like she’s some perfect porcelain doll you want to lock in a glass case. Like she belongs to you.”

Pansy hit him. Full across the chest with her fists.

Her voice was shaking. “My mother... she wasn’t supposed to get hurt either.”

Draco looked up.

“She married in. Just like Hermione. My father—he saw her, wanted her, and that was that. She was good. Kind. *Just like Hermione.*” Her voice broke.

Draco didn’t speak. Couldn’t.

Tears gathered in Pansy’s eyes, but her voice only sharpened. “She reminded me so much of my mum. The way she smiled. The way she looked at you like you were worth something. My mum was just like that. She believed she could handle this fucked-up world—believed she could survive it—until one day, she didn’t. She got caught in the fucking crossfire, and no one even blinked. And now—now it’s happening again.”

She sobbed.

“And now you’re going to get Hermione killed too.”

Pansy turned and stormed out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Silence.

Draco collapsed into the chair, staring at the wall.

"I thought—I thought if we got married, they'd leave her alone."
Draco whispered.

Blaise ran a hand down his face. "We need to figure this out. Fast. Where would they have taken her?"

Draco stared at the wall, unblinking. "If it was about me... about punishing me... they'd take her somewhere visible. Somewhere symbolic."

Theo's eyes narrowed. "You think it's about Lucius?"

Draco gave a short, bitter laugh. "Of course it's about Lucius. He's been mishandling the docks for months. Signed off on bad shipments. Lost entire crates."

Theo swore. "Tonight's the drop. New shipment coming in. Millions in black market weapons. And if it's light. Someone will have noticed."

Blaise stood. "So they took her as leverage?"

A long silence followed. Then footsteps returned.

Pansy.

Her face was paler now, hollow.

"I called my father," she said, barely above a whisper. "Used the payphone downstairs. He didn't say much... but they have her."

Draco stood slowly. "Where?"

“The docks. The warehouse. She’s there.”

“They want you,” Pansy said to Draco. “You and her. That’s the punishment.”

“She’s not part of this.”

“She is now.”

Draco turned to go.

“I’m coming,” Pansy said.

“No,” Blaise said instantly. “Absolutely not.”

Theo shook his head. “Pans, don’t be insane.”

“I’m not letting her die,” Pansy snapped. “She doesn’t know what to do in a place like that. None of this her fault! Draco, you need someone who can get her out.”

“I’ll go,” Theo offered.

“No,” Draco said. “Tiberius will kill you if you step out of line.”

“I can stay near my father,” Pansy said. “He’s helping run the docks tonight. I can use that. I’ll stick close to the edge. Stay unseen. If you make a move, I’ll get to her. I can get her out.”

Draco hesitated.

“Please,” Pansy said, voice breaking. “I couldn’t save my mum. Let me—let me try to help her.”

He nodded, once.

Draco reached under his mattress and pulled out a pistol. Sleek. Clean.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

They made it.

The warehouse loomed, grey and hollow.

The smell hit first. Salt from the sea. Metal. Oil. And beneath it all—blood.

Draco's boots echoed on the concrete as he stepped inside. Every sound bounced back too loud, too sharp. The air was cold. Damp. Still.

Pansy slipped into the shadows, disappearing around the back where her father worked the outer perimeter.

Draco continued forward.

He saw her instantly.

Hermione.

Bound. Blood on her lip. Her arms slack. Her head tilted forward like a ragdoll.

Dolohov stood behind her, smug, gun pressed to her spine.

And to the left—Lucius. Unconscious. Bleeding from his temple. Useless.

Draco's blood froze. Then boiled.

"Let her go," he said. Voice low. Deadly.

Dolohov grinned. "Funny. That's what she said."

He leaned in closer to Hermione, sneering. "She begged so nicely. Said she'd do anything. I almost took her up on it. Almost."

Draco's hand tightened on the gun.

"What do you want?" Draco ground out.

"You know what I want," Dolohov hissed. "Payment. Retribution. Your father cost us millions. Weapons gone. Buyers pissed."

Dolohov's expression was vicious, sinister, as his hand began to trail lazily down Hermione's body.

Draco's voice dropped lower. "You touch her like that again, I will gut you."

Dolohov chuckled. "You think you scare me, boy? You're just your father's shadow. And now, you'll die for his sins."

"Take me instead," Draco pleaded. "Let her go."

"I think I'll take both," Dolohov said, grinning. "And make sure she watches."

Hermione let out a choked sob.

And then—

Gunfire.

Screams.

Chaos.

Draco ducked. Wood splintered above him. He returned fire blindly, heart hammering.

Hermione screamed.

His eyes snapped to her—she was scrambling, trying to get away—

Pansy broke from the shadows, sprinting toward her.

“RUN!” she screamed. “Hermione, RUN!”

Their hands touched. Pansy grabbed her arm—

A shot cracked.

Pansy jerked mid-step.

She fell.

Hermione screamed again.

Draco saw it all in slow motion. The way Pansy’s body hit the ground. The way Hermione dropped to her knees beside her. The blood.

He reached for them. Another shot.

Agony bloomed through Draco’s side. He gasped, dropped the gun, stumbled.

He dropped, hard.

Hermione was sobbing. Crawling to him.

“Draco—Draco—”

She leaned forward, frantic hands pressing to his wound—

—and then she froze.

Her body gave a sudden, sick twist.

And she vomited beside him.

Draco blinked, dazed. “Hermione...?”

She was pale. Shaking. Her breathing came in short, ragged gasps.

She wiped her mouth with trembling fingers.

“Don’t,” she begged. “Don’t die.”

Her hands were soaked in his blood. Her curls clung to her face, matted with sweat and grime and grief. She was clutching him like she could hold him inside the world by force of will alone.

He reached up, hand brushing hers.

So small.

So cold.

She pressed her forehead to his. Whispered something—he couldn’t make it out. The edges of everything were fraying.

His grip loosened.

Her scream tore through the air.

And then—

Darkness.

I Know The End. The End Is Here.

Chapter 16: I Know The End. The End Is Here.

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

The world came back in fragments.

Beeping.

Sterile light.

Pain.

Draco blinked.

White walls. A hospital.

His throat was dry, raw. His chest—no, his side—throbbed with every shallow breath. Tubes ran from his arm. A monitor beeped beside him. His mind felt like fog, thick and suffocating.

Hermione.

He tried to sit up.

A nurse rushed in. “Mr. Malfoy! You need to stay down—”

“Where is she?” he rasped.

“Mr. Malfoy—”

“Where is she?”

The nurse hesitated. That was all he needed.

He tore the IV from his arm.

Alarms blared.

He didn't care.

He shoved past the nurse, stumbled into the corridor. The pain didn't matter. The shouting didn't matter. He had to find her.

Had to find Hermione.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

The Manor was quiet.

He slammed open the door, bleeding through the bandages, barely able to stand.

"Hermione!"

No answer.

He staggered through the halls.

Their bedroom door was ajar.

He pushed it open.

The bed was made. The fire was low. The silence was deafening.

But on the pillow—

A ribbon.

Silk. Red.

Hers.

He stepped closer.

Tied around a letter.

