

The Spiderwood Cabinet

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/56642374) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/56642374>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationships:	Hermione Granger/Draco Malfoy , Theodore Nott/Ginny Weasley , Daphne Greengrass/Harry Potter , Luna Lovegood/Ron Weasley , Astoria Greengrass/Blaise Zabini , Neville Longbottom/Pansy Parkinson
Characters:	Hermione Granger , Draco Malfoy , Theodore Nott , Harry Potter , Neville Longbottom , Blaise Zabini , Ron Weasley , Ginny Weasley , Astoria Greengrass , Luna Lovegood , Pansy Parkinson , Narcissa Black Malfoy , Daphne Greengrass , mipsy the house elf
Additional Tags:	Curse Breaker Hermione Granger , Auror Draco Malfoy , POV Hermione Granger , POV Draco Malfoy , Explicit Sexual Content , BDSM , Dom/sub , Mildly Dubious Consent , Time Travel , Pregnancy , Miscarriage , Implied/Referenced Sexual Assault , Everything is Chekov's Gun , Forced Marriage , WE ARE EARNING THAT E RATING , Harry Potter Epilogue What Epilogue EWE , Autoerotic Asphyxiation , Masturbation , Age Difference , Rough Oral Sex , Daddy! Draco Malfoy , Angst , Good BDSM Etiquette , Impact Play , Ass Play , Inappropriate Use of Malfoy's Wand , Forced Orgasm , Orgasm Edging , Temperature Play , Minor Character Death , Angst with a Happy Ending , This Might Be A Telenovela , I Tried To Write PWP and Ended Up Writing Character Development , Double Penetration , Triple Penetration , Inappropriate Use of Malfoy Signet Ring (Harry Potter) , Draco Malfoy Has a Breeding Kink , hermione is mother , Everyone lies , Easter Eggs Are Everywhere , Find Them All On The Reread
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of The Spiderwood Cabinet Universe
Stats:	Published: 2024-06-14 Completed: 2024-09-25 Words: 130,862 Chapters: 41/41

The Spiderwood Cabinet

by [Jelly_Roll](#)

Summary

Five years after the battle of Hogwarts, birthrates are low, and the Wizengamot announces a surprise marriage act. Reclusive cursebreaker Hermione Granger, deeply uninterested in love, does her best to find a *temporary solution* while overturning the new law. Meanwhile, Auror Draco Malfoy, who has been harbouring secret feelings for Hermione since the day she punched him in the nose, is determined to treat his new wife with respect and honour, fighting his darkest desires every step of the way. He might even be successful, too, until an accident with a time-travelling cursed cabinet forces both to reckon with future versions of their partners, determined to show them what they really want.

- OR -

Hermione swaps places with herself fifteen years in the future and Daddy!Draco makes her fall in love with him. While Present Day Draco learns about his and Hermione's needs.

It's the Daddyfication of Draco Malfoy.

- Translation into Русский available: [Шкаф из паучьего дерева](#) by [Bbfrombrooklyn](#)

Prologue: 1997

Chapter Notes

This is a story that began as a smut scene, which lived in my head rent-free for months until I eventually caved and wrote it down. From there, it spiralled into a smutty, angsty, and occasionally hilarious (to me) whole thing. I'll be updating tags as I post and note any new TW/CW in each chapter. This story will lean heavily into dom/sub, as well as themes of pregnancy and motherhood, so if those are your squicks, roll on by. The implied rape is not between Draco and Hermione.

Please leave love and adoration; it fills my cold soul. Or DNF it, I don't care, just keep that shit to yourself.

Also included! Songs at the end of each chapter ([Full Playlist Here](#)). My brain can't read and listen at the same time, so I think of them as end credits. Enjoy!

Please do not add this work to Goodreads or Storygraph. I am an accountant, not a writer. Constructive criticism need not apply to my hobbies.

Printing and binding for personal use is permitted. However, I do not permit this work to be stored and shared on common drives, facebook groups, discord servers or any other means of group sharing. All of the characters within are the property of JKR (ick), I do not own the rights to these characters.

Eternal love to TeTe91, overstuffedpeach, On_a_whimbrel and Silver_Snidget. I could not have written this without any of you.

Cover art is by the enormously talented winterwells

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



February, 1997

He could still feel the exact spot on his arm where she bumped into him.

It was dinner time, and she was rushing towards the dining hall. Draco hadn't eaten with his house in weeks. There was no time for socialising with friends anyway, not that anyone would even speak to him outside of Theo. Instead, he spent every waking moment not devoted to class surrounded by rubbish in the room of requirement.

Working on the fucking cabinet.

Draco wasn't sure if an exact point in time existed when everything went to shit. Some might argue it was the day he was born, having the unfortunate luck to be the son of Lucius Malfoy, the miserable bastard. Others might say it was the day he was marked against his will while

his mother screamed uselessly for mercy. But Draco often thought it was the day that Hermione Granger punched him in the face.

He had never looked at her before that, not really. She was a mudblood, so he spewed the venom his father taught him. She didn't deserve to have her stolen magic. But doubts formed as she bested him in every class. How could stolen magic outperform centuries of pureblood lineage? His father asked him the same question while Draco's hand bled from the fangs of his snakes cane.

Then she punched him.

It was so unexpectedly forceful his head whipped back to absorb the impact. *Foul. Evil*, she called him. If he was truly foul and evil, she must have been righteous and pure.

The impact of her fist knocked something loose in his soul, along with breaking his nose. He became obsessed with her. If anyone could meet the height of his emotions, it would be her. After that day, her indignant fury bled into his veins as her voice rang through the halls.

He only meant to graze her shoulder as they passed in the hallway; he just wanted to feel her body against his, if only for a moment.

But she turned at the last second, and their shoulders collided with force.

"Watch where you're going, mudblood," he sneered down at her.

Draco hadn't meant the word in years; he would have preferred to pull her upright and haul her into the room of requirement instead.

To make her his.

But as long as his mother still lived at the manor with Lucius and The Snake, Draco was forced to play his part as the youngest death eater in history. By now, with the collection of evil offences he had committed, Draco was sure she would never be his.

Hermione Granger. Destined to live in his dreams and fantasies.

So, he continued working on the cabinet. The hideous, oversized, evil cabinet that killed six small birds, one mouse and forty-three flobberworms.

Draco secretly hoped that it would never be fixed. Perhaps he would be lucky, and the Dark Lord would simply avada him for the failed task. But that would leave his mother alone; a reality he simply couldn't stomach.

He would make it through this fight with his mother alive if it was the last thing he did.

Suggested Listening: *Steal* by Maribou State, Holly Walker

May 14, 2003

Chapter Notes

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

May 14, 2003

Hermione Granger paced the aisles of Flourish & Botts, quickly scanning the shelves for this month's new releases. The display table in the front of the store always held the most popular new texts, but those were never in-depth enough to fully explore Hermione's questions. She always preferred a textbook. Heavy in hand, as if the answers themselves held a physical weight.

Satisfied with today's stack of thirteen, held in front of her by a featherlight charm, the shopkeeper rang her through with little conversation. She said a silent thank you to the small man for the quiet, grateful not to hear about the various ailments that recently struck his fourth cousin. Or whoever occupied today's small talk she ignored between him and the witch ahead of her in line. Usually, she spent more time chatting while she rang through her purchases, wanting to help with the never-ending problems the kind man seemed unfortunate enough to suffer from, but she had too much on her mind today.

Hermione mentally reviewed her to-do list for the upcoming two weeks. *Magical Woods: Not Just For Wands* sat at the top of her reading list for her current curse-breaking case at work, a stubborn cabinet with enough curses to keep her guessing.

Her texts packed carefully into her extendable beaded bag, shelved already according to topic, she left the shop and made her way down Diagon Alley, back to her flat.

The unusually warm spring air grew heavy as she climbed the narrow stairs to her third-story flat. With a quick swish of her wand, she passed through her familiar wards and paced over to her large bay window.

Fresh air drifted through the window once opened, blowing a pile of unopened scrolls inside and onto the desk below. She must have missed the owl post for more than just today by the number of them.

Multiple notes from Ginny and Pansy, with another from Daphne. All reminded her that they planned on having drinks this evening at the Leaky. Another from Ron noted Luna had returned from her sojourn in the Forbidden Forest and would be at the Leaky for girls' night, plus a postscript asking for help on a cursed inherited hat from his Aunt Muriel.

They thought I would forget.

In fairness, she did, in fact, forget. Her mind still churned from the day's work, held in Gringotts vault 614. Six weeks without progress meant the goblins were getting titchy.

A quick tempus, and she was relieved to see ten minutes to spare—enough to change and make her way to the Leaky if she hurried. Hermione rushed to her room to change, ignoring the rest of the owl post. It would always be there tomorrow.

She was only five minutes behind schedule when an irate patronus from Pansy began to hop about her bedroom. The adorable, extraordinarily bossy blue hare circled her head, ordering Hermione to *stop working immediately* and come to the Leaky.

Pansy assumed I was still in the vaults. Fair point; she's lucky it's new release day.

Friends filled the large table by the time she arrived through the Leaky floo, only eight minutes late. Pansy spoke quietly with Daphne and Luna on the bench. Across the table, Ginny was in the middle of ordering a round of drinks from Seamus when she spotted her. “Oh, good. Hermione made it. She’ll have a butterbeer, please.”

Pansy started holding court the moment Hermione sat down. “Excellent. Now that we are all here, we can decide on our plan. There’s no way I’m going to be told what to do by the Ministry, but a collective effort is always more effective. I’m planning an exposé in my column for later this week on the Minister’s motives. Daphne?”

“I’ve sent an owl off to Astoria and Blaise in Italy to come home already. She’s much better than me at pureblood politics, and we could use her right now to get more information from the Sacred Twenty-eight. Blaise, too,” Daphne said as she sipped on her butterbeer, her engagement ring sparking as she lifted the glass. “Hermione, is there anything you can do through your work at Gringotts?”

Hermione was starting to think she left something important in the owl post on her desk. “I’m sorry. What are we talking about?”

“The Marriage Act, of course,” a heavily pregnant Luna replied melodically, accepting a pumpkin juice from Seamus, who returned with their drinks. “The owls came out today with the news of a surprise legislative session from the Wizengamot. They must have been sworn to secrecy during the deliberations in fear of the public response. I know there have been some rumours, but I never thought it would happen so quickly.”

“Are you telling me The Marriage Act actually saw the light of day?” Hermione said incredulously.

“Kingsley approved it this morning.” Luna shook her head. “I never liked that man.”

Hermione sighed in disbelief. She heard rumours that marriage law talks were brewing, but it always seemed too farfetched to have any risk of actually happening. “Luna, The Marriage Act was supposed to be some pureblood pipedream to increase birthrates and establish more heirs. Why would Kingsley ever sign his name to it?” Hermione’s voice escalated out of her control, and her hair lifted at the ends as if she were statically charged.

“Kingsley is a part of the Sacred twenty-eight too, Granger,” Pansy cut in with a flourish of her hand, “and a declining population does nothing for a politician seeking re-election. Hence the last-minute switch from girls’ night to overthrowing the Wizengamot.”

Ginny leaned into the table before speaking loud enough for the whole pub to hear, “Well, I will be contributing by sending bludgers to the head of every single male I play against for the foreseeable future. Hell, I might send them towards my old teammates now that I’ve been traded from the Cannons. Can’t be matched with them if I take them all out.” She calmly put her hand on Hermione’s thigh to keep her from floating off her seat with rage.

Pansy rolled her eyes. “Ginny. You know that is not a reasonable solution. Be serious.”

“Oh, I am being serious; I’ll bludgeon them all. You know, once, I hooked up with Finch-Fletchly, and afterwards, he told me this story about how his muggle ex-girlfriend put a dead fish into his hubcap. Apparently, it legitimately ruined his life for months.” Ginny already finished her fire whiskey and signalled to Seamus for another. “Do you think I could do that to all the Wizengamot members who voted for this idiotic thing? What is the magical equivalent of a hubcap?”

Hermione momentarily startled out of her rage at the Wizengamot to hear her old classmate’s name. “Justin? When the hell did that happen, Gin? Last I heard, he was with Marietta Edgecomb.”

She struggled to keep up with Ginny’s ever-changing life after her breakup with Harry. Though Hermione never quite got to the bottom of why they broke up. Harry maintained a suspicious silence about it, other than saying they weren’t as compatible as he thought.

“This was ages before Marietta,” Ginny dismissed her with a wave. “One spin around on the broom was more than enough for my taste anyway.”

Pansy stared daggers at Ginny. “Let’s perhaps table the dead fish idea for now, Weasley?” She turned to face Hermione, calming her expression. “Granger. You’ve obviously missed the post today, though I cannot say I’m surprised by this.” Pansy paused, clearly steeling herself to be the bearer of bad news. “Forty-six of the fifty Wizengamot members enacted the marriage act overnight. They’ve claimed precedent from past wizarding wars as successful measures to boost populations, and we have six months to find a match and be married. Otherwise, a match will be selected for us.”

Hermione absorbed the news as fast as she could, trying to figure out which four Wizengamot members voted against the measure. She would need allies to take down the act, and they would be the place to start.

Pansy turned back to the table, continuing her master plan, “While I’m confident that my colleagues and I at Witch Weekly can place enough pressure to eventually get this repealed, realistically, it may take months. So, we actually need two plans right now.” Her palms rested upon the table in seriousness. “First, we need to figure out how to put this law in the bin where it belongs. Second, we need to find ourselves a palatable match in the interim. You know the Ministry isn’t going to give a flying fwooper who they slap together six months from now.”

“Pansy,” Hermione started, pausing her mental Rolodex of Wizengamot members, “While I am in complete agreement that this law is unjust, unlawful, oppressive, and all sorts of deeply

offensive other things we could spend ages discussing, I'm not sure I heard you right. Are you suggesting we all start husband hunting?"

"Well, you three certainly should," Luna said. "Daphne and I are already spoken for, though I'm sure Daphne likely objects to the children clause."

Hermione lighted with rage, "Someone, please tell me what the children clause is." Logically speaking, she knew what was coming. The act's primary purpose was to increase populations, but she needed to hear it out loud to believe it entirely.

"The children clause states that all matches must produce one child within the first two years unless medically proven to be unable to do so. If a couple does not produce a child within this time frame, the marriage will automatically be dissolved with a new match assigned," Daphne replied with a sigh.

"I see." Breathing started to become difficult for Hermione. "So, no consideration for those of us who have alternative priorities from becoming housewives and broodmares?"

"Not really, love." Daphne winced.

The room seemingly spun around her.

Pansy was right. Even if they could get the new law overturned, it would undoubtedly take more than six months. The paperwork and bureaucratic nonsense alone would easily take up the whole time. By the time they were successful, the ministry might have matched her with any number of awful partners.

Previous friends and classmates from Hogwarts started running through her mind as potential assigned matches. *Dean, Ernie, Adrian, Malfoy, Goyle. Oh, gods, what if it's Goyle?*

Pansy spoke softly, interrupting Hermione's spiralling thoughts, "Hermione, love. Do you think you want to take a minute and catch your breath?"

She could barely hear the suggestion over the roar that escalated in her ears. If Hermione ended up matched to a genuinely terrible person, she might end up in a situation where she would have to defend herself physically. There were still plenty of wizards and witches who were secret lovers of dark magic, and just because the war ended didn't mean the world was now free of evil. Safety concerns began mounting in her brain, considering that some people might not evade this fate.

Not unless they found their own matches first.

Ginny silently swapped seats at the table with Pansy, who put her palm on Hermione's back. Firm strokes moved up and down her spine, tampering her building rage.

Hermione and Pansy had shared the same mind healer since the battle of Hogwarts. All of the returning eighth years were mandated therapy as a condition of their return to school. Hogwarts claimed an *abundance of caution* was required to keep the peace, while

simultaneously housing seventeen students together in a single dorm, mere months after they fought on either side of the war.

Between living together and crossing paths in the Healer Stroud's waiting room over time, Hermione eventually found herself on the receiving end of Pansy's softhearted nature. The version of Pansy usually hidden away from those not lucky enough to be in her inner circle.

Eventually, through Pansy, Hermione became closer to Daphne, Astoria, and Theo, and Hermione brought Luna and Neville along and into the fold.

Ginny left at the chance to play for the Hollyhead Harpies, and Harry and Ron started their auror training only two months after the war. Without her three closest friends returning, Hermione was grateful for the newfound friendships. All of them living together found the space to grow up together, no longer living on high alert for the evil that might have been lurking around any corner.

Harry and Ron sauntered over from the front door just as Hermione caught her breath. Rage still rolled off her shoulders, but the sight of her two oldest friends warmed her chest. Whenever she saw them in their red auror robes, they would always look like kids playing dress-up to her. She could never adjust her mind to take them in as adults; too many times she took care of them while they were in the war.

"No Draco today?" Pansy asked as Daphne kissed Harry hello, making room on the bench for him to sit next to her.

"Not today," Harry replied, trying to right his bedraggled robes. "He had some business at the manor with his mother after shift today. Based on the day we had, I don't know if he's got any energy left to get through whatever Narcissa has in store for him. We haven't stopped since a crate of boggarts broke open on Knockturn this morning." He settled into the bench further, seemingly satisfied with his appearance, and looked over to Hermione for the first time since arriving. "Hermione, are you alright?"

"Yes. Quite fine, thank you, Harry." Hermione bristled. "I was just getting up to speed on The Marriage Act. Did you know about this?"

"Not a single word of warning," Ron chimed in, helping Luna up off the bench and by his side. "Would have been helpful, too. There's going to be protests in the streets after the way this thing got passed. We'll never be off the clock again."

Hermione continued staring Harry down, narrowing her eyes in suspicion. There was no way he didn't know about the act beforehand. Kingsley treated him as if no time had passed since the war, deeming Harry his favourite auror, merited or not.

"I swear, Hermione, I didn't know," Harry stated, using his best you're under arrest auror voice as if that would sway Hermione. It would have been more effective if she didn't catch him practising the voice in the mirror years ago at Grimmauld Place.

Nevertheless, Hermione actually believed him. He wouldn't keep such a secret from her.

Luna leaned further into her husband, holding her belly up with one hand. “Ladies, I would love to stay and plan further, but Ronald has promised to take me home early today. We’re painting a mural in the nursery this weekend and need to clear the wrack spurts before we begin. I’ll speak to my father and see what the Quibbler should be doing about this awful news. Pansy, I’ll owl you on coordination with Witch Weekly if that’s alright.”

“Yes, Luna, that would be wonderful. Thank you.” Pansy smiled at them as they strolled away, hand in hand. “Good luck with the wrackspurts, Weasley,” she called out after them, a smirk on her face

Ron and Luna found each other soon after Hermione and Ron’s relationship fizzled out; if one could even call it a relationship. Much to Molly’s delight, they married within months of dating, moving into a small cottage near the burrow.

They were well suited, Hermione thought. Luna’s purposeful obliviousness to Ron’s insecurities forced him to set them aside, and his strategic nature provided her with much-needed focus.

Since Ron, Hermione dated a series of men, not overly concerned if and when she would find someone. None of the men were ever enough for her. There was no spark in conversation, no challenging of wits, and zero chemistry in the bedroom. She had nearly resigned herself to leading a life alone, satisfying herself with work and the occasional vibrator.

Hermione’s last date, if you could even call it a date, months ago—was an enormous mountain of a quidditch player from the Cannons that Ginny set her up with.

While Callum did have the most marvellous broom thighs, he was dumber than a stump and useless in the bedroom. Six minutes of unsatisfying missionary sex, followed by snores that rivalled the Hogwarts Express, didn’t leave Hermione with any remorse as she snuck out of his flat.

Her butterbeer was long since empty. Seamus made himself busy wiping down the surface as she strode over to the empty bar to order another.

“Hey, Hermione. How have you been? Need another?”

“Great Sea.” Hermione passed her empty mug over the bar top. “Another butterbeer, please?”

Seamus leaned into the taps as he refilled her mug. “You sure? After today’s owls, you don’t want something a wee bit stronger than that?”

“No, that’s alright. The butterbeer is fine.” Truthfully, she’d like a whole bottle of wine to herself. But the leaky was known for its limited selection: red or white. She would stick with the butterbeer.

“Uhh... Hermione.” Seamus awkwardly wiped his hands on his cloth behind the bar. “I’m glad I caught you, actually, because there was something I wanted to ask you, actually.”

Hermione wasn't sure where this was going, but she knew she didn't like it. "Sea, I don't think –"

"Don't skip ahead," Seamus tutted as he leaned over the bar. "What I was wanting to ask you was, something along the lines of, you know, with the marriage act and all. Oh, I should've planned this, really." He stammered, wrenching his hands within the cloth. "I mean, if you wanted to. Might be a good idea, is all."

"Sea," Hermione sputtered in disbelief. "Are you asking me to marry you right now?"

"No, yeah, no. I just thought maybe ye might like to go out on a wee date?" Seamus laughed nervously. "Well, maybe marriage six months from now... but anyway, you know, most people were saying today it would be better to find your own match than let the ministry choose, heads up their arses and all. So I thought maybe you and I might have a bit of a date to see if we were compatible and all that."

Hermione felt her shoulders lower to their normal height after what was essentially almost a marriage proposal from an Irish bartender. "You know what Sea? Why not? What's the worst that could happen?"

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *labour* by Paris Paloma

For those who caught it, Seamus' dialogue is directly lifted from Dominic's proposal in *The Banshees of Inisherin*.. Go watch that movie. It's perfection.

May 15, 2003

Chapter Notes

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

May 15, 2003

Daily Prophet Reveals Surprise Marriage Act!

Early yesterday morning, the flock of owls departing from the Ministry carried surprise news for those unmarried between the ages of 20 and 45. Legislation enacted overnight by the wizengamot is forcing all those notified to be married by November 1, less than six months from today.

Those who have not been married by this date will receive a secondary owl on November 2, 2003. This owl is sure to be more ominous than the first, holding an assigned match from the Ministry.

The Ministry's lips are sealed on how it plans to create these matches and ensure compatibility. However, unofficial quotes from those in the ministry have informed us that a new Department of Love is being staffed up rather quickly, taking most of its employees from the Department of Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures.

We at the Daily Prophet are left to wonder if the DRCMC has too much free time on their hands. Were there not enough nifflers to register that they needed to expand to wizards and witches?

Perhaps this new department will know best after all, and love will be in the air for young wizards and witches throughout Britain.

See page six for our expanded wedding announcement column.

Hermione tossed the crumpled paper into the bin and pushed away her full breakfast plate. Her appetite disappeared, only adding to the stress of a nightmare-fueled sleep. In less than six months, she would be shafted with who knows what wizard unless she found her own match first.

With a scan through the abandoned scrolls and newspapers from yesterday's pile, there was no further information she hadn't already regrettably found out last night. She cleared the last piece of the post into the bin as a tiny white-faced owl tapped on the windowpane.

"Hello, Pig. Hold on, let me get you a treat." Hermione rooted around her desk for her bag of owl treats while Pigwidgeon hopped from foot to foot. She unfurled the scroll from his leg, and the small owl perched himself on the edge of the desk to hoot sharply at her.

“Waiting for a response, is she? Alright, let’s see then.” Hermione scratched the top of his head while reading Ginny’s message.

H -

After you left last night, I ran into Theo at the pub. I’m setting you up on a date with him, but under the condition that it’s a double. Bring a date for me, and make sure they’re fit.

Friday 7 PM at Hobnobs.

- G

P.S. I’ve already taken Theo’s broomstick for a test drive and can confirm it works fine. Please consider this another apology for my previous error with Callum.

A single laugh escaped Hermione’s mouth. “She’s tested out Theo’s broomstick? I must have missed that one, too, Pig. Your owner certainly has a way around town.” She wrote out an affirmative and sent it back with Pig, mentally adding finding a date for Ginny onto her to-do list.

If she thought optimistically, she *had* secured two dates in the last twenty-four hours. Sure, they were with a pyromaniac bartender and the heir to one of the most curse-ridden mansions in Britain, but at least they were both nice.

Hermione often saw Theo come into Gringotts while she worked, as he cycled through the cursed objects of Nott Manor. They became close during their eighth year, forced into friendship by Pansy. But the pale boy with hollow eyes and short curly hair never left Hogwarts.

By the time they graduated and Nott Sr. received his Azkaban life sentence, the life had returned to Theo. His buoyant personality matched the dark chestnut curls that bounced when he walked. He was full of mischief and joy, nothing like the boy his father nearly destroyed. She considered him briefly, perhaps not the worst option for a forced match.

Hermione readied herself for work, donning her usual trainers, denims and a chunky knit sweater, pulling her hair into a (mostly) tidy pile atop her head. The goblins weren’t particular about what she wore to work, having no concerns over her muggle clothes. She spent most of her days by herself anyway, deep in the mines.

With a mental reminder to herself to send out owls on her lunch break to the few available wizards she knew, Hermione only had three days to find a date for Ginny.

As usual, she was the first to arrive in the cursebreakers’ office space at Gringotts. Hermione didn’t mind; she barely spoke to the others, except for Bill; currently on a four-month assignment in Egypt.

There was no shortage of work since the war ended, with the Ministry mandating all dark objects be evaluated and their curses removed. Hermione worked as the on-site curse breaker, moving from vault to vault to search for dark objects and remove their curses.

An unprecedented agreement between the Goblins and the Ministry, who typically refused to work together, kicked off the immense amount of work. Hermione remained curious about the value of the contract the goblins negotiated to gain exclusive rights to the heavy workload, but it wasn't a question one could really ask in polite circles.

While the first 500-odd vaults flew by in her first three years of work, the deeper into the mine she worked, the longer each vault took to clear.

A set of straight O scores on her nine N.E.W.T.s in her eighth year bought Hermione a slew of employment offers from the Ministry, St. Mungo's, and even one from Ollivander to apprentice as a wandmaker. But a personal note from Bill Weasley telling her she had the potential to be a cursebreaker with a skill set that many would be envious of immediately sold her on a career path. During her interview with the head goblin, a short, dragon-related non-apology apology smoothed over any past offences, and Hermione gladly signed her employment contract.

Kingsley had offered the same fast track as an auror to Hermione that Harry and Ron received, but the excitement from taking down villains was long gone. She needed puzzles to solve, problems to fix, and the promise of continued research. Curse breaking more than provided those.

A glance at the wall clock told Hermione the workday started four minutes ago. She lost track of time in her newest textbook, reading at her desk, preparing for her day. She'd been absorbed in the material for over an hour.

Hermione packed her beaded bag and set off for the rail cars. The curse breakers enjoyed a private car that did not need the goblins to operate, which Hermione appreciated sincerely. She didn't want to inconvenience a goblin to traffic her around during the day, nor did she desire to engage in small talk. Her sleeves shoved up her arms in preparation for the descent; Hermione grasped the lever and steeled herself for the eight-minute descent to vault 614.

The Lestrage vault must have been one of the darkest she had seen yet. Hermione had already cleared curses from all the pieces in the jewellery case, now sent off to the ministry for war reparations. She was well on her way to clearing out the larger items, including her current mystery. An oversized cabinet that mocked her from the right side of the vault.

Hermione cast her usual diagnostic charm, which showed two red glowing runes above her. A vast improvement from the eight that were shown weeks ago, but still not considered clear of dark magic.

Dark curses like the ones on this cabinet often needed to be cleared in order and she removed them like layers of time, working inwards from the most recent to the oldest. Sadly, the most complex curses were often the oldest, and Hermione was remiss that some of the most impressive magic became lost to the ages, not passed down through time. Even if dark and ominous.

Dagaz glowed a furious red above her, only slightly more prominent than Ingwaz to its left. The curse triggering the Dagaz rune proved the oldest by the depth of its glow, so Hermione shifted her focus to the Ingwaz trigger.

She cast a protective shield around herself as she worked, closing in on the cabinet with each spell. So often did junior curse-breakers get hit with blowback of their own magic as they attempted to undo the creeping darkness. Hermione herself had been hit a few times, with various scars to prove it. But curse-breakers were an egotistical bunch.

Scars were trophies.

Her worst was a long, angry scar that weaved around her left thigh and snaked down her calf. Coloured nearly the same shade as the purple scar she received from Greyback years ago and twice the size.

Except she had pride in the scar on her leg. It was earned. She wasn't subjected to it.

It certainly didn't give her nightmares.

Touching the scar through her denims, she was reminded of the moment she woke up in St. Mungos with Harry and Bill standing bedside. Bill had grinned like a fool, looking immensely proud of her, while Harry's face turned downwards, fraught with worry.

"Do you know how badly you scared me Hermione? Being your emergency contact is an exercise in how fast I can age sometimes. Did we not get into enough danger while living in a tent?"