His name in her handwriting.

He sat slowly, hands trembling, and broke the knot.

The corners were smudged. As if she'd held it too long.

He opened it.

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/Lskdxtks/Screen-Shot-2025-04-14-at-6-43-41-PM.png>]

Draco,

If you're reading this, I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry.

I didn't want to leave like this. But I had to.

You need to know first—the way I felt about you? It was real. It was the only thing that was. I loved you. I never said it, I never found the courage to say it aloud, but I did. I do. I love you.

But I lied to you.

Not about us. Not about the way I looked at you when you weren't watching. Not about the way your touch made my knees weak. That was real. All of it. But I lied about why I was here. Why I came to Hogwarts.

Dumbledore sent me.

He came to me before the term started. Said he'd read everything I'd ever written—the school column, the op-eds, investigative pieces—he said I saw things others missed. That I connected dots no one else could. He told me that what was happening inside the school—inside your world—was bigger than anyone realized. That someone

needed to go inside. A student. Someone who could listen. Learn. Collect everything.

I was supposed to keep my head down. Observe. Take notes. That's all.

But then you claimed me.

And Dumbledore told me I had to go deeper.

He said it was the opening he'd been waiting for. That if I had access to the Malfoy heir, he could end this war once and for all. So I said yes. I told him I'd do it. I didn't know what it would cost me.

I listened to every conversation. Every whisper. I wrote everything down. Notes on Lucius's connections. On the other families. The money trails. The shipments.

All those times you met Dolohov in the shadows? I was there. You didn't see me, but I saw you. I heard everything. I was the one who reported it. The first name I ever wrote down was his.

The ledgers your father had left out in his office? I copied them. I traced them. I gave them all to Dumbledore.

And that final time—when you met with Dolohov again and I followed you—it was because I knew. I knew it all.

I told Dumbledore about the warehouse at the docks. About the drop. That Lucius would be there. That Dolohov was bringing the buyers. That this was the moment.

But then I was caught.

Dolohov's men threw me into that warehouse.

Lucius was already there. Unconscious. Bleeding.

And then you came.

You looked like death. Like fury made flesh. You walked straight in and saw me, and I saw your eyes change. I heard your voice. It was too much.

I thought I would die.

But then everything exploded.

The gunfire. The screams. And then—Pansy.

She told me to run. Tried to get to me.

And then she fell.

She was shot right in front of me.

I couldn't move. I dropped beside her. I screamed your name. I couldn't leave her. I couldn't.

Then you were shot. I saw the blood bloom across your side. I crawled to you. I held you. Until Dumbledore's men came.

They pulled me off you. I screamed. I think I might have hit someone. They told me you'd live. That I had to go.

They arrested Dolohov. Your Father. The buyers. The rest of them. It's ending, Draco. All the violence. All the bloodshed.

Pansy died for this. She saved me. I don't know how to carry that. I think about her every second.

Your mother is safe. She got out before it all started. She's free.

And I'm gone. You can't find me. Not yet. There's still too much to finish.

But there's one thing I haven't said. And I think I have to.

I know what you did.

I know about the beginning. The game. The dare. The reason you chose me.

Daphne told me. And when she did, I think a piece of me died.

Because I loved you. Because by then, I had already given you everything. And finding out I was never supposed to be anything more than a cruel entertainment—it felt like being gutted from the inside out.

I wanted to hate you for it.

But the truth is, I don't.

Because when I look at everything that came after, I see you trying. I see you changing. I see the boy who made such dark choices... and the man who couldn't stop loving me, even when it wrecked him.

The man who held me like I was something holy. The man who brushed my tears away even when he didn't understand them. The man who didn't just protect me—he saw me. All of me.

You were cruel, once.

But you were kind to me, too.

And I'll never forget that.

Now that I'm alone, I've had a lot of time to think. About everything. About the choices I made. The things I said. And the things I never did. I keep coming back to something small. Something silly.

The way you used to call me Mouse.

At first, I thought it was a tease. Another way to make me feel small. But over time, I began to wonder if maybe you meant it. That I was soft. Quiet. Harmless. Easy to overlook. But I was never really a mouse, was I?

A mouse runs from fire—I walked straight into it. A mouse hides—I stood in the open. A mouse survives by staying silent—I spoke, even when it broke me. Maybe I was something else entirely.

Maybe I was a cat. Small and clever. The kind that waits in silence, watches from corners, and strikes when no one sees it coming. Or maybe I was a ghost, already halfway gone by the time you really looked at me. Maybe I was both.

But no matter what I was—I was yours.

And I still am.

Because I'm still your wife, Draco.

And I don't regret it.

Not a single second. Not the night we got married. Not the way you kissed me like you were starving. That night, I wasn't a spy. I wasn't anything but yours. You didn't just claim me. You kept me.

I'll wear that name like armour. No matter where I go. No matter how long it takes. I am your wife. That's one thing no war can take from me.

You would always say I was too soft. That I felt too much. But I had to do this, Draco. For every life the Death Eater's ruined. For everyone caught in the crossfire. For you.

I love you, Draco Malfoy. More than you could ever imagine.

You made me feel like I was something precious. That I was more than a tool or a pawn. That's why I could do this. Because of you.

I was yours. I'll always be, in some way.

Please don't hate me.

Love always,

Hermione.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

Draco stared at the letter for a long time.

He didn't move.

Didn't breathe.

She was gone.

She had never been that fragile girl. Never just the clever know-it-all who stumbled into his world.

She'd walked in with her eyes open. Braver than any of them. Willing to burn for the truth.

She was a fucking soldier.

A crash sounded downstairs.

Voices.

He stood just as the door burst open.

"Draco Malfoy?"

Guns drawn. Badges. Uniforms.

"You're under arrest for conspiracy, possession, and aiding a known criminal enterprise."

The last thing he saw before they shoved him to his knees—

Was the ribbon.

Still curled on the pillow.

Like she'd only just left.

This Woman's Work

Chapter 17: This Woman's Work

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/0jc4QpDV/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM.png>]

Grimmauld Place was freezing in that way old London houses always were—too many windows, too many shadows, too many memories pressed into the walls like bruises. The fire sputtered in the grate, and Hermione sat wrapped in one of Draco's too-big jumpers, hands curled around a chipped teacup. She hadn't slept. She hadn't eaten. Her mouth tasted like grief.

Then came the knock on the door.

His glasses were crooked.

He sat across from her, elbows on his knees, trying to meet her eyes.

"I'm sorry," Harry said, voice thick. "For Ron. For everything."

Hermione didn't speak. Couldn't. There was a crater in her chest where words used to live.

"He was a piece of shit," Harry went on. "But Dumbledore made me keep him close."

She finally looked up. Her voice came out cracked. "Why?"

Harry nodded. "His father—Arthur worked in internal government oversight. He found a paper trail—a chain of bribes, manipulated permits, political donations—tied back to Lucius Malfoy. He brought it to Dumbledore. So he always made sure the Weasley's had a place at Hogwarts. And well, he told me we had to stick together."

Hermione stared into her tea. “Did you all know? About me?”

“Not everything,” Harry said quickly. “Not about Draco. I didn’t know what Dumbledore had asked you to do.”

She laughed then, hollow. “No one did. Not even me.”

It had started with a letter.

A cream-colored envelope, thick and heavy, sent to her family’s townhouse in Hampstead. Her name printed in a neat hand across the front.

She’d thought it couldn’t be real. Hogwarts wasn’t listed in any official registry. It didn’t show up on maps. It was a whisper passed between legacy families, a name spoken in drawing rooms and private clubs—a hidden academy tucked deep in the Scottish Highlands, where the sons and daughters of the world’s most powerful were molded behind wrought iron gates and stone walls.

But then the scholarship arrived.

And the promise that, if she accepted, she’d be given access to archives, resources, and connections that could change the course of her future career.

She was eighteen.

Book-smart. Stubborn. Fierce in her convictions.

But she was also naive. Too trusting. Too hopeful.

She’d wanted to be a journalist since she was old enough to write. She believed in the power of words. Believed truth was a weapon, and that if she wielded it carefully, she could protect people. Make the world better. Safer. Kinder. She thought her pen could tear down the corrupt and lift up the broken. She thought justice would come if only she worked hard enough—if only she was brave enough to tell the truth.

Her view of the world had been so pure. So painfully untouched. There were good people and bad ones. Justice and injustice. Right and wrong. She thought if she just pushed herself enough, studied long enough, loved fiercely enough, the good would win.

But Hogwarts ruined her.

That wretched school. That cursed, golden prison of silk and blood. Everything it stood for. Everyone inside it. Every secret she was forced to carry. Every lie she told. Every line she crossed.

She didn't recognize herself by the end of it.

Dumbledore hadn't wanted a student. He wanted a weapon. A mind sharp enough to infiltrate, to listen, to trace the rot at the heart of the elite. Brave enough to write it down. Innocent enough that no one would suspect her. Disposable enough that no one would care.

He didn't tell her she'd be drugged. Assaulted. Kidnapped. Forced into marriage.

He didn't tell her she'd fall in love with the enemy. That she'd come to crave his touch, to weep in his arms, to wear his name like a second skin.

He didn't tell her she'd lose herself completely. That by the time it was all over, she wouldn't know what was real anymore—her heart or her orders. Her voice or someone else's plan. Her choices or her survival.

Because what if none of it mattered?

What if she had burned her soul to the ground for nothing?

What if the world didn't change?

What if she had done all of this, endured every violation, every betrayal, every shattered part of herself—for a future she no longer wanted?

She didn't know who she was anymore. Not really.

Not a student. Not a journalist. Not a wife. Not a girl. Not a hero.

Just someone who had tried to do the right thing and didn't know if it had been worth it.

Because how could she change the world when she didn't even want to live in it?

[img:

<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

She remembered meeting Harry her first day at Hogwarts. He wasn't what she'd expected. He carried more pain than most boys. She'd learned it slowly.

His parents had died young. Death Eaters. Caught in the middle of something they were never supposed to see—an illegal weapons deal between the Malfoys and a foreign buyer. Assault rifles. Unregistered silencers. Armor-piercing rounds. James Potter had been doing accounting work for one of the shell corporations that funneled the money. His wife, Lily, had helped him connect the dots. They never stood a chance.

Lucius Malfoy made sure their deaths were buried deep. No headlines. No justice.

He sent men to their house.

Harry saw it happen. Hid in the crawlspace. Listened to their screams.

He was nine.

After that, he went to live with Sirius Black—his godfather. His parents' best friend. A man who'd once belonged to the same

highborn world that funded blood deals like this one. Narcissa's cousin. Polished. Respected. But broken.

Lily and James's deaths changed everything.

Sirius cut ties with the family, burned every bridge, and turned his grief into obsession. He became a detective—not for justice. For vengeance. He took every dirty case no one else would touch. Smuggling. Hit jobs. Arms deals. It was always about the syndicates. Always about finding the crack in their empire.

That's when Dumbledore found him. Told him the only way to tear it all down was from the inside. That it had to be the children. The next generation.

And Sirius—desperate, broken—gave him Harry.

Harry hated him for it. For a long time.

But he came. He played the part. Wore the cursed uniform. Said the right things. Stayed close to Ron.

But Ron wasn't there by accident, either.

Dumbledore knew he'd grown up half-obsessed with the power he wasn't born into. That he'd do anything to prove he belonged. That he could manipulate him easily.

And Harry? He saw it. Endured it. Swallowed it.

Just like her.

That was the thing no one said aloud, the truth buried beneath the scholarships and letters and cream-colored envelopes.

The *scholarship students* at Hogwarts weren't chosen for their potential—their golden ticket into the world's most elite was actually a death sentence.

They were chosen for their pain. Their fire. Their hunger. Their ability to become weapons.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The raids had hit like a lightning strike—swift, coordinated, brutal. Sirius had spent seventy-two hours on the ground, bouncing between task force meetings, secure calls with international agents, and violent arrests. His voice still sounded hoarse. Like he hadn't slept. Like he hadn't breathed properly since it all started.

He stood now at the window of his townhouse, the curtain drawn half an inch back, his gaze on the street.

"They hit seven properties in thirty-six hours," he said quietly. "The Malfoy Manor. The offices in Mayfair. The private vault in Zurich. Narcissa's name was on three of the shell corporations. We got to her just in time."

Hermione sat curled on the sofa, untouched mug of tea cooling on the table beside her.

"They found blueprints in Dolohov's estate," Sirius went on. "Documents. Contracts. Smuggling routes. Your notes helped confirm the timeline. There's enough to bury them. International charges. Federal trials. Interpol wants in."

Harry sat beside her. Closer than usual. His hand hovered near hers but didn't touch.

"You did this," he said, his voice low and certain. "You helped bring it all down."

She didn't respond.

“You helped get justice for my parents. For everyone who didn’t make it out,” he said.

Hermione’s eyes flicked to the fire. Her voice was barely a whisper. “Pansy didn’t.”

Silence.

She reached for the mug, held it between her palms, but didn’t drink. Her fingers were shaking.

“I see her every time I close my eyes,” she said hollowly. “On the floor. The blood. Her unmoving eyes.”

Sirius turned away, clearing his throat.

“You have to go,” Sirius said after a moment. “In the morning. I’ve arranged transport.”

Hermione blinked. “Where?”

“A safe house,” he said. “Outside Edinburgh. Remote. Quiet. Narcissa’s already there. We’ve got men on rotation. You’ll be under protection until the trials begin.”

“I can stay here,” she said softly. “I’ll stay out of the way.”

“No,” Sirius said firmly. “It’s not safe. They know who you are now. What you did. You’re too high-profile. We can’t take the risk.”

Harry leaned forward. “You’ll be able to work up there. Finish your article. It’s why you did all this in the first place, right?”

Hermione didn’t answer.

Sirius hesitated, then crossed the room, topping off the drink in his hand before he spoke again.

“Draco’s out of the hospital.”

Hermione's head jerked up.

"He's been arrested. Transferred to a private holding facility. High security."

Her face crumpled.

She nodded like she already knew. Like she'd been waiting to hear it aloud.