"Speak for yourself, Auror," Hermione replied sarcastically. "It's only fair since you made me yours. I'm more than fine anyway." She reached out her hand to him, wordlessly asking for assistance to sit up in her bed. An agonising pain shot through her leg as she moved, but there was no way she would tell Harry that, she thought, schooling her expression.

"Bill was just showing me a spell he learned in Egypt, and I tested it out on a set of cursed boots in one of the shallow vaults. It was only a little blowback." Understatement of the year, Hermione laughed to herself; she had practically been shot straight out of the boots like a cannon.

Harry ran his hand through his hair. "You've been out for over an hour, Hermione. Your leg is a mess. The healer says you'll be here for at least two days. That's more than a little blowback." He began pacing the room, obviously preparing to lean into his lecture.

"Well, in fairness, if I were casting that specific spell on the boots myself, I would have confirmed it worked before I put one on. Bit of a rookie mistake." Bill grinned madly, though his eyes showed a semblance of worry as he glanced at her bandaged leg. "But that's how we learn, you know. She's officially earned her stripes now. Literally."

Regrettably, Hermione did not give the boots enough time to allow the spell to take hold and dissipate the dark magic. They had been beckoning at her for days, and she couldn't stop herself from pulling one onto her foot. Even as the magic snaked up her leg, she questioned her judgement. The boot was hideous, really.

Hermione had earned that scar. Three years later, she had become one of the most talented cursebreakers on the team. She thrived on her time in the vaults, preferring to work alone,

creating new spells, and became a point of reference for even her most experienced colleagues.

She shoved up her sleeves once again and began to cast her wand upon the cabinet, attempting to lessen Ingwaz's angry glow above her. Nothing in her usual repertoire worked on this rune, and as of late last week, she theorised the species of wood as the source of her stalemate.

Magical Woods: Not Just For Wands in hand, along with a quill and notebook, Hermione quickly learned the spell from the first chapter to determine the exact species she worked with. A cast of her wand sent the notebook to float away beside her, flipping open to the correct page while her charmed quill began to scribble down the most imperative sections of the text.

Ziricote, known scientifically as Cordia dodecandra, nicknamed spiderwood, sources from Mexico. Produces orange flowers during the months of February to May. Magical items using this wood can be easily identified due to the unique spider-webbing pattern of the grain. Resistant to decay and exceedingly rare, this wood is most often seen used in heirloom furniture.

*Magical Woods' Affordability Rating: 5/5 Galleons.
Additional details on page 146.*

Heirloom furniture indeed, Hermione thought as she flipped the text to the indicated page. She compared the spider webbing pattern within the images to the cabinet before her—an exact match. She continued reading, searching for the details on magical properties.

The nature of the spider webbing pattern of the ziricote has been renowned for centuries for its ability to channel magical energy. Furniture makers often imbued protection charms within the patterns to protect the contents from theft or harm. While mainly used for small jewellery boxes, affluent families commonly fashioned bassinets out of this wood, ensuring the protection of their new heirs.

The cabinet was enormous. Hermione could certainly climb into it and fit herself comfortably for a nap if she so dared. Its construction likely required at least fifteen times the wood compared to a tiny cot. The price of having it custom-built would have certainly been exorbitant. Although that was less of a surprise, considering the depth of the mine she stood in.

Dark magic practitioners have been known to channel the spider web pattern for their nefarious means. A fine line between protection and possession could allow nefariously cast spells to easily take hold, or improperly cast spells to evolve within the wood.

Use with caution.

Hermione shivered. Based on her diagnostic, the current curse dated at least a hundred years old. It likely evolved along the grain to become something completely different from the caster's original intent. Her brain spun with possibility. She would have to dive deeper into

the connection between the ingwaz rune and the protection charms commonly used at the time of the original curse.

The sound of Hermione's stomach growling caught her off guard as she continued to hypothesise in her small notebook. Absorbed in the day's new information, it had to be past lunchtime, she thought with a starving realisation. A quick tempus showed half-three.

Unable to tear herself away from today's progress, Hermione summoned her beaded bag and found the ham and cheese sandwich she packed earlier this morning. She worked through her notes as she devoured the cold meal.

It was enough to keep her going, at least.

Hermione considered a break from the cabinet to allow herself time to ruminate on her next steps. She created a list of books she knew already resided in her small home library, plenty of reading for the upcoming week. With a desire to complete her day with a sense of success, Hermione set to remove a few smaller curses in the vault before going home.

Sometime later, Hermione collected the pile of freshly uncursed items to complete her daily report for the goblins. An emerald tiara with a particularly impressive slicing curse sat atop the day's achievements, but none of the objects today provided any real challenge, apart from the cabinet. Hermione felt refreshed with this approach and her sense of accomplishment and decided to focus another day or two on small objects before returning to the cabinet.

~

Hermione's pile of clean and uncursed objects had grown significantly, and her report to the Goblins on vault 614 turned into a respectable stack of parchment. A wiggle of her arms sent her sleeves back down from their bunched-up place at her elbows, and she prepared to head back to the surface to take the next few hours to complete her paperwork.

Ginny's horse patronus pranced around her legs while she cast her wand to seal the vault for the evening, "Hermione. Please don't be late for our double date tonight. You better have found me someone fit!" The horse galloped away.

Shit. Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit. Ginny's date.

Hermione checked her wristwatch. Luckily, it was still early afternoon, which gave her a couple of hours to scramble and find a date for Ginny.

Who on earth would agree to a date with a famously intimidating female quidditch player within hours would be a short list, Hermione thought, searching her brain for names.

~

The humidity of the plant shop, tucked in on the far corner of Diagon Alley, always gave Hermione a sense of comforting warmth. Neville's magical green thumb thrived on all available shop surfaces, including the ceiling, with leaves nestled in between the rafters. She

felt such pride in her friend every time she came to the shop; he had come such a long way since the days of searching for Trevor, the toad on the train.

“Hiya, Hermione.” Neville beamed as he came out of the back room. “What are you in for today? I’ve got a great big dittany in the back.”

He knew her well.

“Thanks, Nev. I would love that,” she replied, working herself up to the ridiculous question, “I’m here for a small favour today if you’re amenable.”

Neville reached behind the curtain to pull out a lush, leafy plant with multiple purple blossoms. “Anything for you, Hermione. My gran still talks about all the work you did for the estate last year.”

“Anything?” She wasn’t so sure. “You might regret that offer in a minute.”

Neville set down the plant and looked at her expectantly.

“After this ridiculous marriage act business, I agreed to go on a double date with Ginny and promised to bring her a date.” Hermione began to ramble, picking up speed, “It’s just that the date is this evening, and I forgot to find someone for her. You don’t even have to consider it a date if you don’t want to! I’m sure she’ll just be happy to see you as a friend. Please, Neville? I’ll owe you one.” She took a deep breath as she finished.

Neville chuckled softly, rubbing the back of his neck with his hand. He seemed to be thinking it over as he wrapped up her dittany.

Hermione knew women were after Neville; his grandmother told her all about his multiple marriage offers from the other pureblood families, but Hermione never once knew Neville to date anyone.

A curious thought struck Hermione. If she had to be stuck with someone while overturning this law, Neville might not be the worst choice. He was a good friend and certainly easy on the eyes. By the looks of him, he had not once used a featherlight charm on the various bags of soil around his garden and shop.

He handed her the wrapped plant, and she began to search within her extendable bag for the change purse. “How much?”

He waved her away. “For you? On the house. While I’d rather you not need it, I’m sure it will get good use.”

“And the date?” she asked hesitantly, pulling her hand out of her bag.

He released a sigh, “Sure, Hermione, I’ll go. But just as a friend? I know enough about Ginny to know that we’re not well suited.”

“Yes, Nev. Of course. Friends.” Relief washed over Hermione. “I’ll make it clear to Ginny the moment I see her. It’s 7PM at Hobnobs by the way. Meet you there?”

“Sure, Hermione. That would be great.” He brushed his hands against his apron before opening the door for her. “I’ll see you then.”

Perhaps the date would have additional possibility, Hermione thought as she left. Neville might be the exact option she was looking for.

~

Hobnobs was the latest restaurant on Diagon Alley. Casual enough that most wizards and witches frequented it for an after-work beverage but it boasted an infinitely better menu than the Leaky, so it was often frequented for dates. Cosy, dimly lit booths lined the restaurant's walls, while busier tables filled the centre of the space.

With a scan of the restaurant for Ginny, Hermione found her already seated in the corner booth with Theo, leaning over the table and waving her hands in conversation excitedly. Hermione braced herself for the fallout of failing to find a suitable date for the witch before she strode over to join them at the booth, sliding in next to Ginny.

“Hermione!” Theo exclaimed as she sat down. “So glad you agreed to our little date.” He leaned across the table to place a swift kiss on her cheek. “Ginny tells me you are husband hunting.”

Ginny scoffed. “Theodore, you know that is not what I said. Besides, you never finished telling me about Cho. I’m invested now.”

“Ginevra Weasley, that is hardly polite conversation while I am on a date with Hermione.” Theo smiled sweetly at Hermione before glaring at Ginny with a raised eyebrow. “That is why I’m here, isn’t it?”

Ginny snapped her mouth shut just as Neville approached the booth.

“Hiya Hermione, Ginny.” Neville nodded politely at them before sitting down next to Theo and shaking his hand. “Theo, I didn’t know you’d be here this evening; how’ve you been?”

Moments like this had Hermione thankful most students returned for eighth year. Nearly everyone in attendance, with a few notable exceptions like Millicent Bullstrode, agreed to let bygones be bygones.

She no longer stressed about interactions between Gryffindors and Slytherins as she once did. Something about children fighting in a war on behalf of their parents and professors put life into perspective: that and the mandated mind healers, of course.

“Well, Longbottom. I need to stop by your shop soon, though. The renovations could benefit from some greenery in just about every room. Anything to lighten up the mood,” Theo replied. “I’m only halfway through the manor now with one of Hermione’s colleagues.” He shifted to face Hermione. “Still no chance you want to take over? It would be done in half the time. The old wizard Gringotts sent moves about as slow as a flobberworm.”

She shook her head. "Sorry, Theo, too much going on in the vault." Hermione often took on-site work for friends, clearing curses from old homes, including Neville's grandmother. But the sheer volume of dark items at Nott Manor was no favour; it was a full-time job. Hermione felt a pang of sympathy for Theo, knowing the oldest and slowest curse-breaker on the team had been sent.

Ginny shifted to ignore Theo, directing her attention to Neville, being painfully obvious in the way she assessed how tight his henley fit his broad chest and arms. "Hey Neville, are you my date for the evening?"

Neville sighed at Hermione, "Did you not tell her?"

"Sorry, I just got here and didn't get the chance." Hermione turned to Ginny, who was still staring at Neville's chest instead of his face. Theo, on the other hand, looked on incredulously at Ginny. "Gin, I'm sorry. I couldn't get you a date, not in the sense you wanted anyway. Neville kindly agreed to come as a friend to complete the foursome."

Ginny visibly deflated. "Figures," she muttered as Theo scoffed into his drink.

"Neville, why don't you and I get drinks at the bar," Hermione announced to the table, standing before he could answer. Obviously, something was occurring between Theo and Ginny, and Hermione couldn't tell if it was romantic or otherwise. Whatever it was, she didn't want to be around to witness the result.

"That went well," Neville commented to no one as they reached the bar, leaving the other two to hash out whatever was happening between them.

Hermione ordered a bottle of red wine and four glasses for the table, grateful Ginny didn't pick the Leaky. A butterbeer would not have been enough for the mood brewing at her table.

While waiting for the wine, Hermione summoned the courage to address Neville directly with the thought that had been stewing in her mind since earlier that day. "Neville. Do you think we could..." She paused, defaulting to the solution before explaining the problem; her worst habit.

He leaned against the bartop while waiting silently for her to continue.

"I'm trying to find a husband before getting matched by the ministry," Hermione blurted out. "Not a real husband, mind you, but a temporary solution until the act is overturned. Pansy and I are working together to get it overturned. But I need a husband in the interim."

Neville's brow lifted at the mention of Pansy Parkinson. "Is she now?"

Why the fuck is he focused on Pansy and not the fact that I am currently proposing marriage? Hermione thought in irritation.

Her voice escalated. "Neville Longbottom. I am trying to ask you to marry me."

The bartender, choosing that precise moment to return with their order, cast a judging eye as he set down their wine and backed away slowly.

Neville began to laugh. “Hermione. You can’t be serious. You’re on a date with Theo.”

Hermione turned back to look towards the booth they left the other half of their foursome in. Theo, who changed sides to sit beside Ginny, wouldn’t have noticed a hippogriff enter the restaurant. He was too busy twirling red hair between his fingers and whispering into her neck.

She snorted. “Yes, because my date is clearly going so well.”

Neville’s eyes widened as he took in the same sight as Hermione. His mouth opened to speak, but he took a moment before a response formed. “Look... Hermione. I’m flattered, but I have to say no.” He reached out his hand to rest on her shoulder. “I’m sure you’ll find someone, but it can’t be me.”

Her stomach clenched at the rejection. Neville would have been a real possibility. He would have been safe. She couldn’t understand why he was saying no.

“I’m going to head out, Hermione. Again, I’m really sorry.” His head tilted slightly to the side, assessing her closely before he turned and left the restaurant without so much as a goodbye to his so-called date.

Hermione swayed into the bar top in disbelief, bumping into the wine bottle waiting for her. Still corked.

With a quick scan to confirm no one was paying attention, Hermione grabbed the wine and tucked it into her extendable beaded bag. Another final glance over at her booth, where Theo and Ginny were already snogging inappropriately, and she knew neither of them would miss her as she strode out the door.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Special Girl* by dodie

I’ve never been convinced that Hermione was ever a good friend to Ginny in canon. The girl is obviously working through some shit. You think a bestie would check in. Also, please be patient with Ginny, she’s working through some shit.

Author's Update (3/25): The Price of Fate is now out on AO3! This is the Theo/Ginny story of Spiderwood. Read Theo's version of events of this date there! It's certainly not what you think...

July 1, 2003

Chapter Notes

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

July 2003

Hermione exited the back door of Grimmauld Place early Saturday morning, four hours ahead of Harry and Daphne's wedding. The backyard stood easily the size of a standard quidditch pitch, and the transformation that Daphne and her sister were able to complete for the wedding proved nothing short of miraculous.

With a silent appreciation for how much work the sisters put into the event, Hermione was thankful she was part of the groom's party instead of the bride's. Daphne told her specifically, no more than four times; all she wanted was for Hermione to be there for Harry and to keep him calm. They collectively predicted that Harry would be understandably emotional over his parents and the marauders, and Hermione was determined to keep him grounded for the day.

She climbed up to the second floor to find Harry getting ready in the spare room, laughing silently to herself at the sounds of his cursing his hair. Much more manageable than dead parents, she thought wistfully. With a tentative opening of the door, Hermione peeked inside to see what she was up against.

Of course, today, of all days, he is attempting to comb that hair.

"Harry," she began, closing the door behind her, "can I help you with anything?"

He became quite a handsome grown-up, Hermione thought with surprise. She took in the sharp dress robes that Daphne picked out—a deep black but for the slightest hint of red around the cuffs for Gryffindor. It wasn't very often Hermione saw past the child she grew up with and took Harry in for the man he grew into.

"Yes, Hermione. Please," Harry begged as he threw the old comb onto the bed in exasperation. "I don't know why I attempted a comb."

With an easy swish of her wand, Hermione cast a complicated spell to minimise the damage Harry caused, though there was no tidying his mess of black hair. "Daphne loves your hair just as it is. I'm sure it will be fine. You look wonderful, by the way."

Cautiously, Harry poked at a stray tuft of hair in the mirror, seeming satisfied. "Thanks, Hermione." He took in her appearance in the mirror's reflection. "You clean up alright yourself."

As part of the groom's party, Hermione was blessedly exempted from wearing a bridesmaid dress with Astoria and Pansy. While their dresses were beautiful, and a far cry from the horrific bridesmaids' dresses Daphne could have put them in, there was something quite

unfortunate about wearing the same dress as two tall, beautiful purebloods who were raised with the exclusive purpose of being seen by men.

With Daphne's blessing, Hermione opted for a dark shimmering black gown to match Harry and Ron's robes. An inconspicuous Gryffindor red hemmed the dress, with a small train in the back and cutting just below her knees in the front to show off her sparkling shoes. When Hermione purchased them, they reminded her of Cinderella, the movie she watched so frequently with her parents as a child, though few of her friends would understand the reference.

The attendant at Madame Malkins had offered Hermione matching gloves with a raised eyebrow to her scar when she purchased the gown and shoes. After a brief moment of consideration, Hermione decided against the gloves. While her nightmares persisted from that day on the floor in Malfoy Manor, wearing gloves in the height of summer was simply impractical.

Now that her arms were bare, she somewhat regretted the choice.

Hermione spun in place to show off her glittering dress, and Harry let out a low whistle when he saw her exposed back, "Jeez, Hermione. Husband hunting at my wedding, that's brave of you."

"Husband hunting?" She feigned offence. "Harry, I would never!"

"It's alright, Hermione, I'm only kidding. You've never been one to waste an opportunity."

She had racked up a few dates. However, none were even remotely successful. Hermione crossed Theo off her list early on, not bothering to think about that ill fated night any further. She certainly didn't consider her proposal to Neville a date, but Harry set her up with two auror colleagues, and then there were the two dates with George Weasley, who since eloped with Angelina Johnson.

No date was as much of a failure as the one with Seamus Finnegan.

She had met up with Seamus for an ice cream at Fortescue's a few weeks ago on a particularly sunny afternoon. After the catastrophe of a date with Theo and failed proposal to Neville, Hermione determined she should be better prepared to evaluate her matches. The more rumours she heard about the ministry's failure to plan, the more she strived to find her own husband.

Armed with prepared notes in her extendable bag, she readied her list while Seamus was ordering ice cream at the counter, starting off as he sat down. "I have a few questions here, Seamus, and they're numbered one through fifteen. So if you want, you can pick a number."

"Questions about what?" He seemed taken aback by her efforts. "Was I supposed to bring homework for our date?"

Hermione ignored his tone, confident that her new approach would be sufficient for the purposes of their date. "Our compatibility, of course. Don't worry; I can pick the first

number for you; how about ten? What is something you think you excel at?"

"Uhhhhh. Explosives?" Seamus stammered back.

"Interesting answer." Hermione jotted down his answer in her notebook, forgetting her ice cream as it melted down her wrist. Without looking up, she accepted a napkin from Seamus to clean the mess. "Next question, number four, perhaps."

"Hold on, now, shouldn't you answer the same question?"

"You know, I was just going to ask the questions. I wasn't really anticipating getting the same ones back." Hermione returned to her notebook, immediately concerned that she didn't know the answers to any of the numbered items. Not truly. Each would need time and consideration.

She might need to rework this approach, Hermione thought in frustration.

"Hermione, I just wanted a wee ice cream with you, not to relive my NEWTS. I'm not sure we're that compatible, actually." Seamus moved to leave their table. "Truth be told, I'm not sure why I thought we were compatible in the first place now."

She could still feel the ice cream dripping down to her elbow as she got rejected not five minutes into a date with Seamus Finnegan, of all people.

Hermione settled onto the chair in the corner as Harry started to fix his tie. "Harry. Do you think... never mind." She wasn't sure if she could articulate the emotion that began to bubble up over the past few weeks.

"What is it, Hermione?"

She felt a blush coming down her cheeks. "Do you think I'm lovable?"

"Lovable?" Harry asked back, looking confused. "Of course, I think you are lovable; why would you even --"

Hermione interrupted, "Everyone has always called me the smartest person in the room or the brightest witch of her age or complimented me on solving everyone else's problems."

Harry nodded along, allowing her to build momentum. She sometimes forgot how easy he was to talk to.

"And I know I'm a lot to take on sometimes. I get lost in projects and can be impatient, and my hair may, at one point, strangle someone who gets too close." Hermione landed upon the awful feeling as she thought aloud. "It's just that no one has ever loved me."

"Well, that's just untrue. I love you."

She shook her head. "No, Harry. I mean, like the way you and Daphne love each other. I see what you have, and I don't think it will ever actually happen for me. I'm always too much for everyone." Hermione stared at Harry's crooked bow tie, realising the poor timing of her

confession. “Gods, listen to me going on and on your wedding day. Harry, I’m so sorry. Forget I ever said anything.”

“Hermione.” Harry paced over to wipe the tear that escaped onto her cheek and brought her up into a crushing hug. “You are extraordinarily lovable. You just haven’t found the person yet that is worthy of you. Sure, a lot of people think you’re *too much*.” Harry air quoted, rolling his eyes. “But you should never, ever, make yourself less so someone else will love you. Do you understand me?”

Hermione stared at him, mouth agape in bafflement.

“The right person will love you for who you are and who you grow into together. Besides, this is my wedding day. It’s an excellent distraction from my hair. What exactly did you do to it anyway?”

He held both hands on her shoulders, steadying her.

“Thank you, Harry.” Hermione sniffled. “It’s a charm I modified that tames venomous tentaculula. I thought it might have some applicability.” She chuckled softly, thankful for Harry’s ability to refocus her.

“I don’t know why Daphne insisted I start getting ready so early this morning. It’s not like men have much to do.” Harry plopped down on the side of the bed. “We’ve got an hour to burn until Ron gets here, at least. Rose is still keeping them up through the night; he’s looked like arse warmed over for weeks.

Why don’t you tell me about a case at work while we wait? It will distract us both.” Harry smiled up at her kindly, patting the bed next to him as an invitation to sit.

So, Hermione told Harry all about the cabinet in vault 614, its magical wood composition, and the two runes. She even pulled out the notebook from her beaded bag to show him a small sketch of the cabinet.

His green eyes widened at the crude drawing, “I’ve seen this cabinet before, Hermione. Or at least one that is extraordinarily similar. You don’t remember?”

“What are you talking about? I’ve never seen a cabinet like this before in my life. I would remember. The thing is absolutely enormous and could hide a whole gang of... Oh Gods! The vanishing cabinet.” Hermione couldn’t believe she forgot about the vanishing cabinet at Hogwarts, long since consumed by fiendfyre in the Room of Requirement.

“Harry,” she said anxiously, “do you think I’m dealing with a vanishing cabinet?”

“Not sure, Hermione. Have you tried to go through it and see where you end up?” He paused abruptly. “Stop. Forget I said that. I’d rather you not disappear to a mystery location even if you managed to make it out to the other side.” Harry ran his hands through his hair, ruining any semblance of her earlier spellwork.

“I can’t believe I didn’t think of this sooner.” Hermione felt as though she grew a foot taller. “It has a mate, Harry! That’s why I can’t break the curse. Not because I can’t figure it out. It’s because I don’t physically have all the pieces!”

Her heart raced. She would be able to solve the curse of the cabinet easily once she found it’s mate.

“Well, as a suggestion you may or may not consider, Malfoy will be at the wedding. And, while he may not enjoy the memory, he does have a significant amount of experience with vanishing cabinets.” Harry closed the notebook and returned it to her. “I think you should show him your notes and ask his opinion.”

“Malfoy?” Hermione asked incredulously. “Draco Malfoy has barely said two words to me in the last five years. I doubt he will want to help me. Besides, I don’t need it now that I know what I’m looking for.” Hermione tucked the notebook back in her bag as Ron entered the bedroom door.

“What about Malfoy not wanting to help?” Ron asked through the apple in his mouth while he pulled his dress robes on. “Even I think he’s decent enough these days. As much of a slimy git as he was in Hogwarts, he’s a good auror. Saved my arse more times than I can count.” Harry was right; Ron looked like he hadn’t slept in weeks.

Hermione waved her hand dismissively; she had no desire to include Malfoy in her work. “Just a case I’m working on, Ron. It has some similarities to the vanishing cabinet from the room of requirement. Harry thinks Malfoy might be useful as I figure out the curse.”

Ron finished his apple in two large bites. “Well, if there’s one thing Malfoy could help you with, it would be that. Between spending nearly a year on that cabinet, plus the dark magic he survived living in that manor, I’m sure he’ll have a suggestion or two. Wouldn’t hurt to ask.”

Hermione considered Ron’s words carefully. While she hadn’t become friends with Malfoy, the fact that Ron, of all people, vouched for him was something. There wasn’t a person on the earth that Ron hated more than Malfoy during their Hogwarts years, not even Voldemort himself.

“Alright. You’ve convinced me; I’ll ask him tonight for his opinion.” She ushered the boys out of the room, “Now, Harry, let’s get you married, yes? Daphne will be looking for you at the head of the aisle.

~

The ceremony was small. Nothing but closest friends in the backyard of Grimmauld Place. Ron stood wide-eyed next to Harry, the steam out of his ears reduced to a slow leak after a pepper-up potion. Hermione, next to Ron, watched with fascination over the complex magic of the binding.

Harry asked Professor Flitwick to officiate the ceremony, and the tiny wizard radiated joy as he weaved Harry and Daphne’s hands together in a band of bright blue magic. They had chosen to complete a soul bond during their ceremony, far beyond the usual magic of simply

getting married. She could just catch Harry's whisper of love to Daphne after he was told to kiss his bride and stood in awe of their relationship together.

After his breakup with Ginny, Harry seemed to barely be able to tread water. Suddenly single, after being with the woman he originally wanted to spend his life with, plus the rigour of auror training, it was enough to exhaust anyone. Hermione worried constantly that he wouldn't graduate.

But he made it by the skin of his teeth, and just one year after getting a shining auror badge pinned on his robes, Harry was assigned his own trainee in the form of Draco Malfoy, fresh off of his correspondence NEWTs taken during house arrest.

Harry once told Hermione he had enough near misses at work where Malfoy saved him that it was enough. Enough to forgive the childhood animosity between them and move on with their lives. A single shared bottle of fire whiskey sealed the newfound friendship between the two aurors. Over that same bottle, Malfoy jokingly suggested Daphne would be well-matched with Harry, and the rest was history.

Hermione downed her second glass of wine at the reception when she set out to find Malfoy, armed with a bit of liquid courage. Circling the dimly lit tables outside, she found him standing at a high table by the bar with a glass of fire whiskey. His head hung low while he spoke with Blaise, both looking serious. She just caught the end of the conversation as she strode up to the both of them.

"—I can't, Blaise. It's not even in the realm of possibility. She would never—" Malfoy caught Hermione's eye and quickly stopped speaking.

"Mate. You are going to match in three months. Now would be the time." Blaise added before seeing Hermione approach.

The mystery woman piqued Hermione's curiosity. The impending marriage law had everyone pairing off in fear of who their assigned matches would be. "Who's the lucky girl, Malfoy?" she asked.

"No one, Granger. Blaise was just taking the piss. Too much fire whiskey." Malfoy glared at Blaise, who, for some reason, winked at Hermione before he spun on his heel and strolled away. Hermione looked to see where he set off and spotted Astoria looking adoringly up at her approaching husband.

Being left alone with Malfoy, was never her intent. A group discussion would have been much more manageable. "Malfoy," she greeted him coldly.

He returned her coldness in kind with a sneer. "Granger."

She was desperate to break the ice, wishing Pansy or Astoria were there to take over the conversation. They always knew how to navigate speaking to other purebloods, a skill Hermione never wanted nor needed. "Did you enjoy the wedding?"

“Yes. It was lovely.” His eyes roved up and down her body with judgement. “Nice dress. Didn’t want to match the bridesmaids?”

“Ah, well. I had Daphne on the technicality of not actually being a bridesmaid.” Hermione stroked the scar on her forearm, suddenly self-conscious, “Harry tells me you both are busy at work. Protests on the marriage law?”

“Yes, quite.” He stared into his drink as he knocked the ice around, avoiding eye contact.

“Well, I, too, am quite busy with work.” Hermione pulled her notebook out of her beaded bag, eager to get their conversation over with. “In fact, there is a particular cursed item that I’m currently working on, which Harry thought you might have a suggestion or two.”

She lay her notebook open flat on the high table between them, pressing her hands over it so it would stay open.

He choked when he saw her drawing. “Granger. Why the fuck do you have a drawing of a vanishing cabinet in your notebook?”

“Well, I’m trying to rid it of dark magic, obviously,” Hermione huffed, “it’s currently sitting in the Lestrage vault and is cursed six ways to Sunday. I’m on the last two layers of the curse but can’t seem to make any more progress.”

“Where is it’s mate?” he asked as he sipped the last of his firewhiskey.

Hermione paused. “I haven’t located the mate yet.” She quickly tucked her notebook back into her bag. “Will you help me or not, Malfoy?”

“Help you? You want me to help you?” He seemed affronted. “Why would the brightest witch of our age want my help?”

“Harry reminded me of your extensive experience with uh... these types of cabinets.” She didn’t want to bring up the day they both narrowly escaped the room of requirement unburnt. “I would appreciate it if you could come to the vault sometime and take a look at it yourself. There might be something I’m missing.” Hermione shifted uncomfortably. “Plus, I don’t *exactly* know how to find it’s mate.”

The corner of his lip twitched upwards. “Hermione Granger admitting something she doesn’t know. This must be a first.” He rolled his shoulders back. “Sure, Granger, I’ll help you. Send me an owl with a convenient time, and I’ll be there.”

“And here I thought I was done with these idiotic excuses for cupboards,” he muttered, setting his unfinished drink on the table and strode off to Blaise and Astoria’s table.

~

Hermione sent a Gringott’s owl off to Malfoy Manor the morning following the wedding, requiring his presence in the Lestrage vault in two days' time. She wasn’t going to procrastinate working with Malfoy; the sooner they started, the sooner they would be

finished. Two days gave her enough time to put all her notes on the cabinet in a sensible order.

He arrived early to their agreed-upon time. She found him on her way to make her morning tea in the staff kitchen, waiting for her in the cursebreakers' lobby, tossing a snitch up into the air and catching it repeatedly.

"Malfoy. Hello. How did you... Did the goblins let you up here?" She tried to shake off his unexpected presence. "This is supposed to be a restricted area."

"Certain privileges when you have one of the largest vaults, Granger." He tucked the snitch into the pocket of his immaculately pressed dark robes as he stood. "Restricted becomes open for interpretation. Where is the cabinet?"

His midnight black Oxford peeked out the top of his dress robes, and he wore dragon hide shoes polished within an inch of their life. Hermione wondered idly if an unpaid elf did the task.

"Just one moment, I need my notes. It's down in the 600s." Hermione spun on her heel to return to her desk for her beaded bag, notes included.

Malfoy nodded in agreement, tucking his hands in his pockets.

Hermione quickly got her things together, returning to find Malfoy exactly where she left him.

"This way, then." She strode past him towards the private railcar platform, not looking back to see if he followed. Hermione realised belatedly that it would be a rather tight squeeze in the smaller railcar, normally meant for single occupants.

He must have realised the same thing when they got to the platform to climb in and raised an eyebrow at the car in question. "Ladies first, then," he said, holding his hand out in offering.

Hermione stared at his hand blankly and climbed into the car without taking it. She rode this car daily without a man's assistance; she did not need any today.

He rolled his eyes and climbed into the car after her. She could feel his large thigh pressed up firmly against hers, radiating heat. Hermione shifted uncomfortably in her seat, trying to get some space between them, but none could be found.

Eyes straight ahead for the entire descent into the mines, Hermione refused to acknowledge his large form pressed against her. She could see his stolen glances down at her leg from the corner of her eye. Surely, he was just as uncomfortable with this level of proximity as she was. His hands didn't move out of their place the entire ride, clasped firmly in his lap.

Finally, they arrived at the vault in question, and Malfoy climbed out of the car first, once again extending his hand out in assistance. He kept it out the entire time she hauled herself out of the car, ignoring her grunts of exertion.

The ominous cabinet stood tall, precisely where she left it in the Lestrangle vault. Hermione conjured two chairs and a table as a workspace and set to unpack her beaded bag, pulling out the relevant texts and her notes on the cabinet. She thrust a stack into Malfoy's hands as she organised the table. "Here. I've made a copy for you on what I've completed thus far, along with my hypotheses for the remainder of the work."

"Granger. There must be over a hundred pages here." He fanned through the stack, looking incredulous. "And this is my copy?"

Hermione didn't understand why he was doubting her. "Yes. Your copy is identical to my own. Nothing is missing."

He scoffed. "I wasn't accusing you of withholding, just a comment on the level of detail." He set the stack down without reading a single page and moved closer to the cabinet.

She set off behind him, rushing to cast a protective shield around the cabinet. "Don't touch it, Malfoy. I have no idea what kind of curse might come out. The magic has evolved into something unrecognisable."

He circled the cabinet slowly, mere inches outside her glimmering shield.

"You know, Granger. I hoped I would never see another one of these again," he said, looking upwards to the top of the cabinet, "but this a work of art. What kind of wood is this?" He lifted a hand to trail his fingers along the glowing wood grains from a distance.

"Page 74 in your notes, Malfoy." Hermione huffed in impatience. She would have to force homework if they were to be rid of each other quickly. "It's cordia dodecandra, more commonly referred to as spiderwood. The grains are known to take on spells and evolve their magic over time. The glow you are looking at is the last two curses I've yet to unravel."

"Spiderwood. The cot wood?" Malfoy whistled low while eying the cabinet up and down. "This would have cost an absolute fortune."

"You know about spiderwood Malfoy?" Hermione asked in surprise.

"Everyone in the Sacred 28 owns a cot made of this wood, Granger. I'm sure if I asked Mother, she would pull mine out of storage. Pureblood families are notoriously paranoid about protecting their heirs, and those cots do well with protective enchantments." He paced back to the table to pull a chair out to sit down and start reading. He was flipping through pages faster than Hermione expected.

"I've never seen any of the cots glow like that," Malfoy said as he continued to read, not looking up, "you're saying the magic evolved?"

"Page 92."

Malfoy flipped ahead and read quietly for a moment.

"Granger. This is going to take longer to consult on than I originally anticipated. Would it be alright if I took these notes home and returned next week? I'd like to consult some of the

texts in the Malfoy library.” He was already shrinking the notes down and heading towards the vault door.

Her answer wasn’t necessary, apparently.

Hermione briefly considered the books he would have access to in his family library. The Malfoy Manor library was rumoured to be the largest in Britain, not that she ever saw it. She didn’t exactly make it further than the drawing room on her previous visit.

He might turn out to be useful after all.

“Of course. Same time next week, then?”

“Yes, of course. Same time.” Malfoy nodded back at her from the entrance to the vault before disappearing out the doors and leaving her alone at the table.

Hermione wasn’t sure if working with him was a good idea or not, but she would at least get a good book out of it.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Waiting Room* by Pheobe Bridgers

When this story was merely an outline, my wonderful alpha suggested taking inspiration for Hermione’s questionnaire to Seamus from *Love is Blind*. It was an inspired suggestion, and I ran with it.

<3 TeTe91

October 1, 2003

Chapter Notes

Check the TW/CW in the end notes.

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

October 2003

Hermione had now spent nine Wednesdays with Malfoy. The same time every week. The same descent into the mines. The same blank stare forward as their thighs touched for eight straight minutes.

Times two for the round trip.

They made no further progress on the two remaining curses. All of their efforts poured into finding the mate to the cabinet. And apart from one of them acting in pure stupidity, executing the last resort of simply climbing in and seeing where they turned up, it was still unlocatable.

Much to Hermione's surprise, Malfoy became just as invested in solving the puzzle as Hermione. He often muttered to himself about vanishing cabinets in general, how they should all be set aflame, the mere idea banned from existence, but he kept coming back to assist—every Wednesday.

Stacks of books were brought from the Malfoy Manor each week, referencing ancient family spells that could be used to locate the mate. But none worked. Each spell they cast frustratingly indicated that the mate was located in the Lestrangle vault, number 614.

"Malfoy! Another book is wrong!" Hermione yelled across the room to their work table; she just completed another spell suggestion from *Global Positional Spells (G.P.S.)*, the fourteenth spell that pointed back to the exact spot where she stood. "You're family's magic is shite."

"My family's magic is not shite, Granger," he called back from his research, not bothering to look up. "It's over a millennia old."

Apart from the occasional sneer or snide comment, he turned out to be an excellent research partner. Packed lunches started to appear on the third Wednesday after he commented that she would forget to eat otherwise. And they began exchanging owls throughout the week, mapping out courses of action for each session they spent in the vault together.

Solving the problem of the cabinet quickly took up most of her free time, along with her failed attempts to take down the marriage act while simultaneously husband hunting.

Hermione was beginning to feel wrung out from burning the candle at every end possible.

She collaborated with Pansy to write multiple well-researched columns on the act and its implications. Hermione tried not to be frustrated as she read the final column published in *Witch Weekly*, her well-thought-out research edited down to pointed lists.

Logically, she knew that the columns must actually fit on the page, but that didn't mean they couldn't be informative and fulsome. Certainly the readers would have appreciated more detailed analysis.

Compulsively following Percy Weasley, who worked as the Senior Undersecretary to the Minister of Magic became another of Hermione's many efforts. He controlled every Wizengamot member calendar, holding the proverbial keys. If she was going to convince the members of their error, she had to go through Percy first.

Successfully, Hermione secured appointments with all 50 members after her eighth *accidental* run-in with Percy at the Burrow. But none were scheduled until June, citing a supposed sessional closure and *much-needed vacations*.

She was no idiot; they ran as if their tails were between their legs from the protests and pushback and were unwilling to face the impact of their decision. Kingsley hadn't shown his face in weeks.

The November deadline loomed in Hermione's mind. Doubtful that anyone would be proposing to her in the next three weeks, she had resigned herself to the idea of a terrible match, praying that it would at least be someone safe.

Not that Hermione hadn't tried to find her own match. Her social calendar was full, thanks to Pansy and Ginny. They continued to interfere and set her up on endless dates, none of which were remotely capable of holding an intelligent conversation. Nor did any prove to be satisfying in the bedroom. More than once, she brought a date home to 'scratch the itch' as Ginny would say, only to escort them out of her flat not thirty minutes later and open the bedside table drawer to finish the job herself.

While Ginny seemed to date every available wizard, Pansy, curiously enough, didn't appear to go on any dates. She published column after column in an attempt to get the marriage law overturned. Hermione assumed she just didn't have the time left, but it seemed so unlike Pansy to risk her happiness and well-being in such a way.

"Malfoy. Do you know if Pansy is waiting for an assigned match next month?" it was out of her mouth before she could stop. Hermione knew they dated in Hogwarts, but the past relationship completely escaped her mind in the moment. Not to mention, their discussions never strayed from the cabinet or its curses. Not once.

He stepped out from behind the cabinet, where he inspected for a false bottom, and lifted an eyebrow at her. "No, Granger. I don't know if Pansy is waiting for a match. Where on earth did that question come from?"

“Just thinking about the deadline,” Hermione rubbed the palms of her hands down her denims, cursing her mouth for moving faster than her brain, “everyone seems to be pairing off in avoidance of getting a ministry owl.”

He took a single step closer to where she sat at the table and placed his hands in his pockets, staring at her intently. “Oh? Have you... paired off then?”

Hermione was now desperate to change the topic she hadn't even meant to bring up. His unrelenting stare made her uncomfortable. “No. I haven't. I've rather given up on the idea, but I may just have to make do with who I'm assigned while Pansy and I continue to fight the Wizengamot.”

He took another step forward. Hermione craned her neck to see his face. “And what of the poor soul that gets matched to you, Granger?” He stared her down for a single endless moment before he spoke again, lowering his voice, “Will they have to *make do* with you as well?”

“I will be perfectly clear with whomever I am assigned that it is a temporary situation. Hopefully, the person will be understanding. I'm not looking for love. I haven't the time.” Hermione needed to exit the conversation. She gave Malfoy a wide berth on her way over to the cabinet and pulled her wand from her pocket.

“I think we should try the next locator spell,” Hermione said anxiously, hoping he would take the hint and get back to work. The flush on her cheeks slowly warmed its way down her chest.

He followed her back to the cabinet wordlessly, pulling his own wand from the brown leather holster on his chest. His face was devoid of emotion, as if he hadn't just insinuated that her future husband would be getting the worse end of the deal.

The locator spell included a particular bit of complex wandwork that required two people to cast. Hermione was impressed when Malfoy suggested it via owl earlier in the week, if only a little bit doubtful that he would be able to pull it off. But the moment she felt the surge of his magic weave within her own, she was stunned.

Blue beams of light emanated from his wand and snaked around her forearm as her own silver magic did the same to him. Their joined magic pulsed and shimmered between them before encasing the cabinet with a glimmering aura. The grains of the wood gave a single bright glow before the cabinet absorbed the spell with a resounding crack.

“Get back, Granger!”

Malfoy whirled them out of the way so swiftly Hermione didn't even realise he moved until she lay flat on her back on the floor of the vault, with his body covering her like a shield.

Seeker reflexes.

Nothing rebounded from the cabinet, the powerful spell they cast only another piece of magic that would allow the curses to evolve.

His nose pressed against the shell of her ear, and his harsh breaths warmed the skin on her neck.

Hermione attempted to take her own shaky breaths from her place pinned beneath him but couldn't get enough space to expand her chest. She realised, at that moment, she never smelled him before. Freshly mown grass, leather, and parchment paper invaded her senses; it was so familiar to her, almost nostalgic, but she couldn't quite place it.

"I'm sorry, Granger. Shite, I'm so sorry." He propped himself up on one elbow, hovering his face above her own, closing his eyes for a moment to catch his breath. "Did I hurt you? Are you hurt anywhere?" He began moving his free hand up and down her face and body frantically, looking for injuries.

His large, broad hand held firm against her body as it searched for injuries. He patted down the tops of her thighs, along her hips and up her rib cage, ending at her neck, where he tilted her head from side to side to get a better look. His large hand wrapped entirely around the front of her throat as he manipulated her by the chin, thumb nudging her jawline.

Seemingly satisfied she wasn't injured, Malfoy stopped his frantic movements, leaving his palm resting on her neck, the cool metal of his signet ring pulling her focus into him. Silver eyes met amber as they stared back at each other and his chest heaved, still trying to regain his usual composure.

Hermione didn't want him to stop touching her; didn't want him to take his hand off her neck.

She arched her back slightly, testing the pressure against his palm and how it felt as she pressed harder, wondering what it might be like if he took her breath away on purpose. How hard he would need to squeeze for his ring to leave a mark.

In an instant, his eyes blew wide, and he snatched away his hand as if he were burned, jumping off of her to pace over to the other side of the vault and face the wall.

His shoulders heaved, and he rested a hand against the wall to lean forward.

"Malfoy, I –," Hermione whispered from where she sat on the floor.

He didn't hear her.

It felt like the vault shrunk in half. The air so far below the surface always felt warmer, but she was overheating. She needed to get out. To get above ground.

Hermione packed up their workstation faster than ever before, hastily calling out to Malfoy from the vault entrance. "I'll just be outside in the car when you're ready."

He hadn't moved from his place against the wall, "Sure, Granger. Just give me one minute, and I'll be right there."

The rail car. I have to spend eight minutes in the rail car with him. Fuck.

Reluctantly, Hermione climbed into the car and tucked her arms and legs up into herself to take up as little space as physically possible as she waited for him to exit the vault. By the time he eventually strolled over to the car, Hermione couldn't even look in his direction, mortified by her actions.

They didn't say a single word the entire climb to the surface.

As they passed the last ten vaults, Hermione watched, frozen with horror, as his hand inched towards her. The gleaming silver signet ring on his pinky finger hovered centimetres away from her hand, resting on her thigh. So close she could sense the warm heat of his hand.

The car lurched to a stop with a screech of the brakes.

Hermione didn't bother to wait for him to get out first and engage in his usual useless chivalry. She hauled herself awkwardly onto the platform, staring down towards him, sitting speechless in the cart.

"I think I might take a break from the cabinet. There is no shortage of vaults to work on that far down in the mine—plenty of curses to unravel." She could feel her ears burn as she spoke. "So, there is no need for you to show up next week, Malfoy. When I get back to it, I'll perhaps send you an owl?"

She had no intention of taking a break from the cabinet. She refused to return to that airless vault with Malfoy. She was certain she could solve it on her own.

Without a moment's hesitation, Hermione spun on her heel and briskly made her way out of the mines. She dared not look back, fearing what she might see.

Chapter End Notes

CW/TW: Autoerotic Asphyxiation

Suggested Listening: *I Did Something Bad* by Taylor Swift

Hermione, you freak, is that you?

October 31, 2003

Chapter Notes

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

October 31

Pansy and Hermione had made precisely zero progress in their attempts to overturn the Marriage Act. Article after article in *Witch Weekly* and endless owls from Hermione to the Wizengamot members pleading their case fell on deaf ears. Even Percy Weasley went into hiding after Hermione's 46th request to move her appointments earlier.

Even the protests died down. Most witches, in fear of the owls scheduled to arrive the next day, quietly married wizards of their own choosing.

Except for Pansy, Hermione, and Ginny.

Pansy hadn't gone on a single date that Hermione knew of. Ginny, on the other hand, must have been breaking records. At the start of July, she exclaimed it was "The Summer of Ginny!" after having one too many drinks at Hobnobs and filling everyone in on her latest conquests on and off the pitch.

Seamus, ever the opportunist, jumped at the chance to make more than his usual earnings on October 31, the eve of the matches and organised a *Last Chance for Spooky Romance* event. The small Irishman bounced back and forth happily behind the bar, clearly in his honeymoon stage with Hannah, who assisted her husband with the intoxicated patrons. The pair took orders for drinks as fast as they could, lines weaving out the door, with Hannah occasionally pulling double duty as a bouncer.

Those already paired off in marriage came to watch the descent into madness, while those who were single attempted one last hookup before the flock of ominous owls would be released in the morning.

No one seemed to give any concern to overindulgence.

Ginny and Hermione sat at a tabletop in the centre of the pub--Ginny, determined to remain in the middle of the action, batted her eyelashes at every wizard and witch who walked by. Hermione briefly regretted introducing her friend to movies and television the previous summer, but had to admit the redhead stunned as a knockout Jessica Rabbit.

Hermione spent only ten minutes making her own costume, a quick stop at the shops in muggle London for supplies and a charm to affix a dozen blue boxes of Smarties and her costume was complete. After the sixth time she explained to a confused stranger that she was a Smarty Pants, Hermione gave up on the pun and pulled a box off to pair with her drink.

The twosome finished a shared bottle of unidentified red wine, and three boxes of smarties before Hermione made the rare decision to order fire whiskey, giving up on the evening

entirely. She threw back her third glass in one gulp, shuddering as it burned down to her belly. Her head swam in confusion from too much liquor and the loud din of the shoulder-to-shoulder crowd.

“Pansy was supposed to be here by now. Have you seen her?” Ginny’s voice rang out a hint too loud, even for the noise of the crowd.

“No!” She yelled back, realising that she, too, reached a new volume.

“I’ve got to use the loo anyway. I’ll look around on my way there, see if I can find her,” Hermione grabbed her bag and took the long way to the toilets, scanning the crowd for Pansy’s distinct raven-black bob.

Without watching where she was going, Hermione walked straight into Neville, standing outside the ladies' room.

“Hermione! Fancy seeing you here right outside the restrooms. How are you, *Hermiooonneeee*,” Neville exclaimed, drawing out her name loudly. His eyes kept darting to the door of the ladies' room. A crown of leaves sat atop his head, but Hermione didn’t ask what his costume was supposed to be.

Odd man.

“Alright, love, I’m ready. It’s now or never,” Pansy mumbled into her purse as she came out the door, dressed in her usual short black dress, only slightly altered with a pair of glittering silver wings affixed to her back.

Hermione eyed her suspiciously, shifting her gaze over to Neville and back to Pansy, “Did you two just shag in the Leaky toilets? Jesus Fucking Christ, everyone is getting together tonight.” Hermione might have been drunk, but she knew the look of a recent shag, and Pansy and Neville’s faces were covered in it.

Pansy’s purse hung agape as she stared back between Hermione and Neville. “Hermione! What a surprise! Neville, did you know Hermione was here?”

“You did shag! I knew it.” Hermione reached her hand to the wall to balance herself. “Nothing gets past the brightest witch of our age!”

Neville looked down at Pansy and shrugged, pulling her into his side. “We were going to tell her this evening anyway, Pans. It’s okay.”

Pansy pulled herself closer into Neville’s side, reaching up to put a hand on his chest, and took a deep breath before she spoke. “Hermione. Neville and I are married. We were going to tell everyone this evening, but it appears you have beat us to the news.”

Hermione’s shoulder smacked into a potted plant, sending her to the floor with a crash as she lost her balance. With a firmer hand against the wall, she clamoured herself to standing and attempted to absorb the news that literally knocked her off her feet.

“I don’t... How did you... When did you...” Hermione couldn’t form the question she wanted to ask. There were a whole host of answers she wanted from them. She racked her memory, but failed to find a single instance where the pair showed any interest towards each other. And here they were, looking completely smitten.

“Pansy Parkinson, you didn’t invite me to your wedding!”

Hermione wasn’t sure why a wedding invitation topped the other questions spinning in her head, but it seemed the most critical at the moment.

Pansy reached out to hold Hermione’s hand. “Well, I am sorry about that. But for what it’s worth, no one was invited except Neville’s gran. We’ve had to keep it a secret from my cunt of a mother.” She frowned, picking a piece of non-existent lint from her dress. “I’ve been working to amend some of the family’s estate documents before she finds out. Finished just in time, too; she’ll find out tomorrow I’ve had her declared legally incompetent.”

Neville snorted. “Not exactly the owl she’s expecting.”

Guilt washed over Hermione for not being there for her friend. “Oh, Pansy, you could have told me.” Pansy helped her so much through her trauma of the war, and it now felt supremely one-sided.

“Really, Hermione, it’s alright.” Pansy stroked her thumb against Hermione’s hand as she held it. “Truthfully, we’ve been enjoying a bit of an extended honeymoon.”

Hermione doubled back as she registered Pansy’s words. “Extended Honeymoon? When exactly did you two get together?” She eyed Neville with suspicion, the man was grinning like a fool.

“Before I tell you this. I would like to remind you how particularly awful my mother is, Hermione.”

“Yes, yes, of course, I’ve met the woman, remember?”

Pansy continued, “Neville and I have been together since eighth year. And we’ve been married nearly a year now. Our anniversary is on Christmas Day, in case you wanted to know that bit of information for your calendar.”

The smile on Neville’s face as he stared down at his apparent wife threatened to burst. Clearly besotted with the witch, he seemed to be overjoyed that their secret finally came out into the open.

Hermione’s head spun with confusion from too much liquor, trying to process the relationship she should have known about for years in a matter of seconds. She rubbed at the curls atop her head, grabbing a fistful between her fingers. Pansy and Neville were obviously happy with one another, and Hermione had no idea. How could she have been so blind to all the love around her?

Everyone was getting together except for her.

Her mind circled back to the weight of the lie. Pansy kept this secret nearly as long as they were friends, and her heart ached with the betrayal. *"You have kept this from me for five years?!"* Now, it was Hermione who was the loudest person in the bar. Silence cast over the conversations that surrounded them as everyone looked over to see the commotion.

Hermione swung a pointed finger through the air, anger building at being left out of the secret. *"And you! Neville Longbottom. You let me propose to you!"* She was sure the ends of her hair were sparking.

Neville chuckled back at her. "Hermione, it's not like I accepted. And I told you I wasn't interested in dating."

"Not interested in dating and already married are two separate things, Neville!"

"Sure, but I wasn't ready for him to share our little secret. By the way, you'll owe me for that, blatantly hitting on my husband." Pansy barked with laughter. "Like you two would be a good match."

"Pansy, it wasn't romantic!"

She dismissed Hermione with a wave. "I'll accept an obscenely over-the-top wedding gift as an apology."

Neville leaned down to place a soft kiss below Pansy's ear, whispering something Hermione could not hear, while Pansy tilted her head and weaved her manicured fingers into his belt loop, pulling her husband closer. Hermione's stomach hardened at the sight; the odds of a man ever looking at her like Neville did Pansy grew slimmer by the minute.

"Nev and I are going to tell the others." Pansy said, moving to return to the bar. She reached out her hand to rest on Hermione's shoulder, "are you okay, Hermione?"

Hermione swallowed the thickening feeling building in her throat and forced the tears welling up to go away. "I'm fine, Pansy. Just surprised. And a little hurt you didn't tell me, if I'm honest."

Pansy looked at her knowingly.

"Go." Hermione shooed them away. The hallway felt remarkably silent considering the bustle of people moving around her. She turned around in one place, trying to figure out what to do next.

A drink. I need another drink.

She sat down at the bar, grateful to have a place to rest her head in her hands. Everyone she knew paired off, except for her. Worse, they all seemed happy about it and disgustingly in love. She was going to be assigned a match tomorrow, and with her luck, it would be Greg Goyle.

The clink of ice rattling in a glass by her ear pulled Hermione out of her spiralling thoughts, and she lifted her head to see the source of the sound.

Draco Malfoy stood next to her, two glasses of fire whiskey in his hands, one thrust towards out in offering. He was dressed in his usual sharp black suit, clearly too superior to dress up in costume for the occasion.

“What do you want, Malfoy.”

“Just to have a drink with you.” His face remained blank, void of any emotion. “That’s all, one drink.”

"Alright, one drink." Hermione took the offered fire whiskey and knocked it back. Ungracefully, she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. “Goodnight Malfoy.” She went to get up off her stool, but a firm hand came down on her thigh, holding her in place.

“Humour me, Granger. I miss our Wednesdays together.” He didn’t make a move to pull his hand back from her thigh, which grew warmer under his grasp.

“Fine. But you’re buying.”

“I would never have presumed otherwise.”

~

Two hours and many drinks later, Hermione was attempting to unlock the room upstairs, which Seamus kindly provided at twice the usual rate. Malfoy stood close behind her, squeezing her arse firmly in both hands, his hips pressing her forward into the door. His mouth skated up and down the side of her neck, teeth tugging on her earlobe and sending shivers down her spine.

“Come on, Granger. It’s just a lock. Cast a fucking *alohamora* or something.”

Hermione pushed her hips back into him in order to get enough room to fit the key into the lock. He returned the force in kind, pressing her forward just as she managed to open the door, and they both staggered into the room.

He kicked the door shut as he spun them around, slamming her back roughly against the wall, his mouth never leaving her neck. The firm hands from the vault Hermione thought back to so often were once again on her body, roaming up and down every inch of her.

Pleasure ached through her body as he held her in place with one hand grasping her hip, thumbing the skin beneath the hem of her shirt. The other hand weaved through the hair at the nape of her neck, exposing more sensitive skin for his mouth to rake over.

With an abrupt stop, he pulled back and stared into her eyes. Hermione could only find a sliver of steel grey around his blown pupils.

“Yes?” he whispered.

“Yes.”

He ripped the shirt off her head. He kissed her roughly from her neck down to her navel, getting down on his knees to unbutton her trousers, pulling them unceremoniously from each leg. Smarties skated across the floor in all directions.

“Smarty Pants,” he scoffed, breathing warm air against her thigh, “stupid fucking costume.”

“It’s a pun Malfoy,” she scolded, leaning her head back to rest against the wall.

He stood to pick her up by the arse, wrapping her legs around his waist as he sat down on the bed. “Shut up,” he muttered into her mouth as he kissed her.

They were frantic, kissing and nipping at one another furiously. He kissed her as if he didn’t want tomorrow to come, like they were about to receive a death sentence instead of a owl. Hermione returned the kiss with intensity. The smell of freshly mown grass and the taste of fire whiskey on his tongue sent a storm through her chest in anticipation.

She ground into him once, slotting his hard length against her core before summoning all of her liquid courage to climb off his lap and stand before him in her matching light pink bra and knickers.

Hermione hoped to end the night with a hookup and wore her favourite set, she never considered it would be Malfoy.

She stood confidently between his knees as she unclasped her bra, vaguely registering that it landed on the lamp as the lights flickered. Afraid that if she stopped moving, she wouldn’t be able to begin again, Hermione pulled her knickers off and kicked them aside.

The moment she stood naked in front of him, his eyes changed. Previously intoxicatingly dark, laced with seduction, they blew wide with fear. He took in her naked body, eyes darting to each of the scars that littered her skin, cataloguing her injuries.

What the fuck is he afraid about? I’m the one standing in front of him starkers. Oh gods. This was a mistake.

Malfoy’s throat bobbed as he swallowed. It looked like he was building up the courage to face off a band of death eaters, not have sex. Hermione felt increasingly sober in her exposed nakedness as he sat there fully clothed.

“You’re beautiful,” he choked out.

Hands grazed up and down her sides, all the firmness gone from them. He took her breasts in his hands, squeezing them gently, rolling one of her nipples between his thumb and finger. Slowly, he took the other breast in his mouth and laid kisses underneath, above and all around the soft peak, careful not to touch it.

His kisses were so gentle they were nearly reverent. Hermione felt as though she was being lifted up onto a pedestal and worshipped, yet all she wanted was to go back to being slammed against the door.

He pulled her in close, wrapping his hands around her and up her back as he shifted them onto the bed. His hand cradled her head as it set down against the pillow.

Deftly, he pulled off his shirt, trousers and pants before settling his naked body atop her own. His hard length brushed against her thigh as he murmured adorations as he kissed her neck and chest lovingly.