And then her hands came up, pressing against her eyes as she broke—quietly, completely.

"I knew," she whispered, breath catching. "I knew he would be. It just—hurts."

Neither man spoke.

"I miss him," she choked. "Even after everything. I miss him so much, I can't breathe."

Harry looked away.

Sirius exhaled, running a hand through his hair.

"You don't have to be okay right now," he said, voice low. "You just have to stay alive. Finish your article. That's enough."

Hermione stared into her lap, hollow and shivering.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/2yM42yDz/6b80b9fad61eca4e1e67bc451dc749c9.jpg>]

The safe house was all wind and stone and pale Highland light. A hollow place, perched on the edge of the world. Hermione drifted through it like a ghost—silent, sleepless, barely eating. The fire was always lit, but she could never get warm.

Narcissa said nothing when she arrived. She just wrapped her arms around her, perfume and silk and sorrow pressing into Hermione's bones.

"I'm so sorry," Hermione whispered.

And then she broke. For Pansy. For Draco. For the girl she used to be. For the war she didn't even know she'd been fighting.

She collapsed into Narcissa's arms and wept like a child. Shaking. Soundless. Sinking.

Days passed in a blur. Hermione didn't know how many. She lost time.

She sat for hours at the window but never saw the view. She picked at food, let tea go cold in her hands. Narcissa stayed close, calm and quiet, always watching. Not prying. Just there.

But she noticed everything.

One morning, Hermione gagged on the smell of toast. She barely made it to the sink before she vomited.

And later, when the same thing happened at dinner—Narcissa touched her shoulder gently, her gaze unreadable.

"Hermione," she said quietly, "do you think you might be pregnant?"

Hermione blinked. "What?"

Her face went white.

The room tilted. The walls closed in. And then she was up, stumbling out the door and down the corridor, falling to her knees in the bathroom, vomiting again—dry heaving now, breath coming too fast.

Narcissa followed without a word.

She knelt beside her. Rubbed slow circles into her back. Held her hair. Waited.

When the worst of it passed, Hermione slumped against the cold tile. Her whole body trembling. Her lips numb.

“I—” Her voice cracked. “I—I hadn’t thought—I didn’t even—”

She clutched her stomach. As if the truth might already be there, waiting.

Narcissa didn’t push. Just smoothed the hair from her damp forehead and said, “Let’s find out, dear.”

The test sat on the counter. Hermione couldn’t stop staring at it.

Narcissa sat beside her on the edge of the tub, hand steady in hers, thumb brushing the back of her knuckles like a lullaby.

Hermione didn’t speak. She didn’t cry. Not yet.

But when the test turned positive, the sound that broke from her chest was pure devastation.

“No,” she gasped. “No, no—this can’t—this isn’t—”

She folded over, arms crossed over her stomach, like she could undo it somehow. Like she could claw time backward with her bare hands.

Narcissa caught her as she collapsed again, sobbing so hard she choked on it.

“I can’t do this,” Hermione cried. “I don’t know how I can do this without him. I don’t even know who I am anymore.”

“You’re still you,” Narcissa whispered, pulling her close, rocking her like she was five years old and broken. “You are strong. You are brave. You survived.”

“I miss him,” she sobbed.

“I know.”

Narcissa didn't promise it would be okay. She didn't lie to her. She just stayed. Solid and still and mothering.

The days that followed blurred at the edges.

Hermione barely left her room. She moved like a shadow, silent and skeletal, drowning in Narcissa's soft borrowed clothes and the hollow ache in her chest. She slept in fits, ate only when Narcissa sat beside her and coaxed her through it. Sometimes, she cried without knowing why. Other times, the tears wouldn't come at all.

Narcissa brought in her typewriter one morning.

The article was still there—untouched—waiting. Pages and pages of evidence. Everything she'd uncovered. Everything she'd lived through.

Hermione tried. Read the first paragraph three times. Her fingers hovered over the keys.

And then she'd abandoned it.

She couldn't write it.

She couldn't breathe through it.

She lay back down and curled into the pillows like a child hiding from monsters.

Narcissa never pushed. But she stayed. Always.

She brought tea in china cups with lemon and honey. Lit candles when the wind whistled against the stone. Rubbed lavender oil into Hermione's wrists when the panic hit, and murmured stories—about Draco's baby teeth and his first tantrum.

Hermione listened.

It was Narcissa who insisted on the doctor.

Just once, she said. To make sure everything was okay.

She let herself be led, dazed and quiet, into the bedroom Narcissa had set up as a temporary clinic. A soft blanket draped over the table.

The doctor—discreet, a woman Sirius trusted—was gentle. Kind. She didn't ask too many questions.

Hermione lay on her back, hands clenched at her sides. Narcissa sat by her head, her fingers wrapped around Hermione's pale knuckles.

She didn't speak. But her presence filled the room like warmth.

The doctor prepared the ultrasound.

For a moment, there was only static. The flicker of gray light. The hum of electricity.

Then—

thump-thump.

thump-thump.

Hermione's breath caught.

And then—

Another.

thump-thump.

thump-thump.

Two.

The doctor turned the screen slightly. Smiled softly.

“Twins,” she said. “They’re healthy. Strong.”

Hermione stared. She didn’t blink.

Two.

Two heartbeats. Two tiny lives. From the man she loved—*and lost*.

Her vision blurred.

And then the sob broke loose.

No warning. No sound at first—just the awful, raw quake of her chest, the shaking of her limbs. Narcissa arms were around her, holding her as the tears came harder. Louder.

She wept into Narcissa’s shoulder, her hands fisted in the silk of her blouse, her cries barely human. She cried for the pain, for the terror, for the unbearable sweetness of it. For Draco. For Pansy.

Narcissa held her through it all. Whispered soft comforts into her hair, stroking her back. Her own cheeks wet with tears.

“I can’t do this,” Hermione gasped.

“You’re their mother,” Narcissa said, voice thick but sure. “That’s all you have to be right now.”

Hermione curled her arms around her stomach like a shield. Like a promise.

She stayed that way for hours.

Long after the doctor had gone.

That night, Narcissa tucked the ultrasound photo into a frame and placed it by the bed. Hermione didn't ask her to. She didn't thank her. But she didn't move it, either.

She sat in bed, long after the fire had gone out, with a blanket curled around her shoulders. One hand splayed across her belly.

"I don't know if you can hear me yet," she whispered, her voice rough from disuse. "But I'm going to pretend you can."

Her palm stayed there, open and steady, waiting for a flutter. There was nothing yet. Just the ghost of something forming beneath her skin. A presence. A weight. A promise.

"I miss him," she said softly. "I miss him so much I can't breathe sometimes."

Her eyes stung, but she didn't cry.

She laid back against the pillows, both hands curved protectively over her belly now.

"Your dad..." She smiled faintly. "He was impossible. Arrogant. Moody. Controlling." A pause. "But he loved so hard it broke him. And he never wanted to love anything."

Her throat tightened. She closed her eyes.

"He used to look at me like I was made of stars. Like I was something he'd never believed in until I showed up. Like I was *his*." A shaky breath. "And I was."