"You're so beautiful."

"Perfect."

"Please, can I have you?"

"I will give you everything if you let me."

Hermione didn't know how to respond. Didn't know how to touch him.

It wasn't enough.

She wanted to claw her hands into his shoulders, wanted him to shut up and fuck her already. This kind of adoration wasn't what Hermione had in mind when she asked Seamus for a room upstairs.

Hermione wanted to forget what the next day had in store for her, and Malfoy seemed like the perfectly inadvisable way to do that, with muscles that could surely get a headboard to leave a dent in the wall.

Cautiously, she drifted her hands down his muscular back, tugging at his shoulders to pull him upwards into a kiss. She forced her tongue into his mouth, trying to return to their earlier pace, but he pulled back and peppered soft kisses down her jawline.

Hermione wrapped her thighs around his waist and squeezed his naked form closer so his length touched her wet core, but he just drifted his hand up and down her thigh as gently as possible.

"Please, Malfoy. Please fuck me."

With one slow thrust, he sank into of her. The stretch felt magnificent, reaching the deepest spot inside her. Hermione arched her back into him, thinking she should have spent more time enjoying the visual of his cock beforehand.

He rested his forehead on hers and released a low groan, not moving a muscle once he was fully seated.

His head tucked down towards her neck to trace slow kisses down to her shoulder while rolling his hips into her. Everything was soft and sweet and slow, it was almost as if he was attempting to make love to her.

What the fuck is he doing.

Hermione lifted her hips to try and match his slow pace, sliding in and out of her, but she couldn't get enough friction. He continued rolling his full length into her over and over again, continuing to mutter adorations into her neck. None of it was enough. Not enough pressure, not enough friction, not enough force.

Without warning, he thrust deep inside of her and heat filled her core.

"Fuck. Granger, I'm sorry, Fuck."

Did he just fucking finish? He's been inside of me for two minutes, and he's finished? From that?!

"Sorry, I'm so sorry," he muttered as he scrambled for his wand on the floor, casting a cold contraceptive charm over her belly.

Hermione mourned the loss of his still-firm cock, even if it didn't give her what she needed and pulled her legs and knees up together in embarrassment.

She lay there silently, staring at the ceiling, wondering what the hell just happened. She couldn't look at him, couldn't face his stare.

The room stood starkly silent and she could feel his eyes on her, but nothing she could muster would allow her to turn her head and look at him.

She was mortified.

After what felt like an hour of silence, she could hear his clothes rustling.

"Granger... Are you ok? I'm sorry if... Can I?"

"It's fine, Malfoy. It's fine," she said to the ceiling, never more sober in her life. "I'll see you around, alright?" She refused to look at him.

Within seconds of hearing the door click shut, Hermione scrambled to put her clothes back on. Hauling her beaded bag over her shoulder and tossing the room key on the desk, Hermione slammed the door behind her. The only thing she wanted to do now was go to sleep in her own bed and pretend this night never happened.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *CUFF IT* by Beyoncé

I love Pansy and Neville. They are canon, and no one can tell me otherwise. I mean, he's a gardener and her name is a flower. Keep up.

November 1, 2003

Chapter Notes

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

November 1, 2003

The subtle tap on her window rang out like a bombarda going off in Hermione's skull the next morning, based on the state of her hangover. Her head pounded with regret, and the empty contents of her stomach lurched into her throat with a heave.

That was about four fire whiskeys, too many.

Hermione jolted out of bed as flashes from the night before came speeding back to her consciousness. With a sprint to the bathroom, she promptly threw up what little rolled in her stomach into the toilet. She braced herself with one hand against the bowl's rim as she sat back on her heels and the cold tile against her shins lured her cheek to the floor.

I had sex with Draco Malfoy. Terrible, terrible sex with Draco Malfoy.

Hermione groaned as she rolled onto her back and stared at the bathroom ceiling. She would never be able to look him in the eye again. Memories of his adoration poured into her brain one after another 'Please, can I have you?' and 'I will give you everything if you let me' played on repeat as she fought the urge to vomit again.

She moved slowly to rummage through the bathroom cupboard for a hangover potion, kicking herself for not having enough foresight to put it on her bedside table the night before. The volume of the incessant pecking on the window blessedly decreased as she drank down the potion.

Outside, a large barn owl with an official ministry scroll tied to its leg impatiently waited for her, hopping about from foot to foot and hooting wildly. She took the scroll from its outstretched leg, surprised that the owl didn't wait for its treat before it flapped off.

Hermione threw the scroll onto her desk, trying to fight back the tears that welled in her eyes. She couldn't bring herself to open it and see some awful name etched in extravagant calligraphy.

There was only so much one could take in a twenty-four-hour period.

The scroll mocked Hermione from its place on her desk as she rushed to get dressed and brush her teeth at the same time. While a scourgify to her teeth would work just as well, Hermione found she could never give up the muggle habit of a toothbrush, one of the few things she had left of her parents. She desperately wished she could run away to be with them in Australia, to escape her current predicament and hide from the world. But that wouldn't do anyone any good.

Hermione steeled herself, packing the scroll into her bag and took a handful of floo powder from her mantle. If she was going to have an emotional breakdown over whatever name was waiting for her, she surely wasn't going to do it alone.

~

"Ginny! Are you home?" Hermione yelled out into the flat as she dusted off the floo powder from her clothes. "I didn't want to open my scroll alone, so I thought we could do it together." Hermione could hear rustling in the bedroom, and some sort of whispered argument going on.

Great, I've interrupted.

"I'm making coffee!" she yelled louder, pacing over to the kitchen to pull mugs out of the cupboard, ignoring the commotion in the closed bedroom.

A male voice called out behind her, "Hey, Hermione."

Hermione spun around from the coffee pot to find Michael Corner standing in the kitchen. She hadn't seen Michael since their Hogwarts years, the last she heard he worked as an unspeakable at the ministry.

"Hi, Michael." Confusion struck Hermione as she heard escalated arguing in Ginny's bedroom. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm just on my way out." He took one of the full coffee mugs from the counter, still without any cream or sugar, and lifted it in thanks. "Cheers, Hermione," he said with a smile as he sauntered off to the floo.

Hermione scratched at her cheek while trying to figure out what she walked into when a *tap tap* came from the window.

A familiar barn owl hopped about on the sill with a similar-looking scroll to the one Hermione already tucked in her bag. "Why hello again. You're busy today, aren't you?" She gave the ministry owl a treat as she took her second scroll from the small owl that day, hoping vaguely he would be able to rest soon. She set the scroll down on the kitchen counter and rummaged through her bag to find her own, pulling it out to join its match.

"I'm not leaving!" Cried out a male voice from the bedroom, who Hermione knew, without a doubt, as the voice of Theodore Nott.

With a chuckle to herself, Hermione poured a third cup.

Ginny emerged from the bedroom, heading straight for the coffee cup and taking it with both hands from Hermione. Lifting an eyebrow upon seeing the third mug on the counter, she smiled softly. "Busted, huh?"

Hermione nodded.

“THEO!” Ginny yelled, not moving from her place in the kitchen, “Hermione knows you’re here, you might as well come out.”

“Ginny! What is Theo doing here?” Hermione yell-whispered at Ginny before Theo emerged, in gods knew what state of dress. “And, for that matter, Michael Corner just left. I heard you two arguing.”

“Yes, well. We were all at the Leaky and I thought one last time for the road...”

Hermione tried to piece together just how intertwined Ginny and Theo were as he strode out of the bedroom with a shit-eating grin plastered all over his face.

“Hermione. What brings you over at this ungodly hour of ten in the morning,” Theo exclaimed as he took his own coffee. He lifted the mug with a sly grin. “Cheers.”

He acted as if the day wasn’t about to go to complete shit. “It’s November 1, or have you forgotten?”

“That is the day that usually follows All Hallows Eve, Granger.”

“You know what? I’m going to ignore whatever this is.” Hermione waved her arm towards the pair before grabbing the two scrolls beside her. “Ginny, it’s scroll day. I thought you might want to open them together.” Clenching her own scroll in her fist, Hermione thrust out the second towards Ginny, who snatched it away.

Ginny stared intently at Theo. “Theo, would you like to head home now? I’m getting engaged in a moment.”

“I think I’ll stay,” he said with a chuckle, hopping onto a stool at the kitchen counter and staring right back at Ginny, matching her intensity. The two of them would not break eye contact, and Hermione suddenly felt like she was intruding on the couple’s odd version of foreplay.

“Fine. Suit yourself, Theodore.” Ginny ripped her scroll open, eyes going as big as saucers as she read the name assigned to her.

“Well then, share with the class,” Theo murmured into his coffee cup, still watching Ginny intently. “What poor bastard got Ginny Weasley?”

She crumpled the paper into her fist before throwing it to the floor.

“You did.”

The smile that grew across Theo’s face could have split his face in two. “Ginevra Weasley. Are you proposing to me?”

“We’ll discuss this later, Theo,” Ginny said, glaring at him. A smile broke out on her face for a fraction of a second before she turned to face Hermione, schooling her expression.

“Alright, it’s your turn, Hermione. Best get it over with.”

Hermione shook her head in disbelief, not knowing what to make of the relationship in front of her. But she needed to open her own scroll.

“You’re right, Gin. Best get it over with.”

With one quick tear, Hermione skipped over the legal details at the top of the scroll and scanned for her assigned name. Her heart beat in her chest furiously, and her hands began to shake.

“Hermione Jean Granger is hereby assigned a match of Draco Lucius Malfoy.” Hermione’s voice dropped as she read, “Parties are to be married by the end of the month. If not married by the end of the month, a sentence of three years in Azkaban will be automatically issued.”

At that moment, a number of things occurred all at once in Ginny’s small kitchen.

Theo spat out his coffee and fled out the floo, laughing maniacally. Hermione barely heard him yell *Draco Malfoy’s Flat* over Ginny’s hollering.

The redheaded witch began to list all the offences she would commit on behalf of one Hermione Granger to the Ministry, the Wizengamot, and the Department of Love. A diatribe on the utter lack of compatibility between Hermione and ‘The Ferrett’ landed somewhere in the middle of her list of threats, but it was nonsensical.

Hermione sank slowly to the floor, resting her shoulder against the cupboards when she sat so as not to lose her breath completely. She watched Ginny in confusion as her yelling lost all meaning, buried by the dull roar within her ears.

The previous night replayed in her mind in vivid detail—more detail than Hermione thought had occurred in the moment. Every loving word, every reverent touch came flooding back, threatening the coffee that now rolled in her gut. Not a single hour ago she vowed to herself she would never look him in the eye again.

How in the hell was she going to marry him?

She was fucked.

~

Hermione couldn’t recall how she made it home, nor anything she did during the day. She drifted aimlessly, as if operating under a trance, until making it to the final destination of her own bed.

Wrapped up within the childhood quilt her mother made, she rocked back and forth, muttering potential plans to herself. Nothing she could think of would be sufficient to get out of marrying Draco Malfoy in the limited time she had available.

She cursed herself for not finding her own match sooner and cursed the ministry for taking exactly zero consideration into who they matched together.

Then she cursed Malfoy for acting the way he did the night before.

The late afternoon sun shining into Hermione's window turned to shade as a large eagle owl tapped at the window, hovering and flapping its wings. Startled from her mumbling and cursing, she unfurled the quilt from her shoulders and hoisted herself off the bed to open the window.

"If I ever see another owl, it will be too soon," Hermione grumbled, lifting the pane. The owl was enormous, with a dark blue ribbon tied around its neck. At least three times the size of the barn owl she received her death sentence from this morning.

The owl clutched a large, heavy package between its talons. Hermione moved quickly to take the box, allowing the creature to rest on her windowsill while she rummaged through her desk drawer for the fancier owl treats. The bird gave a polite hoot upon receiving three treats and departed into the air with a forceful flap of its wings.

After watching the beautiful owl fly off, Hermione turned her attention to the delivered package, wrapped in matte black paper with gold ribbon. A wax embossing on the top of the ribbon with an ornate *M* confirmed her suspicion of the sender.

Malfoy.

Slowly, she untied the ribbon, not wanting to know what awaited her inside but equally not wanting another unopened missive to haunt her from her desk.

Wrapped in delicate tissue sat a large textbook, which must have been ridiculously expensive, if not priceless, due to its age. Hermione had never even heard of the title before: *Bloodline Protections: An Encyclopedia*.

As she flipped open the cover, a small note floated into her hands.

Granger,

Assuming you received a similar owl as I did today, we appear to be engaged.

I would be remiss if I did not follow at least some of the courting traditions expected of me, even in these untraditional circumstances. Please enjoy the engagement gift enclosed. This particular book has been passed down my maternal line for generations, and many mothers have used it to protect their children. It includes a number of spells involving spiderwood that I'm sure you will find illuminating.

I wasn't lying last night when I said I missed our Wednesdays together. Regardless of your feelings for me, I enjoyed working with you. You are an intelligent and formidable witch who, I have no doubt, will beat the Wizengamot at their own game.

Until then, I would be honoured to be your 'temporary solution' for as long as you require.

Please let me know when you might be available to discuss arrangements. My floo is open to you.

- DLM

Hermione snapped the book shut, as her stomach lurched, and set it back to her desk as gently as possible before running to the bathroom to vomit, note still clenched in her hand against the toilet.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Retrograde* by James Blake

I love Ginny and Theo almost as much as I love Pansy and Neville. If you want to break your soul with a masterful fanfic that has the two of them together, go read *Perfectly in Pieces* by CDLynn.

November 1, 2003

Chapter Notes

Draco's POV is finally here. I'm dying. I'm so excited. Sedate me. He is such a goddamn treat. Plus Theo and Narcissa. The chaotic fiends.

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

November 1, 2003

Draco's heart leapt into his chest the moment Hermione Granger's name unfurled from the ministry scroll. It might as well have glowed on the page the way it bore into his brain.

He would be married to her.

She would be his wife.

He was so fucked.

It was almost ironic; a beautiful bookend on the ten long years he loved her. He could still feel the sharp crunch of his nose under her fist, see her arm wind back as if she was notching Cupid's bow.

No one had ever been able to match the fire she lit in his soul since that day.

His passing relationship with Pansy Parkinson in sixth year never materialised past distracting each other in broom cupboards while their parents negotiated a marriage contract. By the time Draco took the mark and effectively shut everyone but Theo out, Pansy wouldn't speak to him anyway.

Lucius' sentence to life in Azkaban nullified the marriage, acting as the proverbial nail in the coffin of the relationship, if one could even call it that.

Draco dated the odd witch since Hogwarts, set up by his well-intentioned mother doing her damndest to rebuild their reputation and societal status.

Few made it to a second date; they were a host of exceedingly vapid women looking for their own boost in society, hoping a Malfoy name would thrust them into the ranks of the elite.

Worse than the unrequited and unarticulated love for Hermione Granger he could not shake were the unending fantasies.

If he passed her in the school halls, his mind would push her into an alcove and kiss her senselessly while she ground her core into his thigh.

Seeing her in the quidditch stands made him imagine fucking her so hard into the pitch that she left with grass stains on her spine.

The most frequent fantasy invaded his brain every Thursday in double potions. Sitting behind, he watched, fascinated as her hair grew with the humidity. He wanted so desperately to wrap both his hands into her hair.

Draco imagined holding her by the hair and forcing her onto her knees, taking his enjoyment of her as he forced his cock down her throat.

Even with time and distance, the fantasies continued, taking on a life of their own. Draco refused to take dreamless sleep on any occasion; the risk of a nightmare worth it for the chance to see her while he slept.

He wanted to consume her.

But she was the golden girl. She was not one to be consumed.

Hermione Granger needed to be adored and loved, worshipped and cherished, not whatever sick fantasies Draco had cooked up in his last decade of blinding obsession.

Which was the exact startling realisation that barrelled through his mind as she finally stood naked before him on Halloween, her olive skin glowing, littered with scars she certainly didn't deserve.

She wouldn't want what he wanted. She was too pure for that.

So, Draco did the only thing he could think of. He worshipped her as she was meant to be worshipped. He kissed her softly and stroked his hands up and down her thighs while he forced down all thoughts of fucking her so hard that she screamed for mercy.

It nearly worked, too, until he got so distracted with the fantasies in his mind and the perfect woman beneath him he finished in a record time not seen since his teenage years.

It was mortifying.

She hadn't finished and wouldn't look at him. Her eyes bored into the ceiling with a blank stare, wordlessly wishing he would vanish into thin air.

Draco took the painfully obvious hint and dressed quickly, leaving her naked and exposed in the room meant for business travellers, his seed still leaking out of her.

He was mortified.

Draco had one shot with the witch of his never-ending dreams, and he blew it.

For weeks, he thought himself the luckiest bastard alive, getting to feel her warm body against his own in their twice-a-week private rail car. The warm, thin air of the vaults amplified her sweet scent of jasmine and parchment.

Always his amortentia.

All the ways he would ask her out on a date cycled through his mind each and every car ride. But he could never bring himself to articulate the question out loud. She would never want him in the way he wanted her. Never say yes to him.

So they sat in silence trip after trip, and once in the vaults, they talked of nothing but solving the mystery of the cabinet.

Draco, lost in his thoughts, didn't hear Theo roll through the floo.

"You must be the luckiest idiot I have ever met, brother. You will not believe the news I just heard," Theo exclaimed excitedly as he poured himself a drink from the bar cart.

"It's barely noon, Theo," Draco admonished, before reconsidering, "Pour me one too."

Theo scoffed as he poured a second amber drink, handing it to Draco before sitting across from him, as carefree as ever, lifting an ankle onto his knee and getting comfortable on the sofa. "Have you received your owl yet, Draco? Do tell whose name you've received."

Theo's grin made it apparent he knew precisely whose name appeared in a perfect cursive pen within the scroll clutched in his fist.

Theo knew about Draco's obsession with Hermione since sixth year. In a weak and hurried moment, Draco forgot the silencing charm on his four-poster bed, calling out her name while thrusting into his hand. Curtains ripped open faster than Draco could cast a scourgify, exposing his nakedness and shame.

Theo had been taking the piss for years.

"You obviously know it's Granger's name on my scroll."

"Good place for it, too. Better on your scroll than living endlessly in your head." Theo leaned forward with his eyebrows lifted, his drink already empty.

Draco shook his head in defeat, "It doesn't matter, Theo. Granger views this as a temporary solution while she and Pansy continue to fight the Wizengamot. She's been more than clear on the fact." He lowered his voice to a mumble and spoke into his glass, "Besides, we shagged last night, and it was terrible, so I'm fucked anyway."

Theo's eyes blew wide. "I'm sorry, Malfoy, I must have misheard you. Did you just say you shagged Hermione Granger?"

Draco snatched Theo's empty glass out of his hand and returned to the bar cart to refill it. "Yes. And as I said, it was terrible. So again, I'm fucked."

"Golden girl not any fun in the bedroom then? That's a surprise. I would have thought she would—"

"Theo, please stop speaking. She was perfect. She is perfect. I just didn't—"

“Draco, please tell me you left the witch satisfied. Please, for the love of Merlin’s saggy left nut, tell me you did your job.”

“I might have gotten a little overexcited,” he confessed into his drink.

Theo roared with laughter.

He bent over on the sofa, clutching his stomach and one hand fell to the floor to brace himself as he continued laughing in full force. The back of his hand wiped the tears from the corners of his eyes as he pulled himself up and choked out between gasping breaths of laughter, “You’re right, mate; you are fucked. Leave it to you to take a decade of infatuation and obsession and blow your load upon seeing a single tit.”

“Shut up, Theo. I know I’m fucked. I need to figure out a way to fix this.” Draco paced and forth, running his hands through his hair.

“Alright, alright. At least tell me what she said after you spoiled the show.”

“Nothing. She said nothing. She wouldn’t even look at me, Theo.”

“This is worse than I thought,” he replied, pausing briefly before he strode over to Draco’s desk to pull out a quill and paper. “Here is what you’re going to do. You are going to sit down and write Granger a note, without being too forward, telling her how smart she is and that you are lucky... no, honoured to be matched with her. You will send her this note with an appropriately respectful engagement gift. Nothing romantic. Granger is an intellectual before she is anything else. Send her a book.”

Draco sneered at the suggestion. “Theo, I am not sending Granger a book as an engagement gift. She deserves jewellery. Extravagant, expensive jewellery.” He was briefly distracted by the thought of her wearing an emerald choker and nothing else.

“Draco, you are playing the long game here. You are about to be married, even if she views it as temporary. This is an opportunity for you both to become friends, and you can build from there. No more pining from afar; for the sake of my sanity, I am begging you.” Theo continued, raising a brow, “You can use your family marriage contracts to your advantage. Invite her to negotiate, and get her to live under the same roof as you.”

A book, then, Draco thought. He could do this. He could win over her brain first and her heart second. And he could bury the urge to pin her against a wall.

Draco pulled the old Black family book his mother gave him weeks ago out of his desk drawer and sat down to write a respectable, honourable note.

He was so absorbed in his writing he did not hear Theo leave through the floo without saying goodbye. Realising, regrettably, he forgot to find out whose name appeared on Theo’s scroll.

With a swish of his wand, the book and note were neatly wrapped in matte black packaging. Draco hesitated to add a gold ribbon to the parcel, winding the length between his fingers as

Orion hooted impatiently. At the last minute, he decided to add the ribbon while the package was already in the large owl's talons.

If she was going to be his wife, she should start getting used to gold.

~

The chime of Draco's floo went off at precisely 9 AM the following day.

Respectful, honourable. You can do this, Draco.

He glanced back to the mirror a final time, pulling off the black tie he just finished adjusting. With a push of his hair back off his forehead, he felt ready to greet his future wife.

Draco found her waiting by the floo, a beaded bag clutched tightly at her shoulder, tapping her foot incessantly on the hardwood floors.

"Granger."

"Malfoy." she nodded back. Her eyes darted around the flat.

"Would you like to come in?"

Her knuckles turned white as she wrenched the bag closer to her shoulder. "Malfoy about the other night... I..."

"We had a fair amount to drink."

"EXACTLY," she shouted back. "Exactly." She repeated, adjusting her voice. "Too much to drink. I should apologise-"

The word knifed through his chest. There was nothing she would need to apologise to him for. Ever.

"Maybe we should —"

A cautious smile played at her mouth, "Forget about it?"

Draco didn't have a choice in his response; he wanted to focus on moving forward with her. Perhaps forgetting the incident ultimately would be the best course of action.

"Of course." He nodded in acquiescence and held out his arm as an invitation, channelling every ounce of pureblood manners he knew. Draco was anxious to get away from the fireplace, where it felt as if they were standing off from one another. "Shall we sit?"

Draco gave the small witch a wide berth, recalling every time she refused his hand at the mine car. He gestured for her to sit in the living room, allowing her time to get comfortable on the sofa before sitting in the firm armchair across.

"So."

“So.” She echoed.

“It appears we are to be wed, Granger. Shall we start there?”

“The book was unnecessary.”

“So you aren’t going to read it then?”

“I didn’t say that. But it’s clearly a priceless heirloom, so of course, I cannot accept it as a gift. I’ll be sure to return it to you once I finish it.” She fidgeted in place, repeatedly adjusting the strap of her bag on her shoulder.

Gods, she probably had the book packed away in that bag already, along with a dozen other books and who knows what else.

“Nonsense. It’s yours. I’m happy for it to be with someone who will appreciate it.”

“I will return it, Malfoy.” She cleared her throat as she crossed her legs, the tiniest peek of bare ankle revealed below her denims.

“Very well. Due to both my paternal and maternal bloodlines, I am unable to get married without a contract in place.” A bald-faced lie, but he was taking Theo’s advice.

“Due to your bloodlines?” Hermione scoffed. “So you have no choice in the matter?”

“Quite,” Draco nodded, staring at his hands. “They are, of course, to benefit and protect both parties, in case you were worried otherwise. If you would allow me, I can call for the documents?”

She gave a curt nod. “Fine.”

“Mipsy!”

With a crack, the small elf appeared beside Granger, who jumped in surprise. She eyed Mipsy once up and down, seemingly satisfied when her eyes met the floor, taking in the elf’s tiny trainers.

“Before you ask Granger, Mipsy is a free elf. She has every Saturday off, is paid five galleons a month, and, as it turns out, is a bit of a sneakerhead.”

“Oh yes, miss. Mipsy is a great lover of sneakers. Master Draco was kind enough to provide Mipsy a pair of Adidas to free her, and now it seems she cannot stop!” Mipsy said excitedly, pushing out her left foot to show a gleaming white sneaker. “What can I help Master Draco and the young miss...” Mipsy paused, eyeing Draco.

“Miss Hermione Granger, Mipsy. Miss Granger and I are to be married before the end of the month.”

Mipsy squeaked in delight and her large ears shot straight upwards, eyes brimming with tears as she took Hermione’s hand. “Miss Hermione, it is Mipsy’s great honour to make your

acquaintance. Please call for Mipsy if you are to need anything. Anything at all.”

“Mipsy, it is a delight to make your acquaintance,” said Granger, shaking the elf’s tiny hand and leaning to eye level. “I will be certain to call you.”

Tears rolled freely down Mipsy’s face as she nodded happily.

“Mipsy,” Draco interrupted the forming friendship, “If it’s not too much trouble, could we have some tea and biscuits? As well as the Malfoy and Black marriage contracts? And if you could be so considerate as to keep this information away from Mother for the next few hours, I would be eternally grateful.”

“Of course, Master Draco! Mipsy will be back in two shakes!” The elf bowed and disappeared with another crack without waiting for a response.

At the sound of the disappearance, Granger’s face morphed from the kind expression she had for the elf into one of utter disbelief. She stared incredulously at Draco, wordlessly awaiting his explanation.

“All our elves were freed after the war, Granger. Mipsy has been with our family since I was born and decided to stay. Of her own volition. You should call on her if you need anything; truly, she would love nothing more than to help you.”

She opened her mouth to respond, only to be cut off as Mipsy cracked back into the room with a tray of biscuits, tea and a stack of scrolls. The little elf busied herself, arranging the scrolls on the table, pouring tea and serving biscuits on tiny plates while he watched Granger twitch in awkward, polite silence.

Another bow and a crack, and Mipsy was gone.

“And she's fine with this? The servitude?”

“Yes, Granger. Ask to see her sneaker collection if you don’t believe me.”

“Fine,” she said, rearranging herself on the sofa without taking a biscuit. She waved her hand at the pile of scrolls now on the table, “If it’s alright with you, Malfoy, I’d like to get this over with.”

Draco moved to spread out the stack of contracts, taking his perfectly prepared tea for a slow sip. “Due to these... extenuating circumstances, I thought we could both read through the Malfoy and Black contracts and select the clauses that best suit our needs. Some are non-negotiable, unfortunately, which you will see from my notations, but most are up to interpretation.”

“I see.” She nodded, picking up a handful of the scrolls to read. She read rapidly, her mouth moving slightly as she silently processed the long list of clauses, eyebrows raised. “And you are sure we have no say in the matter?”

“Granger, the fact that we are in this situation and are able to negotiate is the most say that I have ever been granted in my life. My father is rotting away where he belongs, in Azkaban,

effectively abdicated. I am the head of both the House of Malfoy and the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black. I determine what I can and cannot do.”

He paused before continuing, considering the depth of his tiny white lie, “However, family magic spans generations. My magic will not allow me to get married without a contract. The bonds simply will not take. And I would rather not join my father in Azkaban over a contractual oversight.”

In the grand scheme of things, the small lie didn’t seem like the worst offence he had ever committed. Not in the pursuit of love.

Hermione’s eyes narrowed, and Draco worried for a brief moment he went too far. “Malfoy the last thing I want is for you to end up in Azkaban,” she muttered as she continued to read, her suspicion falling away.

Draco conjured a quill and a blank piece of parchment and set himself as their scribe. “Excellent. Let’s begin.”

“Well, first off, I assure you I will not be taking an allowance. That’s completely unnecessary.”

“Non-negotiable. Next point,” he retorted, biting into his biscuit.

“Malfoy. I will not be taking your money. This is ridiculous. I have more than enough money to take care of myself.”

“Give it to charity then if you like. It’s of no importance to me; the sum barely makes a dent in my vault.”

Hermione raised her eyebrow slightly. “Fine. I’ll prepare a list of charities; we can annotate the contract to that effect.” She continued to scan the pages. “We will certainly not be living together.”

“Ah, that one is also non-negotiable, I’m afraid. Both Malfoy and Black magics are rather particular about that clause, proximity leading to heirs, etcetera.” He was lying through his teeth now.

She blushed the most delicious shade of pink.

He wondered briefly if that same colour would extend to other parts of her body. If her cheeks would become rosy if he bent her over his knee and connected his palm to her arse.

Respectful, honourable. Keep it together, Draco.

“I assume you do not want to live in the Manor--rightfully so. I myself have not lived in the Manor in years; it’s just mother there now. You are welcome to move into here with me, where there is plenty of room.” He waved his hand around the space. “You can have your own bedroom, and we can continue to pay the rent on your flat so you may return to it when we have concluded our... situation.”

He desperately hoped she never returned to her flat. For all he cared, it could burn to the ground.

She took a long sip of her tea, surely cold by now and stared him down. “Malfoy, perhaps we could expedite these negotiations if you told me which clauses will not cause you or me bodily harm if we do not include them.”

“Pages sixteen through eighteen of this one.” He handed her the thinnest scroll on the table. Full of useless legal jargon that went over the types of meats that one was to serve at holiday dinners and the number of times a wife was required to wear skirts in a week. None of the clauses had been used in decades, but she didn’t need to know that.

“Well,” she retorted as she read the final three pages. “I think it would be reasonable to exclude this entire list.”

“Agreed.” Draco smiled as he finished his second biscuit. With a wave of his wand, he transformed his parchment into a scroll and amalgamated all the clauses into a new draft. He handed it to her across the table, and their hands touched for the briefest second before she snatched it away. “You’re welcome to review it in detail on your own time if you wish.”

“I will be sure to do that.” She was already stuffing it into that endless bag and getting up to leave.

Draco started back up, ignoring her movement, not wanting any silence between them. “Now, as for the date, would the 27th be alright with you? That should give my mother sufficient time to plan a wedding and party. She will, of course, want to host the wedding, and I usually give her what she wants, most of the time.”

She did not sit back down, dismissively arguing with him as she walked to the floo. “No. Absolutely not. I’d not like to give the ministry fuel for this fire. While the 27th is fine, we can be married at the ministry registry. You’ll have to disappoint your mother on this one. I’ll be in touch regarding the contract.”

Draco didn’t want her to leave. He wanted her to stay. He wanted to watch her read, and forget about her tea and scoff at him incredulously.

Think of something, you idiot.

“Granger,” He stood up after her, pretending she did not just grab a handful of floo powder, and paced over to his desk, shuffling random papers about while he searched his mind for a way to stall her. “How is that cabinet going? I’ve been quite curious since we last worked together on it.”

Hermione leaned against the fireplace mantle, and for the first time since she arrived, Draco realised she looked relaxed. “I still have not been able to uncurse the bloody thing. I’ve half a mind just to start using opening spells to see if something is inside.”

He tensed. She would get frustrated with not being able to finish an assignment. No doubt she was ready to light the thing on fire just to declare herself the winner. But Draco had seen the

cabinet enough times to know she would hurt herself if she weren't careful.

"Granger, please don't do anything that would put yourself in harm's way. Especially not while you work on it in that vault by yourself."

"Malfoy. This is the longest I have ever been stuck with a curse, and it's driving me mad. The research you and I conducted was the most progress I've made, but I haven't accomplished anything without you."

She looked defeated, staring down at her fist full of floo powder.

Draco took his opening. "Tell you what, Granger. Let's continue to work on the cabinet together. You can access the complete Malfoy library, and I can be assured that the cursed thing won't trample you if its magic evolves to the point of growing legs. We're going to be living together; we might as well have a project to keep us busy. Beyond overturning the marriage act."

The moment Draco said the word library, he knew he had her. Her eyes lit up like it was Christmas morning. She perked up from her place against the mantle and smiled at him broadly. "That would be wonderful, Malfoy. I'll prepare a work plan for the two of us and send you a list of texts we should consider, starting with the book you sent me last night. I can make some notes and—"

"Send me the list of books, Granger. And review the marriage contract, please." Draco didn't want to push his luck and attempt to keep her here any longer.

Her smile faltered as soon as he brought the marriage contract back up.

Idiot. Why did you have to bring that back up?

"Yes. And the contract. I'll need to do a fair bit of research and my own review. I'll send you an owl, once I'm finished?" She asked, looking up at him.

"Of course, Granger. Looking forward to it."

~

Draco exited the main floo at Malfoy Manor, making his way to the sitting room in his mother's wing. Since the war and his father's imprisonment, she destroyed, renovated and redecorated every possible surface in the once-dark home.

Narcissa used the space to keep up with her extensive correspondence and receive visitors, occasionally referring to it as her war room.

His mother came alive after the war. Finally, away from the eternal darkness that was his father, she took over most aspects of running the family fortunes. Her eye for business and negotiation left Draco with little to do but show up when called, trotted out to shake hands and sign cheques. Truthfully, he preferred it this way. It made his mother happy; which was all that mattered.

“Hello, my dragon,” his mother said sweetly, not looking up from the papers on her desk, sipping her tea. Reading glasses perched low on her nose as she shuffled through the scrolls, seemingly making separate piles; Draco had no idea what for. “How did the negotiations go with your intended? I assume you are here to tell who will marry into our family?” She looked up over the rims of her glasses knowingly.

“Has Mipsy ratted me out then?” Draco huffed as he sat down in one of the armchairs facing her desk, at eye level with his mother only due to the small step under her chair.

“Mipsy knows better than to withhold information from me. I promised her a pair of Air Jordans for every secret she told me long ago.” Narcissa chuckled as she leaned back into her chair and removed her glasses. “Do tell, how is Miss Granger? Regrettably, it’s been some time since I have seen her.”

“She’s approaching our marriage as a temporary solution,” Draco replied, putting air quotes up with one hand, “but has nonetheless taken home a drafted copy of a marriage contract to review.”

“Well! That is excellent news!” Narcissa clapped her hands together and smiled modestly.

“We shall have the wedding of the season. Last year’s Pucey wedding will look like a backyard barbecue by the time I am done with the arrangements.” She waved her wand to shuffle a stack of papers atop her desk. “I’ve already notified the caterer to be on standby for instructions, and of course, we’ll have the wedding at the manor.”

“Mother.”

“Unless Miss Granger would be uncomfortable at the manor, which would be understandable, of course. You must discuss this with her soon as we would need to reserve an alternate location.”

“Mother.”

“Somewhere outside would be lovely, but that would be a great deal of warming charms in the weather. We could charm the rose gardens if you would like to —”

“Mother!”

"What, Draco?"

"Granger wishes to get married at the ministry registry office," he blurted it out before she could get any further in her plans.

“Pardon me?”

“She does not want a wedding. She does not want to be married to me. I am a brief holding place on her pursuit of freedom. Ergo, no caterer.

No rose gardens.

No wedding.”

“I see.” she pursed her lips. “No wedding then.”

“I’m sorry, Mother. No wedding.”

Narcissa picked up her quill and twirled it slightly. “Well, I won’t tell you I’m not disappointed, but no matter. You getting married to Miss Granger is excellent news regardless of the means in which it takes place.”

“Mother. Please do not use Granger to further any of your machinations.”

“Draco! I would never dream of such a thing. I merely meant it’s excellent news since you have been pining over the woman for nearly a decade.” His mother stared at him with a small smile.

“I have absolutely not pined over her for nearly a decade.” Draco scoffed, exiting his chair so that he could avoid her glare.

“Mipsy!” Narcissa yelled. With a crack, the tiny elf appeared next to the large desk.

“Yes, mistress? Mipsy was just changing the laces of her new sneakers. She is most grateful for the—” Mipsy stopped abruptly as she saw Draco on the other side of the room.

Narcissa let out a small laugh as she turned to address the elf. “Apologies, Mipsy, we are busted, as one might say, on that account. Would you please fetch Mr Nott? There is an urgent matter at hand I must settle.”

Draco paced by the bookshelves, avoiding his mother, and pretended to scan the titles. Two loud cracks in quick succession told him Mipsy successfully brought Theo to the war room.

“Cissy! I meant to come by to thank you for your assistance earlier.” Theo’s voice rang out through the room. “But it has been a rather busy few days with my betrothed. Mipsy here nearly caught us doing wildly inappropriate things while making breakfast, from which I assure you, Mipsy, you would not have recovered.”

Mipsy blushed beet red as she cracked off once more.

Theo kissed Narcissa on one cheek before sitting on the sofa, catching Draco’s eye. “Didn’t see you there, brother.”

“You’re more than welcome, Theodore, and I apologise for the interruption. There is a matter I would like to settle rather quickly here with Draco. Might you tell me how many years he’s been in love with Hermione Granger?”

“*Mother!*” Draco exclaimed, staring at Theo with as much subliminal messaging as he could muster to tell his friend to lie.

“Oh, I would say ten, give or take.”

Wanker.

“You see, my darling? Settled. We all know you’re in love with her. So I will reiterate my statement that this match is excellent news.”

“Still has a bit of work to do there, Cissy,” Theo drawled. “She’s not exactly running down the aisle to be with him.”

“Details. Theodore. This is an opportunity! A gift! I’m sure she will fall in love with you in time. You will be putting in at least some effort to make that happen, Draco?” Narcissa asked with a raised eyebrow. “Mipsy has informed me that she has taken a draft contract to review? Might I ask what clauses you included?”

His mother always was the most intelligent person in the room.

“I’ll be sure to provide you with a copy once it’s finalised, Mother.” Draco considered setting himself on fire to get out of this conversation. Turning his attention to Theo, he asked, “You never did tell me who you matched with, Theo. And what assistance has my mother provided you? I wasn’t aware you two were working on anything.”

Narcissa answered on behalf of Theo while he continued to pick away at the tray of biscuits. “That would be the young Miss Weasley. And it was only a small bribe, Draco. Well a series of bribes, but that’s unimportant.” She placed her glasses back on to resume her work, waving her hand as if to dismiss both her sons from her room.

“Theo,” Draco asked once more, not believing the question he was posing, “Did you have my mother bribe members of the Wizengamot to match you with Ginny Weasley?”

“I couldn’t very well bribe them myself, Draco. She’s much better at it than I am,” Theo retorted as he made his way out of the sitting room and towards the floo. “It’s been a pleasure, as always, Cissa”, he yelled while laughing halfway down the hallway.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Eat Your Young* by Hozier

Draco, darling. My little, sweet summer child.

November 7, 2003

Chapter Notes

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

November 7, 2003

Hermione's limbs ached with fatigue as she exited the floo of her flat. The pepper-up she took that morning only gave her more anxiety as she faced Malfoy for the first time since their ill-fated hookup. It was all leaving her system now, and the sight of Harry, Daphne, Pansy and Neville waiting patiently in her flat startled her more than it should have.

"When did you all get here?" she asked as she shuffled off her trainers and paced directly to the wine cabinet. She didn't give a shite that it was only one in the afternoon; wine would be necessary if she was going to survive what looked like the beginning of an intervention.

"A couple of hours ago," Pansy replied, moving behind her to get a set of glasses for the wine.

Hermione grimaced, she hadn't intended on sharing, nor using a glass for that matter.

Daphne moved about the room, putting out drinks and snacks for everyone in the stark silence. They sat around her living room in their perfect stoic semicircle, staring at her grimly.

Might as well get it over with.

"Malfoy and I are getting married at the end of the month."

Harry started off the asinine effort. "I could talk to Kingsley, Hermione. We can figure this out." He rubbed the back of his neck, where a red tinge appeared from the friction. "You don't have to marry him."

"Kingsley hasn't responded to any of my owls, he isn't going to help." Hermione snapped back, feeling her own autonomy slipping away into the hands of an inept government. "There isn't enough time to fight this. And I'm not risking either of us going to Azkaban."

Harry's voice lowered, "He owes me a favour, I'll call it in."

"And then what, Harry? Who would I get rematched to?" Hermione took a large gulp of her wine, wishing it would take effect quicker. "And what about all the witches and wizards that got matched to terrible, violent people? Why should I get a pass and not them?"

"I swear I'm trying to overturn it, Granger. People are going to die if we don't do something." Pansy's voice sank, thick with emotion. Tears welled in her eyes as Neville wrapped an arm around his wife.

“We’re getting closer, Pansy, it’s just going to take time.” Daphne reached out to put a hand atop Pansy’s knee. “And Hermione, Draco isn’t the worst name you could have received.”

Harry nodded, agreeing with Daphne, “Daph is right. He’s a good guy, Hermione.”

Hermione considered how much of her *relationship* with Malfoy she wanted to disclose to her friends. If any of them found out about Halloween, she would never hear the end of it. “Malfoy and I have come to an understanding - this marriage is an acceptable, temporary solution.”

She pulled the drafted contract from her bag and threw it onto the table. “We’ve already begun negotiations.”

Pansy’s eyes went wide at the scrolls. “Granger, can I read these for you? I’ve become a bit of a legal expert since taking my mother down.”

Hermione considered the offer. It wouldn’t hurt to have another set of eyes on the scrolls. And Pansy was just as much Hermione’s friend as she was Malfoy’s, it would be a fair approach. She pulled her wand and duplicated a copy of the scroll, sending it through the air to Pansy with a nod. “I’d appreciate it, Pansy. Thank you.”

~

Hermione spent three consecutive evenings at home reviewing the draft marriage contract, each revision session occurring with a slightly larger glass of wine than the previous night.

With each clause reviewed, she came to the unsettling realisation that she actually trusted Malfoy.

The majority of the clauses she read through, quill in hand ready to edit, seemed to be written for the protection and independence of the female party. She couldn’t find a single sentence that would force her into being some sort of simpering housewife. Hermione cross-referenced the fulsome annotations made by Malfoy, who appeared to prefer the Black contracts over the Malfoy ones in light of their favouring of the wife.

Hermione’s original irritation over their mandatory cohabitation dulled as she read through the protection requirements. The drafted contract outlined requirements of separate quarters from the husband, including, at minimum, a private bedroom and bathroom. The contract continued to suggest that providing a private library and sitting room were preferred, though not required.

Hermione paused her edits, thinking wistfully of a potential private library, but Malfoy’s flat was smaller than she expected; certainly, there wouldn’t be enough room.

Another contractual clause noted the wife, at no time, could be forced into magical agreements or bonds by her husband. The marriage bond magic would forcibly prevent any such spell not voluntarily agreed upon. And to add insult to injury, the husband who attempted such an inadvisable feat would be cursed with pox that made Marietta Edgecomb’s curse look like a lone pimple.

Hermione couldn't find a single word that referenced an inability to divorce or requirements to bear children, reading and rereading to make sure she hadn't missed anything. But the most surprising omission was any note on the requirement that the wife be pureblooded. Hermione scoffed into her wine.

Purity will always conquer? Seems unlikely without a proper solicitor.

Her astronomical allowance, stipulated at 5,000 Galleons per month, would be deposited in her bank vault of choice. An obscene amount if she ever saw one.

Hermione had to admit she was curious about the size of the Malfoy and Black vaults at Gringotts. They were at the deepest level of the bank, and Hermione had yet to enter into either of them during her post-war cursebreaking assignment.

He wisely left a blank space for her to fill out what charity she wanted to allocate her money to. Scribbling out instructions for the sum to be divided evenly between a charity for elves, werewolf children and dragon sanctuaries, Hermione felt satisfied with her review and set the scroll aside for the evening.

With a neat swish of her wand, the hovering legal reference texts snapped themselves shut and zipped back to her bookshelf along the living room wall.

She checked her watch – 7PM. Not too late to floo call Malfoy and let him know she finished her review. Anxious to get the paperwork completed, Hermione didn't want to wait until the morning to use one of the ministry owls.

He said he would leave his floo open... I'm sure he won't mind.

Calling out "Draco's Flat" Hermione stuck her head into the green flames.

Malfoy answered immediately. "Granger. I wasn't expecting your call. Is everything alright? I thought you were going to send an owl with the contract."

"I just finished and didn't want to wait until morning to discuss it. Am I interrupting anything?" Hermione looked over his shoulder, but the flat echoed in an empty quiet.

"Nothing at all. I can come through if you'd like?" Malfoy asked.

"Sure. Give me two minutes, and I will open the floo to you."

Crawling off hands and knees, Hermione wiped the soot off her trousers and adjusted the wards on her floo. A whoosh one minute later and Malfoy came through the flames, nearly walking straight into her.

He pulled out his wand to scourgify the soot from his travel and paced around Hermione's small, combined kitchen and living room in her flat. He seemingly inspected her tiny home, pausing at the bookshelves, which in some sections were stacked two deep.

"You like the muggle classics?" He picked up a copy of *Jane Eyre*. Fanning it open to show off the well-worn pages.

Hermione snatched the book out of his hands, returning it to the shelf. “You know the Brontë sisters?” she asked incredulously. The fact he pulled her favourite book from the entire wall of shelves made her stomach flip in place.

“Not well. I’ve just finished off Thomas Hardy’s works and need another author to sink my teeth into. If you could suggest any, I would be grateful.” Draco smiled, waving at the shelves with his empty hand. “You appear to be well-read on the period. Would expect nothing less from such a swot.”

“And you must have identified, of course, with William Boldwood?” Hermione asked, knowing *Far From the Madding Crowd* like the back of her hand. She wanted to test him, not believing he ever read a word of Hardy’s.

“Why? Because he was rich? Surely not.” Malfoy sneered. “It might surprise you to know I found myself to have a lot in common with Gabriel.” He stepped closer to Hermione and towered over her, forcing her neck to crane upwards to meet his glare. “And while I may have committed a number of crimes during the war, not one of them was murder.”

Hermione instantly regretted testing him, feeling her cheeks flush. “I simply meant –”

“I know exactly what you meant, Granger,” he interrupted her. “But since we are now on the topic, it’s time for your own confession. Why were you at my trial?”

“I went to everyone’s trial.”

“I didn’t ask about everyone else’s trial. Why did you come to my trial?”

“To support Harry. You’re lucky he testified for you. I hope you thanked him for it.” Hermione could feel her flush inching down her neck and onto her chest. She had sat in the furthest back row for all thirteen days of his trial, hoping not to be seen.

“I would have, but you and I both know that he didn’t write a word of it. The scroll in his hand was about eighteen inches too long. So, I’ll ask you again, Granger, why did you come to my trial?” The slight upturn of his mouth gave away the fact he knew precisely who wrote the testimony.

“You were a child, Malfoy. We were all children. It was a war that adults who should have known better, made their children fight for them, regardless of which side we were on. The notoriety of Draco Malfoy, being the youngest death eater ever lost all its meaning on me when I saw the memories of you receiving the mark. Multiple people submitted them into court records as evidence against your father. I watched every one of them. I cannot express to you how sorry I am that you were put through that, held down by your own father.”

His sneer returned. “Granger. You do not ever have to apologise to me. Ever.”

His tall stature loomed over her, eyes flashing into darkness. He held his gaze unbroken against her own, the cold steel of his irises narrowing. Hermione refused to back down, grounding her heels into the floor and stared back with intensity. Silence filled the room as his breath slowed, broad chest rising and falling in time with her own.

Hermione cleared her throat. “The contract then –”

Malfoy’s shoulders rolled back and in a split second he returned to himself. “Yes. Of course. The contract. You said you completed your review.”

“I’ve found everything to be agreeable and filled in the remaining blanks for you. Here is my signed copy,” she said as she pulled out her wand to tap the scroll on the desk, adding her magical signature.

“Just like that?” He asked in disbelief, staring down as a black ribbon weaved itself into a wax seal. The Black magic accepted her signature.

“Just like that Malfoy. I would say it’s been a pleasure doing business with you, but this business was rather forced.”

He nodded in acceptance and caught sight of the empty wine glass on the desk. “Granger, have you eaten?”

“No, I hadn’t gotten around to it yet. Was just about to make a bit of toast.” Hermione grabbed the wine glass and took it over to the sink, finally breaking the proximity.

“Come to dinner with me to celebrate then. We are engaged, after all.”

“Are we? I can’t recall you proposing.”

“Would you like me to propose?”

“Certainly not.” She snorted.

“Fine. Would you prefer me to refer to you as my contracted?” Malfoy chuckled. “Let’s get dinner to celebrate the commencement of our contractual relationship.”

She couldn’t help but laugh. “I am quite hungry.”

Malfoy smiled. “It’s settled then. Grab your coat Granger, I can apparate us there. You don’t mind a side-along?”

Hermione was already half into her coat, realising she was, in fact, starving. She took his offered arm with her hand. “Side along would be fine. Where are we --”

Before she could finish the sentence, her body squeezed tightly, and they were gone in a swirl of black mist.

~

“I don’t think you are sufficiently considering the risks of the cabinet absorbing one of your protegos!” Malfoy exclaimed as he gestured with his muggle beer.

“Nothing has happened so far. I’ve cast at least a dozen protegos around myself and the cabinet while working, the grains have never glowed from protego spells.”

He unexpectedly took them to a small muggle neighbourhood in London, where he guided her to a small Thai restaurant. The surprise must have been apparent on her face as he replied quickly, "I like food, Granger. I go where it's good. Come on, the masaman is delicious here."

He was right, it was delicious. Along with the four other shared dishes between them. Hermione ordered another glass of wine and immediately fell into the ease of debating the cabinet, purposefully ignoring the fact she kept referring to it as their cabinet.

After paying the bill and saying a clearly familiar goodbye not in English, Malfoy helped her into her coat and held the door for her as they left the restaurant into the cold night air. Tucking into a side alley to apparate once more, quiet as the night.

Returned to the living room of Hermione's small flat, he rustled a small package out of his pocket, wrapped in the same matte black paper and gold ribbon as the textbook she already read cover to cover.

"I brought something for you. A gift... I like to give gifts." He fiddled with the ribbon on the package, not looking up at her.

Hermione enjoyed the conversation with him over dinner, which felt effortless, and the heat from his side-along still lingered. Hermione took the package from him with two hands, grazing his own briefly, and cautiously pulled off the ribbon and unwrapped the parcel.

"It's a notebook. A tricky bit of magic, but I've charmed it with one of my own. It's two-way. Any notes you put in here will show up in mine. A bit quicker since you don't have an owl. I was hoping you could keep me up to speed on our cabinet... and whatever else you might like to chat about."

He thought of it as our cabinet.

"This was thoughtful Malfoy. Thank you."

~

Hermione settled into bed, twirling a quill in her hand with the new notebook on her lap. She wanted to write him a note to thank him for the evening, but he puzzled her. They agreed to put Halloween behind them. But this evening, he was... friendly.

It was the version of Malfoy back from their work in the vaults together returned, with the added benefit of liking him?

She thought better of writing in the notebook while under the effects of the evening's wine. But it began to glow just as she closed it and set the book on her bedside table. Hermione picked it back up, opening to the first page where a single line had appeared.

Goodnight Granger.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Alaska* by Maggie Rogers

In case you are wondering which camp I hail from, Dumbledore was the greatest villain in the HP series. Manipulating children to fight in a war that doesn't belong to them, not cool Dumb-y.

November 23, 2003

Chapter Notes

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

November 23, 2003

Finally, Hermione made progress on their cabinet, working away in vault 614 with her two notebooks close at hand.

Four additional revisions to one of Malfoy's earlier tracking spells confirmed a mate didn't exist. A lone vanishing cabinet.

Hermione hadn't recalled encountering any instances of lone vanishing cabinets in her reading and couldn't help but tear up at the confirmation.

It felt almost anticlimactic.

She jotted down the details of the spells she cast and remarked on what a lonely existence a singular vanishing cabinet must have in her two-way notebook. Malfoy had proven to be an excellent conversationalist through distance.

Granger,

The thought of a lone vanishing cabinet is neither heartbreaking nor tragic, as you say. It is merely taking your workload and reducing it in half. This means you will finish with work at a reasonable hour today, yes?

-DLM

Hermione laughed to herself before penning a reply. He knew from their time spent together in the vault that she would insist on working well into mealtimes. It didn't take long for him to keep his robes stocked with snacks, claiming a need to keep her energised for curse-breaking.

The secondary cabinet was a theoretical workload at best. The amount my workload would have decreased is unknown as I cannot cast a diagnostic on a non-existent cabinet. As always, I will remain at work until satisfied with the day's progress.

She found it ridiculous that he attached his initials to all his messages. The ten minutes spent on her first signature in return were even more laughable. *Hermione* was, of course, out of the question, but she felt strange writing *Granger* down. In the end, she settled for nothing at all. Who else would read the notebooks anyway?

Another message appeared with a glow.

Granger,

You are such a swot. Clock out. I'll pick you up at the bank entrance in ten minutes and take you to dinner. And you cannot argue because I am leaving this book on my desk.

-DLM

He snuck her to dinner five times now with this approach, figuring out when she would finish her work and waiting patiently outside the bank, or coincidentally running into her on her walk home. Always a side-along to some distant muggle restaurant he favoured, each better than the last.

That evening's dinner was fish and chips in a small diner, hidden away on a London sidestreet. The greasy fish was delicious, smearing the paper's ink underneath.

Hermione stopped eating to stare at him, looking quite out of place, eating fries with his bare hands and drinking a pale muggle beer. She shook her head in amusement, trying to reconcile the Malfoy in front of her with the one from her childhood.

It was almost as if they were friends.

"I'd like to discuss our living arrangements if that's alright with you," Malfoy said, setting down his almost empty glass.

Hermione choked on her beer. "Erm. Sure Malfoy."

"We're getting married in five days, Granger. Don't you think we should discuss it?"

"I just assumed that I would move in on the day."

"Would you please call for Mipsy once you are ready? She has been asking me about you repeatedly and would like to help. And before you say no, she's a size three shoe. Feel free to gift her clothes like in your old spew days." A smile threatened his mouth. "Except, in this situation, you would be just another one of her unsuspecting victims."

Taken aback at his recollection of her younger self, Hermione would have sworn on Morgana herself that no one remembered her teenage activism. "Malfoy, it's S.P.E.W., not spew. But I appreciate the tip; I'll pick something up for her and call her two days from now."

He nodded, allowing the smile to break onto his face with a laugh. "I may still have a pin somewhere in my closet."

Her surprise over Malfoy knowing where to eat in Muggle London was nothing compared to the shock of him having a S.P.E.W. pin. But he continued as if he didn't just admit to keeping a Hogwarts memento of her. "Good, that's settled. Per the marriage contract, you are entitled to your own quarters. I have a bedroom ready for your things, including a private bath. There is also an extensive walk-in closet attached to the room that I took the liberty of repurposing as your personal library. I presume that was the correct decision?"

"A library?" Hermione spluttered.

“Well, it would be quite a small library, but between that and the shelving space in the common area—which we can share—there will be more than enough room for all your books. I thought the additional space would be appreciated.”

“That was very thoughtful, Malfoy, thank you.” Hermione was constantly squeezing her new books into her shelf, often overflowing onto the floor and other surfaces. A gift of empty shelves was akin to inviting her on a full-day shopping spree at a bookstore.

She was *almost* starting to look forward to being married to Malfoy. Sometime along the way, he turned out to be an excellent conversationalist and considerate, and Hermione enjoyed spending her free time with him.

His trouser-clad broom thighs were also a thing of beauty, but Hermione buried that thought back down into her mind.

“So, just the wedding to talk about then?” he asked.

“Yes. Our appointment on Friday is at the ministry, level four in the Department of Love, *ridiculous name*. Would you like to go together or meet there?”

“Would it be too much if I said meet there? I know it’s not a real wedding, but I think I would like to watch you walk down the aisle. Even if it is in a depressing Ministry office that they previously used to house stray puffskeins.”

“Stray puffskeins? Ugh, I hope they got the smell out when the room was transitioned.” The thought of sealing a forced marriage in a stale, musty office was almost funny if it weren’t so depressing.

“One can only hope, Granger. So that’s a yes to meeting there?”

Hermione paused. He was inching his toe into romantic waters. But he was so amenable thus far she found herself ready to overlook the nature of the singular request. And if she showed up smelling like a puffskein, it wouldn’t matter anyway. “Alright then. I’ll meet you at the head of the aisle. I’ll be the one in white.” She averted her gaze from his, pushing the fries around her plate.

“I could spot your hair from a mile. No need for further identification aids,” He teased, eating the last of his fries, eyeing the remains of her plate. “My mother will also be in attendance. And I promise you won’t hear anything from her about the lack of party. I’ve taken the brunt of that disappointment already.”

“Oh. I didn’t think of asking anyone to come with me. Should I?”

“You don’t want your parents attending?”

Hermione fidgeted with her empty chip basket; she hated this conversation. “My parents won’t be coming.”

“Because they’re muggles? Granger, you, of all people, should know you can take muggles into the Ministry building for special ceremonies.”

“My parents won’t be coming because they don’t know who I am.”

His eyes narrowed. “Why wouldn’t your parents know who you are, Granger?”

“I obliterated them.” No matter how it came out, she always felt pitied as the not-quite orphan.