Her fingers brushed lower, slow and trembling.

"I wonder what you'll look like," she whispered. "If you'll have his hair. Soft and pale and always falling into his eyes. Or if you'll have mine—wild and ridiculous and hard to control."

She gave a broken little laugh. “If one of you is a girl in there, I pray you don’t have my hair. But if you do...”

Her fingers brushed softly over her bump, voice trembling.

“...I’ll brush it every morning, and tie a ribbon in it—just like he loved.” she smiled, tears slipping silently down her cheeks. “Said they made me look like something no one else could touch.”

She swallowed hard, closing her eyes.

“I’ll make sure you feel that way too. Precious. Protected. Loved.”

She whimpered quietly, a sound like wind chimes under water.

“Maybe you’ll have his eyes. That cold silver that only went soft when he looked at me. Or maybe you’ll have mine—too wide for my face.”

Her voice cracked. She blinked fast. Pressed her lips to her knuckles.

“I’ll make sure you know all of him. Who he really was—not what the papers will say. I’ll tell you how your father kissed me with so much emotion, like I was the first real thing in his world. I’ll tell you how he would’ve protected you with his last breath.”

The tears came slow.

“I’m scared,” she whispered. “But I love you already. I don’t know what else I have left, but I have *you*.”

She curled sideways, arms around her belly, face pressed into the pillow.

And for the first time in weeks... she slept.

Bury A Friend

Chapter 18: Bury A Friend

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

The cell was cold. Too cold. Metal walls, gray floors. A slab for a bed. Chains for comfort.

Draco sat hunched on the edge of the cot, hands curled into fists, knuckles torn raw from the last time he'd lost control. He hadn't slept. Hadn't eaten. Not since they locked him in this box like an animal. Not since she left.

She hadn't really left. She'd been ripped away.

His mind replayed her face like a haunting—big brown eyes, trembling lips, the way she always looked at him like he was something more than a monster.

A few weeks later, a guard slid something through the bars.

A newspaper.

He stared at it like it was poison. Then picked it up with trembling fingers.

The headline made his chest cave in.

SINS OF THE FATHERS: THE FALL OF HOGWARTS

By Hermione Granger

His breath hitched.

He read.

And the world fell out from beneath him.

At eighteen, I was recruited by Headmaster of Hogwarts Academy, Albus Dumbledore. He offered me an education. But he asked for something in return: that I uncover the truth.

Hogwarts was never just a school. It was a vault. A fortress. A breeding ground for power and corruption—where the sons and daughters of warlords, traffickers, weapons dealers, and oligarchs were taught to kill with charm and to cover their tracks with gold.

My assignment was to observe. Infiltrate. Disappear.

What follows is the culmination of a year embedded inside a world most people will never see, much less survive.

I was Hermione Granger. A name no one had heard of. An outsider.

But I wasn't the only one.

There were others like me. Students handpicked to watch, to record, to keep track of what the government would never dare touch.

This report is built on evidence: financial records, blackmail correspondence, ledgers of drug shipments, surveillance photos, encrypted wire transfers, falsified death certificates.

It is also built on blood.

The Death Eaters were a syndicate. An intergenerational mafia of power, money, and blood.

They embedded themselves in every structure of influence: international banking, weapons contracts, narcotics, real estate development, privatized militaries. Hogwarts became their crown jewel—a school for the children of the elite, masked as an academy for the gifted. A place where cruelty was refined into charm and corruption was dressed in tradition.

And they sent those children to Hogwarts.

I watched those children be reshaped—molded into perfect successors. Taught how to conceal crime behind charm. How to smile as they broke someone. How to speak in clean accents while trafficking weapons and laundering blood money.

Professors turned the other way. Staff were bought and sold like assets. Gold washed everything clean.

And in the middle of it all was a girl named Pansy Parkinson.

She was everything they hated. Sharp-tongued. Brilliant. Brutally honest. She smoked clove cigarettes in the girls' lavatory and whispered secrets to the walls. She'd been born into the system but refused to let it own her. She walked through the school like a blade with legs, always looking for a fight worth bleeding for.

She saved me.

Not just from death—but from losing myself.

Pansy stood between me and the barrel of a gun. She took on the Death Eaters with no guarantee she would win. She fought for me before she knew who I really was. She fought because something in her still believed in redemption. And she died for it.

The Death Eaters killed her. Because she chose me.

Her death is the price of this article.

Pansy Parkinson may have been a daughter of violence, but she was not a villain. She was a casualty of a system that turned children into collateral.

She was my friend.

And now that system is falling.

As of this publication, forty-seven high-ranking figures in the European criminal underworld have been indicted across four nations. Thirty-one are awaiting trial. Twenty-two are already behind bars. Lucius Malfoy. Antonin Dolohov. Tiberius Nott. Augustus Mulciber. Alecto Carrow. Evan Rosier. The names once whispered in fear are now carved into court records.

Their empires are crumbling.

But this isn't just a story about crime.

This is a story about legacy.

For decades, Hogwarts Academy was allowed to exist without scrutiny, shielded by its reputation, protected by money. The public saw it as elite. Untouchable. But inside, it manufactured monsters.

I enrolled as a student to understand how evil begins.

I'm telling this story so it can end.

For every child still trapped inside the web of their parents' sins. For every victim whose body will never be found. For Pansy. For all of us who dared to look deeper.

This is our reckoning.

Draco didn't blink. Didn't breathe.

He read it like an addict licking powder off the floor.

Every word cut like a blade.

He was gripping the paper so hard—like it could bleed if he squeezed hard enough. Like maybe her voice would spill out between the lines.

He read it again. Then again. And again.

Until the paper was warped with sweat, and his hands were shaking too badly to hold it straight.

She hadn't mentioned him.

Not his name.

Not their nights.

Not the months he'd spent carving himself into her with hands that didn't know how to be gentle. Not the way he made her gasp and cry and beg—for him, only ever for him.

She didn't write about how she used to touch his face like he was worth saving.

She had erased him.

Like he was nothing. Like he hadn't *owned* her.

But she hadn't damned him.

She could've. She should've. He'd given her a thousand reasons.

But she hadn't.

She spared him.

And that mercy—it was worse than punishment.

Because he didn't deserve it. Because it meant she still loved him. Because it meant she still *knew* him. Because it meant she was still *his*.

And now he couldn't reach her.

He let out a sound—sharp and animalistic. Fury and grief and something deeper, something rotten and bleeding.

He stood too fast, the metal cot screeching against the floor. His head spun. The paper slipped from his fingers. He watched it float down like ash.

He slammed his fists into the wall until his knuckles split open again. Again. Again. Until there was blood.

His blood.

Not hers.

Because she was gone. Out there. Untouched. Unscarred. Breathing without him.

The thought made him sick.

She'd survive. Of course she would. She was *Hermione*. Brilliant, brave, goddamn radiant Hermione.

And he'd rot here. In this box. With nothing but the ghosts of her touch and the memory of how she used to moan his name like it was the only word she knew.

He staggered back and collapsed onto the cot, chest heaving, blood dripping from his hand. He pressed his palm to his mouth like he could choke down the scream clawing up his throat.