She readied herself, preparing for Malfoy’s pity before continuing, “After sixth year, I obliterated my parents and sent them to Australia with new identities. Death eaters were targeting muggle-born families, and I didn’t want them to get hurt. I couldn’t protect them if they stayed in England while I lived in a tent for a year. After the war, I went to reverse the spell, but it was too ingrained. Wendell and Monica Wilkins. That’s who they are now.”

Tears welled in her eyes as she spoke. “I’ve spoken to healers at St. Mungos and in Australia. We spent months trying to figure out a solution. In the end, it was easier to walk away. I couldn’t face trying to know them or keep up with their lives. Not while they wouldn’t even recognise me on the street.”

She grieved the loss of her parents for years. The depths of her denial and anger hidden away from her friends while she spent six long months in Australia, fighting the healers tooth and nail on their approaches, arguing every aspect of their attempts to return her parents’ memories.

The wounds still felt fresh whenever she thought of them; she couldn’t bring herself to say their names, their real names, Richard and Jean Granger, because those people died years ago.

He tentatively extended his hand across the table, not making it far enough to reach her. “Granger. I don’t say this to make you feel worse, but you did the right thing. Yaxley and Dolohov hunted down dozens of families that year. Your parents certainly would have been tortured or killed if you didn’t send them away. For whatever it’s worth, I think what you did was courageous, selfless, and brave. And I’m proud of you.”

His hand stretched further, palm open in invitation. “You did a good thing.”

“Yes, but that good thing has left me very much alone.” Hermione stared at his upturned palm, avoiding his gaze while she rubbed the heel of her hand against her breastbone, trying to ease the hole in her heart left by her parents’ absence.

“Hermione Granger could never be alone. You have countless friends and people who admire you. You have Harry and Ron, Pansy and Ginny.... And me.” He reached his hand the final few inches to take her own, pulling it away from her chest, leaving her open and vulnerable. He pulled it to the centre of the table and grasped it firmly, tracing idle circles with his thumb.

The hole in her heart lingered. But for an infinitesimal moment, hand in hand with Malfoy at a greasy diner, Hermione didn’t feel alone in her grief for the first time in years.

His low voice pulled her back to reality. “Come on, we’d better get going before I order more fries. I’ll apparate you home.”

~

Hermione found it hard to believe she was getting married in two days. All her things were packed up, and she spent her morning breakfast chatting with Mipsy, getting to know the elf and letting her know what to take versus leave in her tiny flat. The little elf was overjoyed when she unwrapped the tissue on a pair of baby-sized Air Force Ones. If Hermione were going to use the elf’s assistance, she would at least spoil her.

Once at work, Hermione settled quickly at her desk, taking curses off four pieces of heirloom jewellery brought into the bank by an elderly woman with an oversized ostrich feather on her head instead of a hat. The lovely woman with terrible fashion sense was gifting the jewellery to her future daughter-in-law, *‘preferably curse-free, my dear’*.

Hermione pitied the poor girl. The jewellery was worse than the feather on the woman’s head. Enormous gems of all colours adorned a matching set of earrings, a necklace, a brooch and a tiara. One of the goblins stamped *fula* at the top of the intake sheet, gobbledygook for fake. It made no difference to Hermione; a curse was a curse, so she hummed away at her desk while the woman waited in the lobby.

With the tiara, brooch, and earrings complete; Hermione picked up the necklace with her dragon hide gloves and began to turn it over in the light.

The clasp on the necklace had become loose. She would have to mention to the woman to get it fixed before giving it to her unfortunate daughter-in-law. Or maybe she wouldn’t say anything, she thought with amusement; it was a good enough excuse for the poor girl never to wear it.

Touching it gently to unclasp it, Hermione realised too late she forgot her shield charm.

~

“Hermione, I swear if you do this to me again, I will break into your apartment and steal the last page from every single one of your bloody books.”

Hermione opened her eyes at Harry’s irate voice. Her chest was throbbing. It felt like someone set one of her ribs on fire. Tentatively, she looked down to assess the damage, finding a bandage peeking out from her hospital patient robes.

Fuck. The shield charm.

“You are lucky that old bird stayed in the office with you. Otherwise, who knows how long you would have bled into the carpet before the goblins found you.” Harry paced wildly about her room, arms waving wildly in the air, yelling at her as he walked. “Another nasty slicing hex, Hermione! Well done! I’ll be a hundred before I’m thirty! And furthermore! I got a lecture from Malfoy on how I’m not keeping you safe enough! Like it’s my job! Well, I don’t

want to be *the chosen one* for this job, Hermione! Getting a patronus from St Mungos in the middle of the street while patrolling is not my idea of a good time!”

Harry dropped into the chair by the bed with a huff, seemingly finished his tirade.

Hermione was so wrapped up in Harry’s stress-lecture she didn’t see her soon to be husband leaning into the doorframe with a sneer until he spoke.

“Potter is right, Granger. Not a good time.” He strolled into the room, still in his red auror robes and sat on the edge of the bed, eying her chest. “I don’t think those bandages will go well with your dress.”

She waved him off, there was no need for all the fuss over a small slicing hex. “Like anyone will notice another scar. It’s fine.”

“I’ll notice,” his voice dipped to a whisper, so low she wasn’t sure if she was supposed to hear it. Harry definitely didn’t hear it, still muttering to himself and pulling unruly fistfuls of black hair from his head.

Hermione pulled the neckline of her itchy pale green robes up, suddenly feeling the need to cover her new scar. She never felt shame over one of her work scars until now, but the thought that she disappointed Malfoy in some way burned at her inexplicably.

He seemed to take a cue from her covering up as a hint to leave her bedside. She didn’t want him to leave, she would have preferred he stay close, so she could apologize for her forgetfulness.

She grabbed his wrist as he stood. “Don’t worry about the wedding. I can get Pansy’s help with a glamour, you won’t even notice,” she told him with a hushed voice, completely forgetting Harry was still in the room, despite his continued ramblings.

Steel eyes met amber as she looked up at him, wordlessly asking for absolution. She could not piece together why needing his forgiveness was suddenly so important to her. But while he stood firmly in place within her grasp, his face was void of emotion.

“Sooo, I’m going to head out.” Harry interrupted awkwardly as he slapped his hands against his knees, startling her into dropping Malfoy’s hand; he pulled it away immediately, shoving it into his pocket as he stepped away.

By the time she broke her stare with Malfoy, Harry was out of his chair and moving towards the door. “Seriously, Hermione. I’m glad you’re alright, and Daphne said you could leave as soon as you woke up, but next time, remember a protection charm yes?” He clapped Malfoy on the shoulder as he left. “Lucky your hair is already white, mate.”

Malfoy smiled as he ran his hand through his hair. “I hate to say it, Granger, but Potter is right. I’ve seen you rush in one too many times for my liking. You’re liable to get seriously injured.”

He pulled out a small matte black box from his robes, his fingers playing with the gold ribbon that secured the package. "I was saving this to give to you as a wedding gift, but now seems as good a time as any."

"Malfoy. You do not have to keep getting me gifts."

He lowered his voice to just above a whisper, staring determinately at the ribbon between his thumb and index finger. "I like giving gifts. Think of receiving them as a favour to me. Please." He handed the box to her.

She pulled the ribbon and unwrapped the box to uncover a slender emerald tennis bracelet.

"That is a Malfoy family heirloom bracelet," he said with increasing confidence, "it is imbued with a whole host of protection charms and will prevent you from harm. I've had it stripped of all dark magic, but you are welcome to test it yourself." He spun the silver ring on his pinky finger. "You should know that it's tied to my signet ring. I'll be notified if the bracelet is activated."

Hermione lifted the bracelet up to the light. It was quite beautiful, surely a fortune between the emeralds and the magic that was running through it.

She always assumed that any Malfoy jewellery would be like the other endless hideous items she encountered in the vaults as she worked—ostentatious and hideous, meant to flaunt wealth. Bill often referred to those vaults as new money. But this bracelet felt understated, yet powerful. She felt an affinity for it immediately.

"I'd like you to wear it while you work. So that I know you are safe."

"Thank you, Malfoy. I will check it over.... Not that I don't trust you, I just --"

"It's okay, Granger, I assumed you would. Just wear it, would you?"

"I will." She felt guilty for causing him to worry. And Harry, of course.

He was staring at her intently, looking worried as he drifted his gaze between the bracelet and her bandages, exposed again after the robes drifted back down.

"Hermione!" Daphne strode through the door in her green healer robes, clipboard in hand. "The frequent flyer card last time was a joke! Next time let's meet up at the Leaky, and I won't have to wear these hideous robes." She cast a blue diagnostic over Hermione's head while Malfoy stepped away from the bed. "Your chest took a small slicing hex. I've loaded you up with dittany, and the bandages can come off in the morning. Everything looks good enough for you to be discharged... as long as you feel well enough?"

"I feel fine, Daphne, just a scratch." Hermione wanted a warm shower and her own pyjamas.

"Slightly more than a scratch, but if you insist." Daphne turned to Malfoy. "Will you be taking her home then, Draco? I'd rather she not apparate herself for 24 hours. Floos only, please. There is one just down the hall, on your left."

Daphne didn't wait for an answer as she checked off her clipboard and was back out the door.

~

Malfoy escorted Hermione through the floo and asked her three times if she was sure she would be fine alone before she could convince him to leave. After a long hot shower, with a modified bubblehead charm to keep her chest bandage dry, Hermione went back into her bedroom to find her notebook glowing beside the bed.

Granger,

You scared me today. I've come to enjoy having you around and would not like to repeat the experience. Please wear the bracelet?

-DLM

Hermione found her quill and jotted down a reply, the feeling of guilt that she worried him sitting heavy in her belly.

I will wear the bracelet Malfoy. And I'm sorry for scaring you. You're not bad company either.

Thank you.

He finally dropped the formalities in his response, Hermione thought to herself with a smirk, forgetting her guilt. The book glowed again with a second message.

I was reading today about muggle marriage ceremonies before your unfortunate incident.

She laughed to herself, thinking of him researching into the foreign topic of muggles.

Have you now? Learn anything interesting?

I've decided I quite like the idea of writing one's own vows. It's not really done in the wizarding world.

First, he wanted to meet her at the end of an aisle; now, he was hinting at writing their own vows. Hermione wondered if Malfoy remembered that this was a ministry-arranged marriage.

Malfoy. Are you planning on saying your own vows at our ceremony on Friday?

Yes, Granger. I am. I thought it would be courteous to let you know in advance. I know you don't like to be shown up, little swot.

She snapped the notebook closed.

Suggested Listening: *Hunger* by Florence + The Machine

Malfoy is a simp. And I am HERE FOR IT.

November 26, 2003

Chapter Notes

Ohhhh, hey, book boyfriend. I love a Draco POV. Love. He is just such a gosh darn, filthy, horny simp of a 22-year-old boy.

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

November 26 & 27, 2003

On the eve of his wedding, Draco sat at his desk, surrounded by scraps of parchment. His second firewhiskey sat empty, and his hair surely stood on end from how many times he ran his hands through it in frustration.

Another draft crumpled in his hands and muffled the sound of floor, masking the sounds of Theodore Nott arriving in his flat, picking up scraps from the floor.

“I promise to protect you... Draco, mate, what the fuck are you scribbling about. It looks like an author’s nightmare in here.” Theo tossed the scrap back to the floor and picked up another and another, reading as he went. “Please tell me you aren’t thinking of saying this shite to Granger. She’ll think you’re cracked.”

“I am not saying this shite to Granger because that’s exactly what *this* is.” He waved his hand over the mess surrounding them. “It’s all shite. I’m trying to write vows for our wedding tomorrow.”

“What do you mean write vows?” He kept picking up more scraps from the floor, making increasingly disgusted faces as he uncrumpled them to read. “You do the repeating and the magic ribboning on the hands, and it’s done. I should know, I’ve been married three whole days, it was barely an effort. That bit is supposed to come after the ceremony,” Theo said, wagging his eyebrows suggestively, still reading. “Merlin’s tits. This one is the worst.”

Draco snatched the paper out of Theo’s hands. He was right; it was terrible. “Don’t be crude, Theo. How is Mrs Nott? Have you told her about your bribes yet?”

“I have certainly not. And if you don’t want me to take Granger down memory lane with some of the things I overheard in the Slytherin dorms, you won’t be telling her either. Now, how can I help you so I can get back to my bride? She is a bit tied up at the moment, and I told her I would be right back.”

“I told Granger I would write vows like the muggles do. I thought it would be romantic, and I could use them to win her over, but everything I write sounds like a thirteen-year-old boy who’s never spoken to a girl.” Draco groaned, putting his head into his hands on the desk. He

didn't realise when reading about muggle vows the amount one usually poured their heart into it. And with each crumpled note, he could only focus on her blank stare at the ceiling the night he cocked it all up.

Cold sweat ran down his spine at the memory, her refusal to look at him while she tucked her naked body closer into itself.

He was going to make the same fucking mistake all over again.

Theo chuckled. "When it comes to Granger, mate, you are a thirteen-year-old boy. Why don't you take some inspiration from literature? She's a swot. She'll like that."

"Go back to your wife, Theo, and don't include me in your foreplay again." Draco paced off into Granger's tiny bedroom library to scan her titles for inspiration, pushing Theo into the floo as he went.

He could salvage this.

"Next time, we'll invite you to the main event." Theo barked a laugh as he disappeared into the flames.

Draco looked back and forth across the shelves for the most worn books that Mipsy unpacked earlier in the day, along with the rest of the items in her room. He pulled out the copy of *Jane Eyre*, the edges fanned and browned in places, giving him little doubt that she read it time and again.

Sitting on the edge of her not-yet-used bed, he tugged at the worn quilt folded at the bottom. It smelled of her, jasmine and parchment.

Always his amortentia.

He pulled her scent closer and began to read.

~

The following morning, Draco flooed over to Malfoy Manor immediately upon waking to collect his mother. As she bemoaned her deprivation of an entire ceremony and party, the *least he could do* was have breakfast with her and get ready in his dress robes at the manor.

Mipsy waited by the floo, tears already brimming in her enormous eyes. "Master Draco, Mipsy is so excited for today. She's worn her new shoes from Miss Granger in celebration." Mipsy showed off her new high tops proudly. "Mistress Malfoy is waiting for you in the small dining room."

Together, they walked down the hallway into the small dining room, only called the small dining room because of the larger one in the east wing; the table still sat sixteen. Draco's mother sat primly at the head of the table, reading the Daily Propet and sipping tea. Her paper folded itself into a neat square as Draco entered the room and her perfect demeanour disappeared, embracing him in a warm hug.

Since his father fucked off to Azkaban, Narcissa had become much more affectionate with him, finally free of Lucius' threats of making the heir to the House of Malfoy *soft*.

Draco took the seat next to his mother. He had no desire to put an entire room between them with no need to face off. Mipsy snapped her fingers, and trays of eggs, bacon, toast, and fruit appeared on the table. At least four times the food a reasonable person would assume the two of them would eat. But Mipsy grinned from ear to ear, clearly happy to spoil them on a momentous occasion.

"My dragon, are you nervous about the wedding today?" A small serving of fruit and biscuits hovered onto her plate. "Such an important day in one's life."

"Quite nervous, mother. Not for the ceremony itself, but I've taken the liberty of writing my own wedding vows, a muggle tradition. I'm nervous about whether Granger will appreciate them." Draco pushed his bacon around the plate. Only a few forkfuls and his stomach rolled nervously, thinking about the day.

"Written your own vows! What a delightfully romantic custom. I'm sure Miss Granger will more than appreciate it. It is such a show of oneself."

"That is precisely what I am nervous about." Draco rolled the scroll sitting in his pocket. He stayed up late reading her favourite book, laying in her bed atop her welcoming quilt, working on his vows until half twelve.

He would have been tired if he wasn't so anxious for the day.

Draco and his mother sat and finished their breakfast—or his mother finished her breakfast, at least—chatting informally about the upcoming engagements Narcissa planned to attend in her social circles. He was grateful for the wedding talk to cease, if only to ease his nerves slightly from the distraction.

He found his new wedding robes hanging in his old childhood room, another item his mother insisted on arranging. Mollified to have his mother provide his clothes, Draco acquiesced to the small price to pay for her happiness.

The robes were impeccable, dark midnight black with tiny silver accents along the hem, just like the silver of his eyes.

She was always one for the finest details.

Draco assessed his reflection in the mirror one last time, pushing back his white-blond hair behind his ears, briefly thankful he gave up the gel years ago.

With a final check, his vows were safely tucked away in his pocket, he went to find his mother waiting patiently in the hallway.

Narcissa stood the picture of quiet wealth and power. Her navy robes were well-fitted and understated, with only the finest embroidery along the hems of the bell sleeves and the collar

of the high neckline. A tight coiffure at the top of her neck, paired with drop pearl earrings, made her look feminine yet unshakeable.

“You are beautiful as always, Mother,” Draco said as he held out his arm. “Shall we go?”

“Of course, my Dragon. Let’s go find your wife.”

And so, Draco led the way from the family rooms, through the floo into the ministry, and to the top of the aisle in the third office of the Department of Love. Formerly used as a puffskein housing space, thankfully now without the lingering smell.

They were three minutes early for Granger’s arranged 3 PM appointment, and Draco used his final 180 seconds to become irrationally nervous that she wouldn’t show, staring at the beige office doors.

However, precisely upon the hour, the doors opened.

She came.

Her hair was half tied back, with soft brown ringlets flowing over her shoulders and down her back. The bracelet he gifted her shimmered on her wrist, emeralds reflecting the stark office lights.

An off-white sleeveless sundress brushed the tops of her knees, and Draco took in all the scars she had on display.

Greyback’s scar edged out of the top of her dress, sitting next to the fresh scar from two days ago, while his aunt’s heinous work mocked him, on full display from her forearm. Others, small and large, littered her body, interspersed between the freckles everywhere. He wanted to kiss every inch of her and taste them all, record them in his memory with a prayer she would never bear another.

But she was without concern, showing her whole self at the altar, and he burst with pride for her courage.

She arrived at the top of the altar next to Draco, turning to face him. “Hi,” she said.

“Hi,” he responded, moving to take her hand.

He could not take his eyes off her, half listening to the officiant only enough to be able to repeat the words and seal the magical bond with a red ribbon glowing around their wrist. The sensation of the marriage bond taking hold between them sent a shiver through his chest; he could feel her warm magic chase his own in his veins.

As the room quieted, into a lull, Draco snapped out of his admiration and found the officiant waiting for him to speak.

Now or never. He pulled out the worn parchment from his pocket.

“Granger.... Hermione,” he started, “since the day I first encountered you on the train, I knew that you were a force.

While I have not always shown it in the most appropriate ways, I have admired you for over a decade. You are the most intelligent, caring, beautiful, and stubborn witch I have ever known, and I will be eternally grateful for every day you wish to give me as your husband.

I vow to protect you with my name and my body. I vow to support you in any endeavours you choose. I vow to care for you and nurture you, body and soul.

I will be there for you whenever my name is spoken, regardless of the time or place. I ask you to pass through life at my side—to be my second self, and best earthly companion.”

Her smile faltered at the final line, his inspiration from her library. He went too far. He felt his mouth dry out on the quoted words, watching her shifting expression. She was upset with him.

“I wasn’t expecting that. Mine aren’t nearly as thoughtful.” She looked down at the parchment in her own hands, rolling the corners between her fingers. He didn’t even see her take it out. She began to read.

“Malfoy. Somehow, in all of this, you have become one of my truest friends. You are a calm in the storm of this awful act, and I will be eternally grateful that I received your name in the post. Thank you for making this so easy.”

Draco could not believe she wrote her own vows. Clearly not wanting to be shown up at her own wedding, they had a different tint than his own, but he had made progress.

The officiant waved his wand over the pair, and the red ribbon that tied their wrists glowed before unravelling into thin air. “You may kiss the bride.” He smiled.

Draco leaned down to kiss her softly, knowing all his progress could be undone in an instant. He cupped her cheek in one hand and pressed his lips against hers chastely, stopping himself from going further. She returned the kiss in kind.

He had not lost her.

Amber eyes met his own as they broke away from the innocent kiss. It was as if time froze, crystallizing in his memory. He wanted to count the golden flecks in each of her irises, committing them to the deepest part of his brain. The recency of the marriage bonds must have made her glow; there was no other explanation for the vision that stood before him: soft brown curls awash in golden light.

As long as she would have him, she would be his golden girl.

“Shall we go home then?” She asked.

He nodded. “Let's go home.”

Draco hugged his mother goodbye, who looked like the cat who got the cream, and led his wife away to the ministry floo. His nerves came swimming back, tightening in his throat as the green flames consumed him.

~

She didn't look at all nervous, striding around the flat, tossing her bag on the couch as she went to sit at the kitchen island.

He made himself busy, not wanting to provoke her. All he wanted was to continue the kiss from the wedding. To lift her legs around his waist and carry her into his bedroom where he could make her his own.

Draco stuffed the thoughts back down and adjusting his trousers covertly, he poured two glasses of champagne that Mipsy cleverly chilled beforehand.

Offering a glass to her at the counter, he clinked his own against it. "Cheers, Granger. Or should I call you Malfoy now?"

"You very well know that Granger is still my name." She snorted with a laugh. "Cheers." She smiled back, taking a large swig from the glass.

Maybe she was nervous?

"Would you like to see your room? Mipsy is very pleased with herself on the setup." Draco gestured his arm towards her bedroom suite.

"Yes. My room." She took another large swig from the glass, emptying it and hopping off the high island chair to follow. "Mipsy was adamant when moving my things that I was not to help. I would have preferred to do some of the work myself, but I fear getting on her bad side if I am to be truthful about it."

Draco laughed. "Blaise is on Mipsy's bad side, you should ask him about it sometime. It's been three years of chairs *mysteriously* breaking underneath him."

She laughed loudly. "If you had a pensieve I might ask to see that."

They made it into her rooms, and her attention trailed off as she explored the bedroom, bathroom and tiny attached library. Her fingertips trailed over all the surfaces as she moved around.

"Oh!" Granger exclaimed. "She even sorted by books the way I like. And my mother's quilt made it to the bed. I will have to thank her for such a wonderful job." She smiled softly, fingering the edge of the quilt.

"I know you wish your parents were there today, Granger. They would have thought you made the most beautiful bride. I know I thought that."

He was pushing it.

She started to tear up while a soft blush crept onto her cheeks. "Your vows were lovely today," she said, looking up from him where she sat, avoiding the subject of her parents.

"I meant every word of them. Even if happily inspired by your library." He picked up the book he read last night from her nightstand table and handed it to her. "I might borrow a few more, another time."

"What's mine is yours." Hermione chuckled.

Draco idly dragged his foot across the rug. She still didn't understand the magic of the Black contract they entered into. "Not entirely, Granger. These are your rooms. Magically speaking I cannot enter them unless you wish me to enter them. The magic is very much based upon intent."

Standing to step a foot closer, she asked, "Are you saying I wished you to enter them today?"

The smell of jasmine and parchment invaded his senses as she approached. It hinted from everywhere in her room, but her closing the space made it overwhelming.

He needed to keep his distance, maintain respect for her. "My invitation for you to see Mipsy's handiwork may have swayed you in this case, but yes that is what I'm saying."

She took another step towards him, taking deeper breaths than she had before, her chest heaving in her dress.

He needed to get out. Draco backed away from her to the door with a fleeting thought of what her hand might look like fisted into that quilt as he bent her over and took pleasure from her invaded his mind. The thought of how many freckles he might find on her back as he thrust into her from behind made the blood run from his brain and into his cock.

Draco needed to get out of her rooms before he did something particularly disrespectful.

"You must be hungry," he said slightly too loudly as he exited her room. "Why don't you get comfortable, and I will make us some dinner?"

She looked startled, her arm moving back down to her side.

Had she reached for him?

"You cook, Malfoy?"

"Yes, Granger, I cook. Dinner will be ready in an hour if you'd like to join," he replied firmly as he closed her door.

Draco stalked over to the kitchen and poured himself a second glass of champagne, drinking the entire thing in one gulp.

He couldn't believe his stupidity.

How was he supposed to win her over and make her fall in love with him when she looked and smelled like that?

He was supposed to treat her respectfully, with honour, which would be a nearly impossible task considering the number of times in a day he thought of her kneeling in front of him.

Respect was not wishing for tears to stream down her face from taking his cock in her throat.

Composing himself, Draco started to take out ingredients for dinner and a pan, setting out to make a only slightly romantic dinner for the two of them to enjoy together. Respectfully.

He was fucked.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Evergreen* by Richy Mitch & The Coal Miners

I noodled on the differences between the wedding vows for ages. Ages I tell you!

November 28, 2003

Chapter Notes

CW/TW in the end notes.

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

November 28, 2003

Hermione awoke the first morning in her new bed, in Malfoy's flat, feeling less than fully rested. Drinking champagne during the day, followed by wine at a surprisingly delicious dinner with Malfoy, allowed her nightmares to return.

Images of Bellatrix hovering above her, Harry lying motionless on the ground, and Ron abandoning them on his way out of the tent all cycled furiously through her mind as she slept. Relieved to feel the hard wood of her wand beneath her pillow, Hermione checked her silencing charm. It was still intact; he wouldn't have heard her screams. With a swish, she removed the charm and set to ready herself for the day.

She padded over to her private bathroom, feeling moderately guilty to be enjoying such a luxurious setup.

A large clawfoot tub in the corner was flanked by a walk-in shower she could spend days in. A small gift basket caught her eye on the vanity, a familiar gold ribbon tied in a large bow on the wicker handle. It was filled to the brim with creams and potions and a tiny card from Mipsy, welcoming her home.

The elf was obviously determined to spoil her, whether Hermione would accept it or not. Each vial meticulously tagged: *curl softening*, *headaches*, *pepper-up*, *moisturiser*, *contraceptive*. Hermione tossed the vials back into the basket as she read the last script with a laugh over the presumptuous little elf before she turned to start her shower.

As Hermione let the water run through her hair and down her back, she thought back to the day before as she scrubbed a fragrant jasmine-scented shampoo into her locks. Malfoy's vows opened a well of confused emotion in her.

The man who stood in front of her was truly one that she trusted and came to look upon as her friend. She was grateful they reached a place where they could rely upon one another, and the thought of staying with Malfoy until the marriage act was repealed did not concern her.

But the words he spoke yesterday were of devotion. He spoke to her in the same way he drunkenly revered her body before fleeing, the night she could barely believe occurred only a month ago. The night they agreed to keep in the past as a drunken mistake.

Hermione's vows were... less than devotion. They were how she truly felt about him as her friend. If she were going to be stuck in a temporary marriage with a man, he was arguably the best choice for her. They worked well together and respected each other. All their work together on the cabinet proved that.

But then he kissed her.

The feeling of his hand against her cheek was a ghost in her memory. She pressed her fingers to her lips to remind herself of the pressure of his kiss. The moment they connected, vibrations of the marriage bond sunk deep into her chest. She felt the warm sensation of safety all over her skin and lost herself in the brief moment she kissed him back.

The vows pulled at her heart, telling her he would always take care of her and provide for her.

She lingered under the heat of the shower as her conditioner rinsed away and traced her fingers softly up her hip and side and down the centre of her chest, still thinking of his kiss. Tender fingers reached between the apex of her legs, and she circled her folds, allowing the steam of the shower to relax her.

She let her hands skate up to her breast, tugging gently on her nipple, and back down again to where she was growing slick with want. The feeling of the marriage bond echoed over her skin as she dipped a finger inside, immediately feeling a pooling inside her belly.

Hermione worked a single finger inside, moving in and out to gather moisture before adding a second, growing in frustration to find release in her new location; a hot shower usually worked within minutes.

She took her free hand and reached for a nipple, grasping firmly, rolling between her fingers and pinching. The pressure between her legs grew heavy and her shoulders and back began to feel warm while she thrust her fingers to no avail.

None of her usual methods were working, she thought, frustrated as she sat on the tiled bench, nipple still in hand.

A moment seated on the bench allowed her imagination to run as she watched the shower rain down upon the hard tiles, droplets bouncing before they rolled down the drain.

She sank onto her knees, allowing the dull pain of the tile on her knees to distract her. Hermione closed her eyes and imagined a tall, blond, faceless man standing in front of her, fisting his hard cock, its tip weeping with urgency. Harder and rougher, she pulled on her nipples, alternating back and forth between breasts. She continued to thrust her fingers into her opening, letting her palm rub vigorously against her clit as she moved faster.

The man's cock grew harder in front of her, its size just as impressive as the man's broad hand. Hermione watched the imagined hand twist over the angry head of the cock, revealing a gleaming silver signet ring on the pinky finger.

The thought of the ring was all she needed to let the building orgasm roll over her. Hermione roughly added a third finger and saw stars as she crested over the edge.