He wanted her.

Not in some poetic way. Not even in some broken, bleeding, romantic way.

He wanted her like a curse. Like an addiction. Like oxygen.

She was his.

His to ruin. His to protect. His to break and rebuild. Over and over.

He'd stitched himself into her body. Had watched her fall apart under his hands. And now—now she was *gone*.

And now he was alone with just her words, brilliant and brutal, and her silence where his name should have been.

She'd spared him.

But she'd left him.

And he couldn't survive that.

He knew it. Felt it like death in his bones.

He would die in this cell.

Alone. Forgotten.

And she would go on.

Wearing someone else's ring. Raising someone else's child. Smiling at another man like she used to smile at *him*.

The idea made him dizzy.

He leaned forward, bracing his elbows on his knees, bloodied fingers tangled in his hair, his breath ragged and fast and *wild*.

He didn't want to live in a world where she wasn't his.

He wasn't built for it.

Because she wasn't just his salvation.

She was his possession.

His obsession.

His only goddamn reason.

And now she was gone.

If This Is the Last Time

Chapter 19: If This Is the Last Time

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

They brought him in shackled.

Cameras flashed. The crowd roared like wolves. Journalists elbowed each other for a glimpse of the Malfoy boy in chains. Some shouted his name. Others spat it like a curse.

Draco kept his head down. But inside, he was snarling.

The courtroom was high-ceilinged, cold with marble and smoke. A fortress of judgment. Rows of onlookers. A jury like stone. And at the center, the judge—robes black as ash, eyes void of pity.

Draco didn't care.. Introductions passed in blur—it all slid past him, meaningless noise beneath the weight of what really mattered.

And then—

A door opened. A voice called a name.

“Witness: Hermione Jean Granger.”

The world cracked.

Draco's breath caught. A sound clawed its way from his throat, half gasp, half choked sob.

She walked in.

And everything stopped.

She was radiant.

Hair longer now. Body softer. And beneath the modest, pale yellow dress—

The swell.

She was pregnant.

Visibly, unmistakably pregnant.

And Draco knew. Immediately.

It was his.

It wasn't a question. It was truth carved into bone.

His fingers clenched the armrests. He wanted to lunge across the courtroom and rip the chains from his limbs, drag her into his arms and press his mouth to her skin until she remembered who she belonged to.

Mine.

He didn't breathe. Didn't blink. Didn't move as she took the stand. But his eyes never left her.

Gold met silver.

And she looked back.

Not like a stranger. Not like an enemy.

Like she remembered.

She swore in. Lifted her chin.

Her voice was steady. Controlled.

“I was recruited by the Headmaster of Hogwarts Academy, Albus Dumbledore, under covert terms. I was instructed to infiltrate Hogwarts and uncover the internal systems that enabled criminal syndicates to thrive.”

Whispers rippled. The judge banged the gavel once.

“I was accepted under scholarship. But I was never truly there for education.”

She turned to the jury.

“I was there to dismantle a legacy.”

Silence fell.

“I did not plan to fall in love.” She looked at him again, and Draco’s heart shattered. “But I did.”

“I fell in love with Draco Malfoy.”

The world breathed in and didn’t breathe out.

She went on.

And this time, she said everything she hadn’t said in her article. Everything she had held back. Everything the world didn’t know.

In excruciating, damning detail.

She looked at Draco again, and her voice broke into something aching and raw.

“He cornered me in dark corridors—not to threaten, but to warn me. He followed me around obsessively. Watching everyone else. Because he knew I had a target on my back. Because I walked in on something I shouldn’t have. And he never let me out of his sight after that.”

Gold eyes locked to silver. They burned.

“He shadowed my every step, always one breath behind me. Not to control me—but to protect me. He threatened Dolohov in snarled whispers I pretended not to hear. He dragged me into his room—not to hurt me, but to hide me. From the men who would’ve taken me.”

Her eyes shone. She looked to the jury.

“He married me. Just so I could live.”

Draco’s chest heaved.

Her words gutted him. They were sharp and sacred. And they made his cock twitch under the table like a curse. Because she was *his*. Carrying *his* child. And still wearing his name in her mouth like it tasted of salvation.

“He lied for me,” she said. “He bled for me. He fell apart for me.”

Her voice caught. Her hand went to her belly.

“And he took a bullet for me.”

The courtroom went still.

Cross-examination began.

“Miss Granger, are you aware that Mr. Malfoy committed multiple class-A felonies during his time at Hogwarts?”

“Yes.”

“And you continued a romantic relationship with him despite that?”

“I did.”

“Why?”

“Because he was never what they made him. He fought against it. Every day.”

“You testified that he took a bullet for you. Can you confirm the shooter’s identity?”

“Yes. Antonin Dolohov.”

“And Mr. Malfoy’s injuries were sustained protecting you?”

“Yes.”

“Did Mr. Malfoy ever abuse, threaten, or coerce you in any way?”

“No.”

“Are you currently in contact with Mr. Malfoy?”

“No. This is the first time I’ve seen him since the night of the raid.”

“Do you still love him?”

A pause.

“Yes.”

Gasps. Murmurs. Flashbulbs.

“Miss Granger, are you currently carrying Mr. Malfoy’s child?”

Her eyes met Draco’s. Silver fire. Heat.

“Yes. I am.”

“And do you believe his role as the father of your unborn child should be taken into consideration regarding his sentencing?”

“I do. Because he didn’t just risk his life for me. He risked it for *us*. For our future.”

“Do you believe Mr. Malfoy is capable of rehabilitation?”

“Yes. More than capable. Because he already began. With me.”

She finished her testimony.

Walked down.

And instead of leaving, she crossed the room. To Narcissa.

His mother stood. Took one look at her. And broke.

They collapsed into each other. Crying.

Draco's heart was a noose tightening around his ribs. He didn't want freedom. He wanted *her*. His name on her lips. His marks on her thighs. His child in her arms. He wanted to take her by the throat and say *you never stopped being mine*.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

The jury deliberated for hours.

Every second was a blade.

Draco sat frozen. Rage and need thrumming in his veins. Sweat sliding down the back of his neck. The clock ticking like a countdown to execution.

She was there. Still there. Her hand held to her stomach. Eyes on him like an oath.

Silver met gold. Again. And again.

He tried to memorize her. Tried to drink her in through the distance. Every breath she took. Every flicker of her lashes. Every twitch of her fingers.

He told himself this would be enough. That if they caged him forever, he'd still have this moment. Burned into him.

The doors opened.

The judge returned.

Everyone rose. Even Draco, hands still cuffed. Stiff. Shackled.

The gavel came down once.

“The jury has reached a verdict.”

A pause. Silence. Draco felt like his lungs were full of ice.

“In the case of Draco Lucius Malfoy, on the charges of conspiracy, organized crime, and obstruction—”

Hermione’s eyes locked to his. They held.

“—this court finds the defendant—”

He braced.

“Eligible for parole. Effective immediately.”

No breath. No sound. Just white.

Then the courtroom exploded.

Shouts. Cries. The scrape of chairs. Gasping relief from Narcissa. The sound of Hermione choking back a sob.

Terms followed: Supervised release. Community rehabilitation. Psychological treatment. No contact with any former criminal associates. One exception—

“Hermione Granger.”

Draco's knees buckled. He nearly fell.

He looked up.

Straight at her.

A disbelieving grin broke over his face. Wild. Twisted. Starved.

He was going to walk.

He was going to see her.

He was going to be a father.

And no one—no fucking one—was going to keep her from him again.

He would carve through the world if he had to. Burn kingdoms. Dismantle bloodlines. Tear the heavens from the sky with his bare hands if they tried.

Because that was *his* wife. That was *his* child.

And she had waited.

Silver locked to gold across the chaos.

And in that flash of eye contact, with his chains falling and her hands trembling—Draco Malfoy made a silent vow:

Never again. Never apart. Never alone.

He would crawl on his knees for redemption. Rip out his own heart if she asked. But he would *have* her.

He would ruin himself for her. Again and again.

Because she was his.

And now, she was waiting.

And this time, he would not let go.

Dark Paradise

Chapter 20: Dark Paradise

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/8ztCS37v/Screen-Shot-2025-04-13-at-1-43-40-PM-copy.png>]

He didn't hear the courtroom doors slam behind him. Didn't register the cameras or the shouting or the roar of the press.

He only saw her.

Hermione.

Her.

She wasn't crying. Not yet. But her whole body trembled, like she was one breath away from collapse. The sun caught her hair like a halo. Her dress fluttered in the breeze. And beneath it—

The swell.

Closer now. Inches. No chains. No distance. No prison guards.

Just her. Pregnant. With *his* child.

He stopped. Looked at her. Looked at *them*.

And dropped to his knees.

His arms wrapped around her, cradling her rounded stomach like something sacred. Like something he *owned*.

"You're really having my baby?" he rasped.

Her breath hitched. "Babies."

He broke. Body shaking, hands grasping at her dress, mouth pressed to the curve of her belly. His fingers splayed possessively, as if to stake a claim.

“I’m so fucking sorry,” he whispered, over and over, like a prayer. Like penance. Like he might shatter if she didn’t forgive him.

She cradled his head. Fingers in his hair. His name on her lips like benediction.

He stood slowly. Looked at her, his breath catching. His eyes feral, haunted, ravenous.

“Can you say it?” he asked, hoarse, like the words scraped on the way out.

She blinked up at him, brows pulling together. “Say what?”

His throat worked. “You know what.”

Her lips parted, but nothing came.

He stepped closer, eyes fierce. “You said it before. To the room. To the judge. But not to *me*.”

She stared at him for a long moment—then slowly, like it hurt to breathe, she lifted her gaze to his.

“I love you,” she said.

Just for him this time.

And it broke him wide open.

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

They didn't speak much in the car. Just held hands. Touched knees. Breathed the same air. Hermione kept glancing sideways like she couldn't believe he was real.

Back at the safehouse—the one Narcissa had kept guarded and warm—Draco stood inside the doorway like a ghost. He wasn't used to softness. Freedom. *Her*.

Then she turned to him.

And he kissed her.

Not a soft kiss.

A claim.

His mouth moved over hers like he was starving. His hands gripped her like she might vanish again. He didn't push. Didn't rush. Just *touched*. Like she was already his again. Like she never stopped.

She broke the kiss with a gasp. "Draco," she said, breathless. "You're here."

He looked down at her belly, then back to her eyes. "Because of you."

That night, they curled together in bed like two broken pieces finding shape again. Cross-legged. Facing each other. Every breath a tether.

She told him everything.

The dread. The cold nights curled around the ache of missing him. The way she'd lie awake with a hand on her belly, whispering to the babies about their father. The nightmares. The guilt. The grief.

And Narcissa—

“She was the only one who didn’t let me fall apart,” Hermione whispered. “Even when I wanted to.”

Draco swallowed. His throat felt raw.

He stared at her. Possessive. Dark. Fierce. A storm in silver.

“You looked so fucking beautiful on that stand,” he growled. “I nearly came undone watching you. I nearly lost my fucking mind.”

She flushed. He leaned closer.

“And pregnant,” he muttered, low and reverent. “Gods, angel. You don’t know what it does to me. You’re *mine*—and you’re carrying *my* babies. It makes me want to lock every door. Keep you to myself. Never let another fucking man *look* at you again.”

She shivered. “Tell me.”

He didn’t need to. Not with words.

He undressed her slowly, reverently. Pressed kisses down her neck, across her swollen belly. Traced her thighs with fingertips like he was unwrapping something sacred. But there was a heat in his eyes. A punishing intensity in his touch. Not cruel—but wild. Starved. Commanding.

He bent to her stomach, lips dragging across the skin. “Mine,” he whispered. “You’re *mine*. You left. Lied. Hid from me.” His tongue flicked against the underside of her breast. “But you’re still mine. You’ll *always* be mine.”

Hermione gasped, nails curling into the sheets. “Draco—”

“Do you know what I thought everyday about in that cell?” he growled, voice velvet and venom. “This. You. Split wide open. Crying out my name. Knowing no one else would ever touch you like this.”

He moved inside her with reverence and violence. Every thrust a claim. Every kiss a vow. His hands roamed her belly, her thighs, her face. Worshipping and owning in the same breath.

She whimpered his name, hands gripping his back. He kissed her hard, punishing, tender.

"I'll never let you go. You hear me? Never."

When she came, it was with his name like confession on her tongue. When *he* came, it was with a groan that sounded like agony. Like salvation. Like surrender.

Afterward, she slept. Curled against him, one hand resting protectively over her stomach.

Draco stayed awake.

He watched her breathe. Listened to the soft sound of her heartbeat.

He turned toward her. Lowered himself down to her belly.

Pressed a kiss.

"Hello babies," he whispered.

His voice broke.

"I don't know what I'm doing. But I'm going to protect you. Always. Both of you. I'll kill for you if I have to. I'll die for you."

His forehead rested against her skin.

"You're safe now. I'll never let anything touch her again. Or you."

[img:
<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

The clinic was warm. Quiet. Hermione's hand curled in his, fingers trembling.

Draco hadn't let go of her once.

His thumb brushed slow circles over her knuckles. His other hand rested on the swell of her belly, protective, reverent—like he couldn't quite believe she was real.

"Are you nervous?" she asked softly, glancing up at him.

His voice was low. "Only that I'll blink and this will vanish. Like I'm still locked in that cell, dreaming."

Hermione leaned into him, pressing her forehead to his temple. "You're here. You're real."

The door opened, and the doctor smiled. "Ready to meet your little ones?"

Draco squeezed her hand. Nodded, his voice had stopped working.

The gel was cool. The room dimmed. The screen flickered with light and shadows and the fast, rhythmic thrum of twin heartbeats. Hermione's breath hitched. Draco went still.

"There they are," the doctor said gently. "Would you like to know the genders?"

Hermione turned to Draco, wide-eyed.

"I waited," she whispered. "I couldn't know without you. I prayed every day you'd come back to me in time so we could find out together."

Draco's throat closed.

He nodded, silent.

The doctor smiled. "A boy. And a girl."