The shower rained upon her face as she threw her head back, moaning in ecstasy and allowing her mouth to take in the water. She stuck her tongue out to taste as much of the wetness as possible. Moans and a repeated “*thank you, thank you, thank you*” spilt from her mouth as she rolled through her powerful climax.

Hermione’s chest heaved as she came down from her peak, still kneeling on the hard shower floor with three fingers buried inside. She sat back on her feet, absorbing what just happened.

She masturbated to the thought of Malfoy.

Her now husband.

The man she arguably had the worst sex of her life with.

Obviously, a reaction to the marriage bonds.

Hermione dressed quickly, anxious to forget her embarrassing activities. Caught up in towelling her hair dry while she exited her bedroom, she realised too late, as Malfoy stared at her from the sofa, that she took down her silencing charm *before* her shower.

The heat in her cheeks grew warmer when he cleared his throat loudly and stalked off to his own bedroom, slamming the door.

Fuck.

Hermione set to work and made breakfast for the both of them, hoping it would be enough of an apology.

Ten minutes later, she plated their breakfast carefully while he exited his bedroom and sat at the kitchen island, taking a plate of toast and eggs, digging into eat without making eye contact. Hermione sat next to him with her plate and cup of coffee. “Malfoy –“

“Just remember a silencing charm next time?” He cut her off without looking up, speaking low to his hovering fork. “It’s a fairly rudimentary charm; I could remind you of the wand motions if you have forgotten it.”

Heat crept back into her cheeks. “I remember how to cast it. It slipped my mind, is all.”

He finished his breakfast wordlessly, taking his plate and setting it in the sink to wash before pacing to the floo. He took his auror robes from the rack beside the mantle, tossing them on in one swoop and grabbed a fistful of floo powder before he was gone.

Hermione groaned, hanging her head in her hands. They lived together for less than 24 hours, and she already ruined their perfectly respectable working relationship. Short of obliterating him, there wasn’t a way out of him knowing exactly what happened while she was in the shower.

Well, not exactly what happened.

Hermione set her plate into the sink to clean along with her husband's. She grabbed her beaded bag and left out the front door. A walk through Diagon would hopefully clear her mind and help her forget her embarrassment.

~

All through the workday, Hermione's two-way notebook sat ominously on her desk. Not once did it begin to glow, and it was about to be the longest they had gone without corresponding through the books. Hermione, determined to set the morning behind her, opened the book and began a note. After several false starts, she succeeded in her message.

Malfoy – Checking if you are home for dinner this evening. I can cook if you like.

It was short and direct enough, ignoring the implications of the morning's activities.

I will be home from work at six this evening. If you like, I could lend a hand and assist you with dinner? Unless you prefer to cook alone?

Hermione scoffed and slammed her notebook shut at her desk. An older goblin eyed her from his cubicle and shook his head at the disturbance. Malfoy was teasing her, and she would not back down. She reopened the book, feeling reinvigorated to respond in defiance of his goading.

I prefer to do many activities alone, Malfoy. However, cooking is not one of them. I would be appreciative if you could pitch in. Perhaps we would both be satisfied with the results.

The notebook sat unglowing for a full five minutes. Hermione felt victorious over the smug bastard. He tried, unsuccessfully, to make her feel embarrassed for tending to her most basic urges.

It was ungentlemanly.

Her pride disappeared when the notebook glowed again.

Would you be satisfied, Granger? Enough to thank me?

Only 5% sure they were still talking about dinner, Hermione held onto the small chance tooth and nail. If he wanted to play this game, she would surely win.

You proved yourself last night to be an excellent cook. I have no doubts that you will be an acceptable sous chef for this evening's pasta dish I have planned. You may make the sauce. If it is palatable, I might consider giving my thanks.

I am terrible at pasta; you would not be pleased if I ruined what is sure to be an excellent dinner. However, I will commit to making our dessert. Mipsy has the most extravagant whipped cream recipe that tastes delicious on just about everything.

She shoved her notebook back into the very bottom of her beaded bag. There was no way she was going to win this day without carefully planning her response and the evening that was

awaiting her. With a focus on the remainder of her paperwork for the goblins, she set Malfoy aside in her mind, committing to plan further during her walk home.

~

Hermione stopped at the grocer on her way home for a few items to make her planned dinner, torn between two cheeses, not recalling which she usually added to the sauce. Stuck in her head, trying to decide, she didn't hear Pansy approach until she stood only a foot away.

"Granger! Lucky I ran into you! I tried to floo you this morning but the grate was closed. I've reviewed your contracts."

She completely forgot Pansy promised to review the contracts, they were so non-threatening. "Your timing is a bit off Pansy, we got married yesterday."

"Shite. I'm sorry Granger, I knew I took too long. The magazine has been crazy with the marriage deadline this month." Pansy pulled a shrunken copy of the contract out of her robe pocket, enlarging it to hand it back. "So you were good with all of this?"

She nodded, adding both cheeses to her basket, she could decide later on the sauce. "It was all very tame in the end. Unexpected, really."

"What's unexpected is the fact you signed it at all."

"Well I wasn't going to risk the both of us going to Azkaban over an unsealed marriage bond."

"Granger. What the fuck are you on about?"

Hermione felt as if she was missing the last piece of a very important puzzle. "Malfoy told me that his familial magic wouldn't seal the marriage bond without a contract."

"That's horseshite," she spluttered. "He is the head of two of the most ancient pureblood lines. While his familial magic is exceptionally powerful, he chooses when to wield it, not the other way around."

She couldn't fathom why he needed to lie about needing a contract for their marriage. Nothing in the contract benefited him, it was extraordinarily one sided. "Pansy. You've read the contract. It doesn't favour him in the least."

"No. And that's what is so ridiculous about it. I've never read a marriage contract more unbalanced in all my life. Is there something you're not telling me?"

"No." Hermione would take the secret of sleeping with Malfoy to the grave if she had to. Their friend group was too intertwined to take such gossip in stride. Besides, it wasn't the first secret between them. "There is nothing Pansy."

Pansy raised her eyebrow at the denial.

“Fine. But I’m telling you, it’s absurd. He is practically grovelling at your feet with this.” She waved at the scroll with a perfectly manicured hand. “What I do know is that he is a good man now. He’s trying to be better than his father, which admittedly is not a high bar, but whatever his motivation is, it’s good.”

She shifted her shopping basket between her hands, pausing briefly. “Listen, Granger. You’re both very important to me. My best friends. And, I know you are not asking my advice but I’m going to give it to you anyway. Don’t blow up over this. Sometimes you get a little ragey. Just... remember that he’s a good man now.” She gave a single nod, not waiting for Hermione’s response, and clicked away on impossibly high heels, leaving Hermione holding a scroll and a basket full of cheese, mouth hanging open in shock.

~

Hermione was still processing Pansy’s revelation and advice as she rushed through the door, finding Draco wearing a short-sleeved t-shirt, denims and an apron in the kitchen, standing over a muggle mixer with stiff peaks formed on the beaters.

“I thought you would have beat me home,” he asked as he dipped the tip of his ringed pinky finger into the bowl and up to his mouth to taste the dessert. Hermione ignored his blatant flirting.

“I was running late at the grocer, ran into Pansy while I was there.” She threw her bags down on the counter and began to get out pots and pans to begin cooking, banging them around louder than necessary, still in her heavy outdoor robes.

Hands grazed her shoulders as he slid her robes off and hung them on the rack by the floo. He lifted the bowl from the mixer and set it next to a bowl of strawberries, already on the table, returning only to put the beaters in the sink and put the mixer away and he sat down at the kitchen island to watch her cook. “Do you want to tell me what’s bothering you?”

She felt flustered. The feeling of his eyes on her as she stomped about the kitchen boiling pasta and making sauce only increased her ire. Between the events of the morning and the fact she signed a completely unnecessary marriage contract—her head spun in every direction.

With a wave of her wand, Hermione spelled the dinner to finish on its own and marched over to her beaded bag, digging out Pansy’s copy of the contract and throwing it in front of him. She needed to know the truth. “Pansy reviewed this for me. She called bollocks on your family magic.”

He took the scroll, twirling it in his hands, avoiding her gaze. “I don’t know what you are talking about Granger.”

“We never needed a contract, Malfoy.” Hermione could feel the ends of her hair lifting with rage as she ignored Pansy’s advice swirling around in her head.

His eyes went wide and his mouth opened to speak, failing him the first time before responding, “No. We didn’t need one. But I needed it. I needed to make it right between us.”

Hermione tapped her foot in irritation, waiting for a better explanation.

“I have never apologised to you, and it is long overdue.”

He placed the scroll back on the counter and took her hands in his, and holding them in front of his chest in a plea. “Hermione Granger, I am endlessly sorry for the hurt and pain I caused you when we were younger. All I wanted to be when I was younger was my father, and I realised the error of that desire far later than I am proud to admit. You saw what he was capable of, but...” His eyes darted to the scar on her forearm. “The day *she* did that to you – my father laughed about it for weeks afterwards.”

“Malfoy–”

“No, I need to finish,” he continued, “That day is one of the biggest regrets of my life. That I didn’t intervene. The sight of your blood on the floor and the sounds of your screams haunts me, and even if you forgive me, which you shouldn’t, I will never forgive myself.” Tears welled in his eyes and he dipped his head lower to rest on their clasped hands. “This contract only allows me to use my family magic to protect and care for you.”

“You should have told me the truth.” He was so sincere she wanted to put her hands on his face in comfort, but instead kept them steady within his grasp.

Her mind was churning with feelings of rage over the lie, but she began to understand his motivations, along with Pansy’s insight.

The thought of the fresh scar on her chest still filled her with guilt that she disappointed him somehow. Perhaps it was only a small thing to let him protect her this way. She already accepted the bracelet, what more did a piece of paper matter?

“And would you have listened to me? Would you still have signed it?”

“I don’t know.”

He shook his head, a tear rolled down his cheek over the tip of her thumb. “I couldn’t take the chance. You may not want it, but you need protecting. To be kept safe. Let me do that for you.”

“I can keep myself safe. I’ve been doing it for years without you.”

“But you don’t have to do it alone. Please, I need this to feel whole.”

“Malfoy--” Hermione started again. She let go of his hands and held his face, pulling his silver gaze up to meet her own. “I forgave you a long time ago for everything. The bullying, the crimes, that day. I wanted to move on with my life, and I did.”

His warm hands didn’t leave her wrists, enveloping her in his remorse.

Hermione knew in theory she forgave him on the day he received his sentencing to house arrest. Finally understanding how terrible Lucius Malfoy truly was, she thought the sentencing was far too harsh, he already endured enough. But now, she understood the depth

of his remorse. The forgiveness she gave years ago on principle, now felt earned between the two of them, it became personal. "You are not your father."

He nodded minutely. After collecting himself, he stood and picked an invisible piece of lint from his trousers. "And the contract?"

She didn't want to linger on the contract, but still felt slighted. He needed to make it up to her. The fact that he lied, regardless of the motivation, required atonement. "I'll expect an amendment doubling the monthly donations."

"Done."

Too easy. "On second thought, make it triple."

A twitch at the corner of his mouth betrayed his amusement. "15,000 galleons a month to whatever charities you wish. A fair price."

Hermione shifted on her feet, unsure of how to proceed in their emotional state, only to be saved by the groan of her stomach.

"Granger. Would you like me to finish making dinner?" He asked with a small smirk and a raised eyebrow.

The tiniest laugh escaped her, too amused by her stomach's interruption to care about the tense air between them any longer. "That would be wonderful. Thank you, Malfoy."

They moved in silence to set the table and tuck in to their dinner. The tentative peace that lay between them hung awkward in the air. Hermione wanted to ask him about their notes earlier in the day, but she couldn't find the words. It seemed silly after his confession.

Instead, determined to bury the conflicting feelings of the day, Hermione started telling Malfoy about the last six books she read. In detail.

He never left the table while she verbally spewed on about transfiguration, arithmancy, or ancient runes. Nor did he move a muscle as she spoke about the latest biography she read on Amelia Earhartt, unless she counted the eyebrows raising at the concept of air travel.

Malfoy remained in his seat, watching her go on and on, nodding occasionally to keep up until somehow they were through their dinner. Hermione couldn't even remember eating.

He set in front of her a bowl of fruit and whipped cream, along with a small spoon, taking her dinner dish to the kitchen. As he returned and sat down to his own dessert, he asked, "Granger, that is all fascinating, but I am dying to know what an aeroplane is."

Hermione laughed freely. The story of Amelia Earhartt was three books ago, and he just let her ramble on. "One day, I will take you on one, it's better you experience it for yourself."

~

Hermione paced back and forth in her bedroom, determined to settle her nerves. Selecting *Wuthering Heights* from her small library, she sat down on her bed and began to read. She heard a soft knock at the open door only three pages in.

He leaned against the doorframe, just on the edge of entering her own space. “I was just going to sit down and read a book by the fire,” Draco said softly, eyeing her book. “Would you like to join me?”

A peace offering.

Closing the book over with her thumb holding the page she left off, Hermione stared down at the cover, avoiding his gaze. She gave a small nod and climbed off the bed to follow him to the living room, pausing briefly in the doorway and turning back to snatch her worn quilt from the bed.

He already settled onto one end of the sofa, though without any book that Hermione could see. Refined as always, with his back ramrod straight and one ankle sitting on a knee, he stared inquisitively as she settled in with her quilt.

Determined to keep space between them, Hermione sat on the opposite end of the sofa, tucking her feet up and settling the blanket on her crossed legs. The coziness of the space and the warmth of the fire he lit made her want to stay in their joined reading place for hours.

She ignored her husband's gaze upon her while she began to read. Just two sentences in, a swish through the air told her he summoned his own book from the shelf and began to read. Curiosity got the better of her and she peeked over her own book to see what he selected. The title of *Wuthering Heights* shimmered in gold from beneath his large hands, clearly an older edition.

“I purchased some additional muggle books for my own library after helping Mipsy unpack yours.” He said without looking up. “I thought you might like to discuss them while reading.” The tiniest hint of a smile appeared at the corner of his mouth.

Hermione felt the heat of the fire sink into her chest and allowed her own small smile to escape. She acquiesced to his effort to connect and make peace and stretched out her legs out from under the quilt, tucking her toes under his left thigh. Without speaking he adjusted the quilt, pulling it down to cover her feet, and returned to reading his book.

Chapter End Notes

CW / TW: Masturbation

Suggested Listening: *I Found* by Amber Run

I rewrote this chapter more than any others, trying to perfect Pansy's interference. Ultimately, I landed in a place where maybe she knows about Draco's infatuation, but

maybe she doesn't, and I didn't need to spell it out either way. I think it's a nice reader mystery; you can decide for yourself.

There was also the small matter of how would Hermione react to Draco's lies. Even if she is 23, I wanted to give her a moment of maturity. At first, it felt a little out of character, but then I stewed on it and gave her a bit of grace. Maybe she took what Pansy said to heart; maybe her feelings are building for Draco, and she is willfully ignoring some aspects of the contract. So, in the end, I don't actually think it's out of character. I think it's character development. Which this fic is really focused on, surprisingly.

Also, smut.

I hope you enjoyed our girl rubbing one out in the name of delusion in her shower.

February 12, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

February 12, 2004

The previous two and a half months spent living with Malfoy easily became Hermione's safe routine. They alternated their morning structure; depending on whoever was in more of a rush that day, the other would make breakfast. Coffee, tea and toast under a stasis charm on the counter was an everyday occurrence in the early morning, with the only variables being tea and jam for him and coffee and almond butter for her.

Throughout the day, they bantered back and forth between their notebooks. Plans were made for the evening or weekend, discussions over problems they faced at work, and motivations of characters from the latest novel they were reading in tandem were hotly debated.

Evenings were spent cooking together, always followed by reading by the fire. Hermione would set the dishes in the sink, charmed to clean themselves, while Malfoy went into her bedroom to get her copy of their book, along with her quilt.

It only took a few weeks into their living together for the charm on her bedroom door to allow him inside. Hermione ignored the magic's meaning, and he never brought it up.

Over time, their space on the sofa narrowed. Hermione's toes under Malfoy's thigh turned to feet pressed against his leg. Eventually, Hermione sank further into the luxurious sofa, head propped up by pillows on one end, with her feet in his lap on the other end.

They were nearly finished reading their dual copies of *Dracula*.

Hermione usually stopped reading for ten minutes before he did to allow him to catch up before they discussed the night's chapters. Closing her book and setting it down on her lap, Hermione shut her eyes to enjoy his thumb applying pressure up and down the sole of her foot while he continued to read the book in his other hand.

While their marriage was not one of love, Hermione felt content. Happy even, in the way things turned out. They took care of each other and relied on each other in every way.

Well, except one way. She thought as she held back a satisfied moan from his hand on her foot.

She never forgot a silencing charm again after the initial *incident*. Admittedly, she cast them on a near-daily basis. Not having sex in months and living in proximity to a perfect physical specimen of a man took its toll.

Twice, he forgot to close his bedroom door in the evening, and she inadvertently saw him with a towel around his waist, still wet from the shower, while droplets of water ran down his

sculpted chest.

The visual burned into her mind, revisited many times in her own room, chasing her own pleasure. But she was determined to keep their relationship as it was.

Content.

Respectful.

Partners.

Malfoy closed his book, setting it down on the side table and added a second hand to her foot, pressing his thumb deliciously into her sore arch. “Stoker should have been charged for breaking the statute of secrecy after writing this,” he scoffed. “The wizard might have exaggerated a few things, but it’s far too close to accuracy to be legal.”

Hermione laughed back at him, wriggling deeper into the sofa to enjoy his hands on her feet. “I didn’t know he was a wizard. Must not have had enough of an imagination for other topics.”

“The eating vermin was a stretch too far for me. I’m all for a good horror story, but that’s revolting.” He sneered in disgust. “Changing the topic, as I have no interest in discussing rats further. Would you like to go out for dinner on Saturday? I could make a reservation at the French muggle place we like.”

“Saturday? That would be lovely. You know how much I love their souffle.” Hermione paused. “We’ve never needed a reservation there before. I’m sure we can just show up.”

He stared down at her feet in his hands. “Well, it is Valentine’s Day; they’re likely to be busier than usual.”

Hermione dropped her own gaze. “Right. Valentines Day. I didn’t realise the date.” She waved her hand dismissively, ignoring the implication. “Likely to be packed with lovesick fools, making proclamations to each other.”

As soon as the words left her lips, his hands froze. A single thumb dug into her arch before moving down to her heel. She regretted the words, but she didn’t want the conversation to escalate, not into a place where she would be vulnerable. The thought of being romanced by Malfoy with flowers and jewellery made her stomach roll in uneasiness.

“There will decidedly be no proclamations at our own table. Just that souffle and two forks. If you are willing to share.”

“You know full well that you can order your own. It’s too delicious to share.” Her shoulders dropped back down from their heightened level of stress, relieved to have successfully avoided being romanced.

He hinted multiple times since speaking his vows of devotion at their wedding, but she couldn’t break from the memory of Halloween, and she had no interest in risking the easy relationship they formed.

“Fine. But I will not be sharing either,” he said with a smirk.

Like all the previous times they went to the restaurant. Hermione couldn't resist stealing a single bite of his dessert after she finished her own. It wasn't that she was still hungry or that it was so delicious that she wanted more. But the look on his face she revelled in. Why he continued to be shocked while knowing she would steal a forkful was too entertaining to pass up.

By nearly ten in the evening, Hermione lifted her feet off her husband's lap to climb off the sofa. “I'm going back into the Lestrange vault tomorrow. Keep your notebook on you in case I need you?”

She had been called away from the vault and its cabinet for over two months, assigned to another vault deeper below when an old Sacred 28 matriarch died. All the items within needed to be de-cursed before the inheritances and transfers occurred, leaving Hermione buried in small curses and paperwork.

He folded up the quilt and walked behind Hermione into her room, setting it down on the edge of her bed before returning to the doorway. “We made progress with the rune research. I'm sure you'll be able to crack the cabinet open in no time; why don't I stop by for lunch? I almost miss the hideous thing, and my caseload is light this week. Potter won't mind if I step out for an hour or two.”

“Perfect.” Hermione readied a plan of attack for the cabinet from the weeks of off-and-on research she completed with Malfoy. Confident it would finally be successful, she would best the cabinet once and for all, but she couldn't help to think that victory would feel even sweeter if Malfoy got to be there with her.

~

Hermione just finished setting up her small working table within the vault, laying out her notebook and research notes, when Malfoy sent a message through the book.

Be there in two hours, Granger. See you soon.

She snapped the book shut without responding, flustered by the morning's events. He had lingered after setting out her coffee and toast, even though he was obviously ready for work.

Hermione was startled to see him sitting at the island; she assumed he left for the DMLE already while she rushed to get to work on time. “You're still here. Everything alright?”

He held her emerald bracelet in his hand, rolling it back and forth, fingering the delicate chain. “I wanted to make sure you were wearing your bracelet today. That cabinet still makes me uncomfortable, and I only want you to be safe. You don't wear it consistently.”

Taking a tentative sip of her coffee, standing next to his perch on the stool, Hermione sensed the stress he didn't want to vocalize. Feeling guilty over the times she forgot to wear the bracelet; Hermione didn't even realise he noticed. “I have forgotten a few days here and

there. No harm, I haven't been hurt." She presented her arm to him so he could place the bracelet on her wrist.

He used both hands to wrap the bracelet around her wrist and didn't release her after securing the latch, instead gently holding her forearm. He brought it slowly upwards, watching with darkened eyes and connected the inside of her wrist to his mouth for a chaste kiss, his gaze void of any emotion. "I would be beside myself if you were ever hurt. You are everything to me. My perfect wife."

In her shock, Hermione pulled her wrist away, fumbling around the bracelet as if the clasp might come loose. She couldn't look him in the eye. He was going to ruin everything.

She cleared her throat, unsure of what to say. "—I have to go to work." She rushed out the front door without waiting for his response, grabbing her beaded bag and outer robes on the way out, slamming the door inadvertently in her rush.

She rolled the bracelet on her wrist in the vault, trying to figure her husband out. They were getting along so well. After agreeing to put that awful Halloween night behind them, not once did they mention it. She shuddered as she thought of the night once more, how soft and gentle Malfoy tried to be, like she was made of glass. And here he was, kissing her wrist like some damsel in distress once more.

He doesn't even know me at all.

She had gotten too comfortable with Malfoy, her temporary solution, Hermione reminded herself. Once she and Pansy defeated the marriage law, she would move back into her flat and return to her normal life.

Sure, she would miss how well they got along, but surely they could continue to be friends once they divorced.

Set to distract herself from her marriage, Hermione turned to face the cabinet. With a final check to her bracelet clasp, she stood tall, ready to defeat the oversized cupboard.

Hermione brimmed with confidence in her plan, lifting her wand to begin, ignoring the fact that she originally planned to cast the spell with Malfoy when he arrived.

I'm the brightest witch of my gods-damned age, I don't need him.

Her diagnostic charm remained the same since she last entered this vault. The Dagaz rune glowed an angry bright red, indicating that the underlying curse was the oldest of two.

Symbolic of a new dawn, or constant change, evolution and growth, her research on Dagaz indicated a more simplistic translation of *time*. Futhark runes were notorious for being interpreted in multiple ways, depending on the caster, but Hermione felt sure that this curse was time-related. She could feel it in her veins.

Ingwaz, glowing faintly in her diagnostic, was more consistently interpreted as representing fertility. Hermione didn't doubt this interpretation, with the spiderwood consistently being

used for cots. All the puzzle pieces seemingly fit into place.

Blue and green sparks emanated from her wand as she turned her wrist counterclockwise and lifted her hand upwards with a flourish. The aura enveloped the cabinet, swirling in patterns that pulsed rapidly, the sound of hoofbeats pounding from within.

The aura expanded and snapped into the cabinet with a resounding *crack* and the grains of the wood glowed as the magic ran down into the spider webbing before fading away.

Hermione's arms tingled, as if the magic ran through her veins in the same way it tracked the grains of the wood. The magic flowed up her arms and legs and into her core, pulsating in her chest and abdomen.

The sound of hoofbeats continued, and Hermione could no longer tell if it came from the cabinet or her body. Her heart raced in time with the magic.

The tiniest click echoed through the vault as the left door of the cabinet popped open a single inch.

She couldn't look away, couldn't will her feet to stop moving. The cabinet called to her with its open door and deafening sound.

The magic pounding in her chest ached in desperation to connect with that which was absorbed into the wood. Her bracelet burned red hot on her wrist but Hermione could not stop herself as she grasped the door handle and opened it wide.

Lifting her leg to climb into the cabinet, the beady eyes of Malfoy's shining blue patronus burst into the vault as the cabinet door slammed shut behind her, and everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Bags* by Clairó

Hermione, girl. That was dumb. Did the ugly boots teach you nothing in life?

February 12

Chapter Notes

New Tag. Check the end notes.

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

Her head was pounding.

Something must have happened to make her lose consciousness. Hermione lay face down, and her limbs were oddly weighed down. Opening her eyes slowly to assess the situation she now inadvertently created, she lifted her cheek off a pile of warm galleons. The cabinet stood clear across the other side of the vault, one hideous door blown off the hinges, laying atop an empty jewellery case.

An sharp ache in her legs startled Hermione's focus back to her own well-being instead of the stupid fucking murderous cabinet. She attempted to lift her left leg slowly, shaking off the weight. Galleons rolled and clinked as they poured off her, rolling onto the floor. She was covered in a mountain of loose coins, though perhaps buried was a more accurate description of her current predicament.

You can do this, Hermione. It's just a pile of gold.

She wistfully thought of a few softer piles she could have landed on instead when throttled out of a cursed cabinet. Briefly ignoring her pounding headache and gathering her strength with a deep breath, she braced her hands on some seemingly secure areas of the pile and pulled herself up and out, free of the golden coins.

First things first, she thought to herself, patting her hands down her body to quickly check for injuries. Her wand caught her eye, strewn in the middle of the vault. With a huff and resigned satisfaction that she did not suffer any obvious injuries, Hermione stomped over to collect the fallen vineyard.

A quick self-diagnostic charm confirmed she suffered no injuries other than a few minor scrapes and bruises. Belatedly noticing her bracelet felt slightly warm against her wrist, she resigned herself to thank Malfoy for the gift again this evening. He would likely lord it over her, commenting on how she should be more careful, a continuation of their earlier awkward moment from the morning. Perhaps she could convince him not to tell Harry about this incident and limit her lecture to one concerned husband instead of the collective dressing down she might receive from them both.

Though who knew what injury it prevented? The distance alone from the cabinet to where she awoke should have broken a few bones, not to mention whatever magical injury it deterred.

Hermione remembered with a start that the bracelet would have alerted Malfoy's ring as it worked. And unlike the bracelet, he never took the ring off.

He already knew.

She needed to move quickly to manage the situation, but she wasn't sure how long she lay unconscious.

By the time she cast her final spell, it must have been nearly noon. She wanted to have it finished before he arrived for lunch so she could show off her completed work. Prove to him she could do it without him.

"Tempus." She said aloud, hurriedly waving her wand. *Half Six, Shit.*

She'd been out cold for hours. The bracelet must have worked a small miracle if she could walk away with merely a headache.

But there was no sign of Malfoy.

It didn't make any sense.

Hermione turned on her heel to head back up to ground level. Large gold numbers merged together as the vault door closed, 846. Consumed with worry about leaving to find Malfoy that she hadn't even realized she woke up in a different vault. Her head spun in pain and confusion, how could she possibly have moved vaults?

As she climbed into her private rail car, Hermione took a few minutes of solitary climb to plan her defence to Malfoy. Along with theorizing how she somehow moved deeper into the mines.

The fresh air of Diagon Alley refreshed her mind as she exited the bank. The stale underground mines always left her feeling a bit claustrophobic at the end of a workday, and she was grateful for the clear weather, especially today.

Hermione considered apparating to the flat but reconsidered and decided to walk along Diagon instead. She was already going to have to have the safety conversation with Malfoy, might as well take a few more minutes to prepare while the clean air refreshed her mind. If he hadn't even bothered to show up for lunch, perhaps he was already irate with her?

None of it made any sense.

Continuing to mount her imaginary defence she walked straight into an enormous bronze statue of George Weasley in front of the joke shop, her forehead bouncing painfully off the outstretched top hat in his hand.

That's new. And since when does George have a buzz cut?

Hermione pulled herself together for the second time in the last half hour and continued her trek to the flat. The warmth from the familiar Black family wards settled her nerves as she made her way inside.

“Malfoy!” she yelled while removing her boots, “I’m ok! I’m sorry if I scared you this afternoon, but I had a minor accident in the cabinet.” Best not to mention that she voluntarily climbed into the dark cabinet, Hermione thought.