Hermione let out a soft sob.

"A boy and a girl," he echoed, choked.

He bent, pressing a kiss to her stomach. Then another. Then another. Tears slid down his cheeks.

"You're never doing anything alone again," he said, fierce and hoarse. "Not while I'm breathing."

They held each other like they were learning how to feel again. Like the moment might save them.

"I want him to have your eyes," she said softly, brushing Draco's cheek with her fingers.

"I want her to have your smile," he whispered.

They talked about names on the drive home.

And laughed through the tears.

"Winter Narcissa," Hermione said quietly. Because it was during winter that they'd found something almost like love, something pure in the snow, in the hush of stolen nights.

Hermione had taken to calling her Winnie for short.

Draco called her his little Mouse.

"And for him?" she asked.

"Aurelian. It means golden," he said, staring deeply into her wide, sparkling eyes.

"Aurelian Pax." The Pax was quiet. Subtle. But it stood for peace. And for Pansy.

“She probably would’ve hated it,” Hermione said.

“But she’s part of them,” Draco said. “She saved you. She saved me. And I’ll make sure her name lives in peace.”

[img:

<https://i.postimg.cc/MKBRzWwQ/55cd360326e8493cc2f16f35dd72a5d0.jpg>]

They visited on a gray Sunday. The ground soft. The air cold. The cemetery quiet except for the whisper of trees.

The grave was simple. White stone. Fresh flowers. The name:
Pansy Parkinson.

Draco stood silent, fists clenched in his coat pockets.

Then he dropped to his knees.

“Thank you,” he whispered. “For everything. For saving her. For saving me.”

Hermione knelt beside him. “We’ll tell them about you,” she said. “Your niece and nephew. They’ll know what you gave for them.”

Draco’s eyes stayed on the grave. “You’re part of them. You always will be.”

They stayed there for a long time. Wrapped in grief and memory. The wind tugging at their coats. The cold biting at their cheeks.

But even in death, they had love.

And even in grief, they had each other.

Because even in darkness—they had found each other again.

And this time, they would not let go.

Epilogue

Chapter 21: Epilogue

I wrote this in three days instead of studying for my microbiology exam. It's the first story I've ever written. I can't believe I did this. But, I hope you enjoyed it.

The snow came in the night—thick and slow and quiet.

Hermione woke to it coating the manor grounds like a blessing, every stone and tree and thorn-laced hedge dusted in silver. She stood at the tall glass doors in a silk robe, steam curling from her tea, her breath fogging the window. The forest beyond looked like something out of a fairytale—untouched, glittering, still.

She heard the sound of small feet before she felt them—tiny hands wrapping around her knees, a warm cheek pressing into her hip.

“Mummy,” whispered Winnie, still drowsy, pale blue ribbon askew in her wild blonde curls. “Is it time?”

Hermione looked down, brushing her daughter’s hair from her eyes. “Almost,” she smiled. “Go wake your brother.”

Draco Malfoy had never cut down a Christmas tree before Hermione.

Not truly. Not like this.

Certainly not with one child hoisted on his shoulders, kicking snow off his coat with every bounce, and the other trudging proudly beside him with a plastic toy saw clutched in both mittened hands.

Winnie looked like sunlight—long, impossibly curly blonde hair catching the light with every bounce, a ribbon always tied firmly in an

attempt to keep the wildest strands from her glowing face. Her eyes were wide and gold, almost too large for her heart-shaped face—her mother’s eyes. She giggled easily, and squealed when snowflakes landed on her lashes.

Aurelian was smaller, quieter, but no less striking. Silver eyes that mirrored Draco’s watched the world with sharp calculation, and though his hair was kept neatly trimmed, it curled at the ends softening the edges of his solemn expression. He was methodical with his toy saw, inspecting the bark like a miniature foreman before giving his approval.

“Here,” Hermione said gently, pointing toward a cluster of evergreens nestled between two ridges. “That one’s perfect.”

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/25DgJ0xZ/Screen-Shot-2025-04-15-at-2-20-13-AM.png>]

The manor had changed.

Hermione stood at the threshold, boots dripping snow onto the polished floors, and let the warmth hit her like a slow, deep breath. Gone were the chilling echoes, the silent, too-wide halls. The marble was still ancient and grand, but it was softened now—by gold light, by curtains that danced when the windows were open.

The walls, once a gallery of cold portraits, were now crowded with life. Framed photos. Crayon masterpieces. Pressed flowers from Winnie’s garden. Aurelian’s toy soldiers were scattered across the grand staircase like tiny guards.

Even the sitting room had changed. Once bleak and uninviting, it now glowed with warmth—with soft rugs underfoot, and a family portrait above the hearth.

That night, after hot cocoa and stories by the fire, Hermione and Draco took the twins upstairs. The ceiling was bathed in soft gold, painted constellations. Glowing lights were strung above their little

beds—just like the stars Hermione once created in the dorm for Draco, years ago, to soften the sharpest parts of their world.

Winnie pointed. “There’s Daddy’s star.”

“And there’s mine,” Aurelian whispered, already blinking slow with sleep.

Packages arrived the next afternoon by courier. Blaise’s was wrapped in sleek black paper, twine tied in an elaborate knot. Inside were two leather journals—small, sturdy, monogrammed.

A note lay between them: *“For your secrets. For your spying. Just like your mum.”*

Theo’s came next—an antique chess set carved from walnut and ivory, the pieces tiny and perfect. He’d written: *“So you can learn the game early—and break the rules better.”*

And, like always, there were two small packages wrapped in velvet and tied with pink string.

“To Winnie and Aurelian. Love, Aunt Pansy.”

Draco’s hands trembled slightly as he placed them beneath the tree.

Hermione didn’t speak. Just reached for him.

[img: <https://i.postimg.cc/25DgJ0xZ/Screen-Shot-2025-04-15-at-2-20-13-AM.png>]

The next morning, they visited Lucius.

The prison was gray. Cold. Tense. The children stayed with Narcissa.

Lucius’s hair had gone white. His face, lined and worn. But his eyes were sharp as ever when he looked up and saw Draco.

He didn’t smile.

But he did nod.

Draco set a photo on the table between them—Winnie and Aurelian, lying in the snow, cheeks pink, curls wild. Hermione's handwriting marked the bottom in soft ink: Christmas, 2004.

"They'll never know violence," Draco said, quiet but steady.

Lucius didn't speak.

But his hand brushed the photo, just once.

And, that night, once the children were asleep beneath their painted stars, Draco stood on the balcony, looking out over the snowy grounds. Hermione came up behind him, slipping her arms around his waist.

He turned. Looked down at her. *His Mouse. His Angel. His Wife. His Hermione.*

No longer a girl with haunted eyes and trembling hands.

But a woman—fearless, brilliant, loved.

A mother. A survivor.

He kissed her.

Soft.

Certain.

Eternal.

Inside, the house glowed with firelight and memory.

Upstairs, the twins dreamed beneath a sky drawn by their mother's hand, wrapped in warmth and stars.

And in the stillness of the snow, as the cold wind howled through the ancient trees outside, Hermione knew—

Love had melted even the coldest winter.