The flat sat suspiciously silent, and Hermione began to worry.

Harry will know where he is.

Hermione paced over to the floo and collected a handful of powder from the mantle before the pictures over the fireplace startled her into focus.

She and Malfoy at their wedding. His eyes cast down upon her while she stared straight ahead at the camera. She knew the picture well, but it was not on the mantle this morning.

Nor were the half dozen other moving pictures that accompanied it. The ones that depicted a child growing up over time. A curly haired toddler covered in ice cream, moving to grab whoever took the picture. A girl, about five, grinning ear to ear and posing with a tiny hovering broom. Another of a young girl with her face painted at a quidditch match, cheering with Malfoy, his face painted to match.

And the last, showing what anyone would describe as a first day of school picture, the young girl with flowing brown curls and silver eyes, luggage in hand. Smiling and standing in front of an equally elated Malfoy and Hermione at Platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$.

She looked just like me on my first day of school. Except for the eyes. She has Malfoy’s eyes.

Maybe she hit her head harder than she originally thought. She needed to find Harry, or perhaps Daphne for a more detailed injury diagnostic than she could cast.

“You’re here.”

Hermione spun around, forgetting the floo powder in her hand as it drifted to the floor and around her sock-covered feet. Malfoy stared at her, fixed in place at the door, slightly out of breath.

Except it wasn’t quite Malfoy.

Small creases around his eyes and longer hair tied behind his head made him look more rugged, relaxed even. His robes were less formal than those he wore this morning, with a charcoal wool jumper peeking out underneath instead of his standard black oxford. The dragon hide shoes were still there, and the Malfoy signet ring gleamed as if he charmed it clean recently.

Taking in her surroundings one more time, other inconsistencies from this morning started to arise.

Everything was the same but slightly different.

The bookshelves were overflowing, a far cry from Malfoy’s neat organized texts. An abundance of duplicate copies of muggle fiction as if two nearly identical libraries were

merged at one point. One coffee mug and one china teacup sat next to the sink waiting to be washed, no doubt from earlier this morning.

Just not her morning.

-- water? --"

Malfoy was saying something to her. Man-bun, beard stubbled, casual looking, not-Malfoy was saying something to her.

Fucking breathe, Hermione.

His mouth kept moving, but Hermione couldn't make her brain connect to her ears to understand what he was saying. Taking off his robes, he kept eye contact with her while he hung them up next to the door. His hands began to raise slightly as if he were under arrest, and he started slowly across the living room towards her.

"Hermione, darling, are you alright? Do you need some water?"

Darling?

"Baby, sit down and let me get you a glass of water. I'm sorry I wasn't here when you arrived, I had an emergency call." He held both hands in the air at shoulder height, palms facing her.

Darling? Baby? This is definitely not Malfoy.

Something shifted between this morning, her morning, and now. He kept staring at her, unmoving in the doorway, not quite blocking the path for Hermione to make a quick escape, but the thought obviously crossed his mind.

"Malfoy, what is today's date?"

One corner of his lip twitched into a small smile. "You've always been the smartest, haven't you? How long did that take you to figure out? One hour? Two?"

"Roughly an hour, yes. But that includes the time it took to unbury myself from the galleons in the vault, plus the time it took to find my wand and cast a diagnostic charm for injuries, so let's call it less than an hour." She huffed in frustration. "Again, Malfoy, what is today's date?"

He stepped closer while he shook his head, releasing a small chuckle. "Sorry, I got distracted. I haven't seen this version of you in quite a few years. It's February 12, 2019."

Fuck.

Hermione groaned, rubbing her hands on her face. She needed to sit down and catch her breath.

2019. That's fifteen years. Fifteen years. How in the name of Merlin and Morgana did that gods-forsaken fucking cabinet launch me fifteen years into the future? Shitting arse of a cocksucker. I'm going to break time. I'm going to be hauled away by an unspeakable and never be seen or heard from again.

Too late, as she dropped onto her side of the couch, she realised there wasn't a couch there at all, but a side table. Malfoy quickly caught her by the elbow before she could further herself in a fall.

He didn't release her arm. It was the first time he touched her since he arrived. Even his touch didn't feel like her Malfoy.

Hermione caught her breath from the almost fall, righting herself to look up into his silver eyes. His gaze drifted slowly from her eyes down to her lips, and his other hand move to grasp her hip tightly.

His gaze penetrated her, soft and telling, yet his hand on her hip held firm. Nothing like the way her husband touched her this morning; like she was some sort of creature on a pedestal that might be broken. Fingers hooked into the belt loops of her denims and pulled her one step closer while his warmth radiated over her, sending a wave of calmness down her limbs.

Hermione took another deep breath to settle herself, taking in his familiar scent of freshly mown grass, leather, and parchment paper.

"Wait," she muttered, quickly collecting herself and backing away abruptly. "You apologised for not being here when I arrived. How did you know I would be here?"

"Do you want to sit down first?"

"No, Malfoy. Out with it."

"Fine." Warm breath poured over her as he released a sigh, his chest and shoulders rolling downwards. "I've known about this day for fifteen years. Since the day you showed up in our flat, attempting to explain this to me for the first time." He waggled his pinky at her. "The ring too."

An armchair came up around her, guided by his firm hands on her shoulders, directing her into a soft landing.

"You stay right there. I'm going to get you that water. And a firewhisky," he said, turning on his heel and heading back to the kitchen.

"Malfoy. I don't like firewhisky."

"Yes, I can assure you, you do. You just need to learn to drink it properly." The tone of his voice was kind but commanding, the need to disagree with him again left her. He returned with a tall glass of water, which she quickly emptied, unaware of how thirsty she had become.

A crystal glass with two fingers of firewhisky replaced the empty water glass back to him when she handed it back. "Listen to me, Hermione. Take just a sip for your nerves. Don't rush it. You're always in a rush."

Hermione rolled the crystal between her hands, listening to the ice clink softly. Why was she so interested in his instructions? She hated firewhisky. It was only ever useful to speed along the process of exceptionally terrible evenings.

Like Halloween...

Perhaps one sip might actually be a better idea than her usual method of downing the drink and getting it over with. She let it roll over her tongue and subtle warmth filled her core as she passed the glass back and forth between her hands nervously, looking up to find Malfoy sitting across from her on the sofa, awaiting her next move.

"Let's have it, then. What am I doing here?" She leaned forward, elbows resting on her knees.

He set his glass on the coffee table after taking a large drink. "Fifteen years ago you successfully opened the vanishing cabinet in the Lestrangle vault. For reasons I don't know, the vanishing cabinet did not act like its earlier Hogwarts and Borgins counterparts by exchanging locations. Instead, this particular set of vanishing cabinets exchanged times."

"Our cabinet doesn't have a mate."

"That's only partially true. It's mated with itself, just a future version."

Hermione spun through the endless research and spells they cast on the cabinet, trying to find its mate. Every single spell pointed them right back to the Lestrangle vault, to the cabinet itself. She thought they were all faulty spells, but the answer had been right in front of her the whole time.

A look of concern started to form in his eyes.

"The locator spells all worked. We just didn't know it."

"Yes." He nodded back, allowing her a moment to mentally catch up. "Earlier this morning, my wife, went into the cabinet and exchanged places with you. She is likely sitting down in your living room right now, giving a younger version of myself a mirrored version of this conversation. Actually, I know she is, I remember it vividly."

"So, you're telling me I time jumped through a cabinet with myself?"

"Yes. That is exactly what I'm telling you. Part of the magic of the cabinet seems to be related to an exchange, both sides needed to send a traveller at the same time for the spell to work." Malfoy inhaled deeply, clearly bracing himself for some sort of fallout. "When you arrived fifteen years ago, you had no idea how to get yourself back here, to your own time, other than to just climb back into the cabinet at the right time and trust the magic. And at no

point in the last fifteen years of my Hermione's life, including this current trip you have now found yourself on, did we ever figure out how to make the cabinets work again."

The room began to spin. Another sip. "Malfoy. How long -"

"Three months Hermione. You stayed with me in 2004 for three months, departing on May 12. And you are stuck in this time for exactly three months. Until the magic of the cabinet is ready to send you back."

Hermione's threw her head between her knees in an attempt to stay calm.

Malfoy's broad hand pressed into her back rubbing firm strokes, up to her neck and down her spine. "Breathe Hermione."

He continued to rub her back until the room stopped spinning—a few minutes, though perhaps an hour.

Slowly sitting back upright, locking eyes once again with her husband, Hermione asked, "Since when did you know that rubbing my back like that works to calm me down?"

He moved his hand to draw a thumb over her cheek as he replied, "Time is a strange thing. I've known since today for you. But it was one of the things you helped me learn about you when you visited me."

Hermione nodded, leaning into the hand on her cheek for comfort.

He held her face steadily in both hands and his breath hitched inches from her face. Hermione let her gaze drift to his lips, she no longer felt panicked, but calmness rolled over her shoulders and into her bones.

His forehead rested softly on hers and he closed his eyes, the closeness and calm energy he exuded seeped into her body. "I know this must be a lot for you to take in, and I'm not exactly your person yet," he sighed defeatedly. "Do you need me to call Ginny?"

He leaned back to rest on his haunches in front of her and held both her hands in a firm grip, she watched with fascination as he waited for her answer, fondness in his eyes.

"Yes," she sighed. "Ginny. Ginny is a good idea."

His patronus prowled off with instructions to find Ginny. And not thirty seconds later did the floo roar to life right next to her.

Red hair shorter than she remembered, now at her shoulders, but otherwise the same fiery presence that was Ginny Weasley stormed into the living room, red sparks crackling at her fingertips.

"Oi! Ferret! We have been waiting all buggering day! Decrepit Flamel himself could have walked down Diagon Alley and told us faster. Theo was about to send a search party for you two."

Ginny sucked in a breath and spun around to face her, kneeling down to wrap Hermione in a tight hug where she sat.

“You made it.” Her hair stopped sparking as she calmed down. “I’m sorry I wasn’t here when you arrived, but we all agreed that it was best you hear the news from Malfoy by yourself. Are you okay?”

“I think so, but I seem to be the only one who is not in on the secret.”

“Yes, well, that would be slightly unsettling for you, to be the last one to learn about something,” Ginny agreed, chuckling. “If it helps, chronologically speaking, you are in fact the first to know and get to educate us all in 2004. Though I suppose you are not really living a chronological existence at this moment.”

Hermione let her head fall onto Ginny’s shoulder. It was too much information to absorb in one sitting.

“Did the Ferret feed you yet?” Ginny asked earnestly, tucking a curl behind her ear.

“Working on it, Ginevra,” Malfoy called from the kitchen. “And I told you as fast as I could. She looked ready to bolt when she got here, and I’d rather not have to file a missing person’s report on my suddenly youthful wife. Would be a bit hard to explain at the DMLE.”

He returned to the living room with a tray of assorted cheeses, crackers, jams, and preserves hovering before him, settling it down on the coffee table. Hermione vaguely wondered where his wand might be while the tray hovered. She was so used to the chest holster, now conspicuously absent.

She began to pick away at the food as Ginny spoke.

“I know it’s a lot to take in at once. The short version that I will tell you now is that you are stuck here for three months. With that being said, our Hermione has known about The Visit for fifteen years and of course, made numerous plans and contingencies for your arrival. I’ve been specifically instructed to tell you not to worry, and to listen to Malfoy.” Ginny rolled her eyes dramatically. “What I will also tell you, uninstructed, thank you very much, is that all your friends, including me, are here for anything you need... within reason anyway.”

Hermione nodded, eating the last of the crackers absentmindedly.

“Now. Why don’t I help you get settled in your room? You’re going to want to be comfortable for your time here.” Ginny stood up slowly, reaching out for Hermione’s hand.

Malfoy watched from the kitchen, leaning against the counter where he charmed the dishes to clean in the sink. Hermione locked eyes with him while she walked towards her bedroom, hand in Ginny’s, catching the slightest grin before he looked away, making himself busy in the kitchen.

“Now, I know this used to be your room. And even though it hasn’t been your’s for a while,” Ginny winked at her lewdly, “Hermione thought you would be most comfortable back in here

when you arrived. All your clothes are in the closet and dresser, and your things are in the bathroom.”

“Thank you, Gin.” Hermione sighed, taking in the soft quilt on the bed that her mother made her all those years ago.

“It’s been a long day for you. Do you want a dreamless sleep?”

Hermione rarely took dreamless sleep anymore, the nightmares weren’t as frequent as they once were, and she hated to think she would ever grow a dependence on the potion.

But enough occurred in the last twelve hours that Hermione knew she needed to sleep and attempt to recover if she was going to start fresh in the morning.

She accepted the potion from Ginny’s outstretched hand and took it back, tucking herself in with a whispered thank you as the door closed, ignoring the hushed conversation outside her room as she fell soundly asleep.

Chapter End Notes

TW: Age Difference. (I mean, obviously. It's a time travel fic.)

Suggested Listening: *Runaway* by Aurora

Hello Daddy. We’ve been waiting for you.

February 12, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

February 12, 2004

Draco spun lazily in Potter's desk chair, running out of patience, waiting ten minutes for his partner to show up.

He thought he had been making progress; he and Hermione were closer than ever. She trusted him, and he would even dare to say they were close friends at this point.

The beautiful woman tucked her feet on top of his lap every single night, goading him into a foot rub while she sunk into their sofa.

He reread pages constantly, attempting not to get an erection while she wiggled. By now, she surely thought he was illiterate, always patiently waiting for him to catch up to her reading place.

But he cocked it up this morning. Seeing the bracelet on the coffee table made his skin itch. She was going to forget to put on the bracelet, as she did countless times before, today of all days, while working on that fucking cabinet.

Stupidly, he held her arm after putting the bracelet on her wrist. Visions of yanking her into his grasp drowned his mind.

He wanted to hold her arms above her head, open her body to his, and never let go. Brick after brick, he occluded the thoughts away and placed a gentle kiss against her wrist.

Draco vowed to put his occlusion aside after his father's sentence to Azkaban. But it was the only thing he could do to apologise for the dark thoughts, not that she knew what they were.

And there it was.

He kissed her again without forethought or planning. Even if only on the wrist.

He shattered their respectful friendship only two days before Valentine's Day. The slam of the door as she left echoed in his mind loud and sudden while he spun in Potter's cubicle chair.

He needed to fix it immediately. He needed Potter's advice. Merlin, help him.

"Malfoy. What are you doing at my desk." He ran his hands through his hair as he arrived, already huffing.

Draco slammed the chair to a stop with his feet. He didn't even know where to start. If he were going to ask for advice, he would have to admit some feelings for Granger. Hopefully,

he wouldn't come out of the conversation with a broken nose.

It was terribly difficult to episkey oneself.

"Potter. I find myself needing your guidance. Valentine's Day is in two days, and I would *appreciate* your perspective on what my wife might enjoy."

"Books," Harry replied, eyeing Draco suspiciously, "Hermione likes books. You know this. Everyone knows this."

"I don't mean what she would enjoy from everyone, Potter." Draco sneered, "I mean what she would enjoy from her husband... *If* she were to have feelings for said husband."

Harry's eyes opened wide as he sat down on the side of his desk, hand dropping from his hair to run over his face with a groan. "Malfoy, I'm going to need you to speak slowly and use little words so I understand. Why do you want Hermione to have feelings for her husband, which I will point out, at this time, is you."

Draco dropped his voice to an embarrassed whisper, "Because I have feelings for her."

"Hermione."

"Yes."

"Your wife."

"Yes."

"Your wife, Hermione Granger."

"Yes."

"My best friend, Hermione Granger."

"*Potter.*"

"I'm having a lot of big feelings right now, Malfoy! Need a minute to catch up." Harry sighed, exasperated. "Do I even want to know when these feelings started?"

"No."

"Please, for the love of Merlin's saggy ballsack, tell me they started after you were married." Harry began to pace the tiny space of his cubicle, essentially walking in a tight circle.

Draco watched him carefully, wondering if he should abandon his plan. Instead, he decided the end advice, and hopefully, the assistance would be too valuable and persevered.

"I can't tell you that, Potter."

"Mate. If you weren't like my fucking brother, I would put you in the ground right now. You had feelings for Hermione when you married her?!" His voice escalated to the point others

were looking over their cubicle walls to listen in.

Draco hastily threw up a muffliato, turning a rude eye toward their nosy coworkers sitting back down, frustrated that they were missing out on the gossip.

In for a knut, in for a sickle, Draco thought regrettably.

“Potter. I have had feelings for – No. I have been in love with Granger for years. I never dared to act on it before the marriage act because I was never good enough for her. Shite, I’m still not good enough for her. I’m a death eater, and she’s the golden girl.”

“Ex-death eater.”

He waved his hand dismissively, “The day we got matched was the luckiest day of my life, and I thought if I could at least get her to like me, if I could treat her well, she might eventually have feelings for me too. Except now we’re essentially best friends.” Draco spewed out his feelings, unable to stop, “My grand fucking plan backfired. She thinks of me no differently than she thinks of you, no offence.”

Somewhere in his embarrassing confession, Potter stopped pacing and stared at him incredulously.

“I can’t live my life without her. She and Pansy are going to overturn this marriage act eventually, and then she’ll leave me, and I’ll have wasted my entire opportunity to be with her.”

Thankfully, Draco stopped himself before he could admit they slept together months ago, when he actually ruined all his chances. Best not to let all his secrets fall out. Theo's knowledge of it already more than enough.

A grin slowly cracked onto Potter’s face, growing wider. He looked like a maniac.

“You’re an idiot, Malfoy,” he said, starting into a deeply unsettling laugh.

“I am not an –”

“You’re a fucking idiot, Malfoy.” Potter stopped laughing abruptly, schooling his face into seriousness. “Hermione in no way thinks of you in the same way she thinks of me. Do you know how many times she has smacked the back of my head for zoning out while she’s lecturing me about something?”

Draco knew others found her to be too much, but he could get lost in any of her lectures. Just the thought of her pacing, hands waving in the air about some deeply researched topic made his stomach flip.

“Malfoy, I have never been her best friend. I am her brother. Something you would do well to remember next time you want to bring up your feelings for her,” he said, attempting his best threatening look. “Asking me for advice on how to get Hermione to have feelings for you? That’s asinine. Knowing your pureblood traditions, you should be asking my permission to court her, considering I’m the only family she’s got. Not that you should ever tell her I said

that, obviously. I'd be strung up in the name of feminism. So, I will ask you Malfoy, do you treat her well?"

Draco couldn't believe his miscalculation. He would have been better off asking Theo, of all people. A letter of intent would have been a better approach at the rate he dug this hole. He stood to address the question at eye level, pulling himself together. "I try. The woman is perfect, and I will spend every day of the rest of my life trying to be enough for her."

"Good." He reached out his hand to shake Draco's. "She deserves that."

"Malfoy, I can't tell you what would work in Hermione's case because that is extraordinarily off-putting," he said with a shudder. "I don't even want to think about it truthfully. But have you ever tried an honest conversation about your feelings? You two are so alike; everything is so bloody academic."

Red hot heat on his signet ring stopped Draco from answering the question. He clutched his hand in pain, but the burn only intensified.

Granger was hurt. She did something stupid with that fucking cabinet, and she was hurt.

He tried not to panic; Draco grabbed his partner's arm and set off running for the apparition point on the other side of the DMLE floor. "Granger!" he yelled at a confused Potter, trying to keep up.

He only nodded, picking up his speed to run astride at a breakneck pace.

Draco whipped off a patronus as fast as he could, assuring Granger he was on his way, before pulling Potter on a side-along to the entrance of Gringotts.

They sprinted across the marble floors of the lobby, bootheels catching everyone's attention, stopping at the first goblin available. Both pulled out their auror badges and demanded to get into the mines, speaking over one another urgently. Confusion and irritation were apparent over the goblin's face as he tried to parse out the two Aurors, yelling at increasing volumes.

After a few seconds of confusion, Potter finally shut up and let Draco do the talking. The small goblin rushed them to the mine cart as soon as he understood what happened, escorting them underground into the heat of the mines.

Panic rolled off of Draco as he stepped off the cart towards the Lestrangle vault; he ran through the vault doors as fast as his legs would carry him, only to find it empty.

Granger was nowhere in sight. More concerning, her beaded bag sat abandoned on the table, along with her opened texts, quill still wet with ink atop their two-way notebook that she hadn't responded to him with.

"Malfoy, she's not here." Potter heaved, catching his breath from running through the vault entrance.

"I can see that, Potter," Draco replied hotly. "But all her things are here; she wouldn't go anywhere without her bag. You know as well as I do that her whole life is in that thing."

Draco spun around to the vanishing cabinet and cast Granger's diagnostic charm over it. None of the runes lit up. "She fixed it without me." He muttered under his breath. The cabinet still stood large and looming, but dark magic no longer rolled off it in waves.

Draco baulked in horror. "Potter. She uncursed the cabinet, and it doesn't have a mate. You don't think she would have climbed into it? Where would you be sent by a lone vanishing cabinet?"

His face dropped. "Hermione's not stupid Malfoy, far from it. There's no way –"

A blue shining otter swam before them, and a collective sigh of relief occurred as soon as it appeared. "Draco. I'm at the flat. I'm sorry if I scared you. I'm alright. Please come home when you can."

Draco stuffed the books into her bag without any concern for its organisation and stalked back out to the mine cart. He could not let go of the panic that settled in his chest while thinking Granger had disappeared. Potter climbed into the mine cart after him, eyeing Draco curiously.

"Since when does she call you Draco?"

He hadn't even noticed she hadn't used his surname, on account of the relief to see the familiar otter. "Never."

"Maybe you were wrong then?" Potter asked with a raised eyebrow as the cart climbed higher.

Draco attempted to catch his breath, winding the strap of the beaded bag between his fingers. He couldn't figure out what Potter was on about.

"Mate. I don't know what just happened, and why you thought she was hurt. Not that I didn't believe you or anything. But it didn't sound like she was in any danger, and she just called you by your first name. Are you sure she doesn't have feelings for you?"

Draco sat back into the mine cart, replaying the patronus' message. Maybe he was wrong about this morning? What if she did have feelings for him in return? The thought of Granger calling him by his first name sent a shiver into his chest.

They reached the apparition point in front of the bank when Draco realised he hadn't responded to his partner's question, now for the second time today. Lost in his worries of Granger.

She wouldn't just leave her bag.

Potter slapped him on the shoulder, snapping him out of his spiralling thoughts. "Let me know when you get home she's alright, yeah? And don't forget what I told you earlier. Just talk to her. Maybe it will go your way?" With a raised eyebrow, he disappeared with a crack.

He set one brick atop another before apparating himself.

~

Draco hesitated at the front door of the flat to prepare himself for the conversation. Perhaps Potter was right. He should just come clean to her about everything—how much he felt for her, how much he wanted her. A risk, but he had spent the past months—no years—not taking risks.

The panic from the burning ring still weighed on his limbs as he opened the door and found her waiting at the kitchen island. Relief washed over him to see her safe and unhurt. He had not allowed himself to panic outwardly, but now, seeing her made the entire day unbearable.

Without thinking, Draco dropped the beaded bag he still carried, lunged forward, and crashed his lips against hers, pulling her off the stool and into his arms. Exactly how he wanted to kiss her this morning: one arm snaked tightly around her waist, the other weaving up against the back of her neck and into her curls.

She responded in kind; her tongue skating against his lips, demanding permission to enter. She tasted like honey, sweet and all-consuming. Every motion of their tongues together sent sparks travelling down his spine.

Lost in the moment, Draco bit down on her bottom lip, pulling it into his mouth. The soft moan that came from her like nothing he ever heard before.

It was intoxicating.

His cock stiffened against his trousers as she rolled her hips into him. Draco stopped abruptly and set her shoulders in his hands to create space between them. He didn't want to make anything worse without talking, he wasn't going to cock this up again.

He needed to know what set off his ring. If she hurt herself.

Draco stepped back to take her in, realising in confusion that her hair was shorter than this morning. Her face was narrower, but her eyes shone as brightly as ever, flecks of amber sparkling, unwavering in their gaze.

Like she could see into his very soul.

Draco staggered, tightening his grip on her shoulders.

He lowered his gaze to her body. Wearing a deep green T-shirt and snugly-fitting denims, barefoot in their kitchen, Draco noticed her hips were slightly wider and her breasts a little larger. She no longer looked like she forgot to eat lunch every day, camouflaging her skinniness in an oversized sweater.

Something wasn't right.

Something happened with the cabinet and changed her.

Bile rose up Draco's throat. "Granger. What happened?" He choked out the words, fearing her answer.

“I think you should sit down, my love. We need to talk.” Her eyes softened with pity as she reached out to grab his wrist, pulling him towards the sofa, gently settling them both into their usual seated positions.

She took both his hands within hers and stared into his eyes.

Her shoulders rose as she took a deep breath before beginning to explain. “I’m sorry if I scared you Draco. I’m alright, I wasn’t hurt today.”

Draco turned her hands over to sit within his. “Granger, please tell me what happened.”

“I went through the cabinet Draco.”

Memories of the cabinet in the room of requirement rolled through Draco. He was going to be sick. He dropped to his knees in front of her, patting her down everywhere to look for injuries.

The bracelet would have protected her, he reminded himself, trying not to listen to his own escalating dark thoughts. But just as he reached for the wand in his shoulder holster to cast a diagnostic spell, she pressed her hand against his shoulder, stopping his movement.

“It’s alright Draco. The cabinet had a mate after all. Just not one we could locate before today.”

He dropped his forehead to rest in her lap. The panic of losing her became too much. Between the thoughts of her not reciprocating his own feelings and then the thought of her lost in the cabinet, Draco couldn’t breathe.

“Draco, look at me please.” She took his face in her hands and lifted it softly. A tear rolled down her cheek as she began to smile down upon him. “It’s alright my love. I’m here with you, and I’m not going anywhere. Why don’t you let me explain what happened.”

He nodded into her soft hands.

“The cabinet didn’t have a mate in another place. Its mate was in another time. This morning, we ate breakfast together. I kissed you goodbye and went through the cabinet for the third time in my life.”

Third time?

She continued, keeping her eyes locked on his, “The first time I went through was when I first activated the cabinet. I travelled from 2004 to 2019 and back again. The third time I went through I travelled from 2019 to 2004, this morning. I’ve exchanged places with myself.”

The harsh sound of the door slamming behind her earlier today echoed in his mind. “Is she alright? You in the future—or your past—I don’t know. My ring went off. Is she hurt?”

Pulling her arm upwards to show off her bracelet, she rolled it around her wrist. “The bracelet kept me safe, Draco. It would have been much worse if I wasn’t wearing it. You protected

me, as you always do.”

Her warm hands on his face were the only thing that stopped him from occluding. Draco couldn't hear what she was telling him. How could you possibly exchange places with yourself, in another time? Time turners were outlawed for years, and even if she possessed one, none on record ever went that far into the future.

Doris Lockhart famously went two days into the future with her own time turner four years ago, only to return with a direct ticket to the Janus Thickey Ward at St. Mungos. His mind searched for other examples of time travellers, finding he knew of no successful examples.

“You will do an excellent job of keeping me safe in 2019. I remember my time there very fondly.”

“But this morning, I shouldn't have –”

Hermione shrugged her shoulders. “I can't say what you should or shouldn't have done. But your wife is going to be gone for a while. You may need to wait to fix whatever it is you think you broke.”

“How long?” A lump formed in his throat.

“Until we are switched back. May 12. In three months, you'll get your own wife back. But until then, you get me.” She wrung her hands in her lap, nudging a large emerald ring on her ring finger.

Draco recognised the ring—once his great-grandmother's, Pandora Black. He had seen it countless times in his mother's jewellery box. Narcissa loved Pandora dearly, often telling stories to Draco of how she doted upon her as a child.

As far as he knew, it was still there, the ring couldn't have been the same one. “Where did you get that ring?”

“You gave it to me, Draco, obviously.”

“No Granger. Not obviously. And that. You keep calling me Draco. Since when have I not been Malfoy to you?”

She waved her hand, dismissing the question. “You're my husband, I'll call you what I like.”

Draco couldn't help but let his gaze drop down her body. Fifteen years from now he was married to this beautiful perfect creature. He needed to know how he did it, how he kept her.

“Yes. We are married in all senses of the word,” she said, amused at his obvious ogling.

“And the marriage law?”

With a chuckle, she replied, “Oh gods no, they repealed this year, in fact. Didn't last long once I put my mind to it. We're still married because we are very much in love.” Wiping a tear off her cheek, a smile broke out across her face, her eyes sparkling down upon him.

Panic left his body, replaced by utter joy and disbelief, his limbs lightening significantly.
“You love me? Since when?”

She scoffed, waving her hand dismissively. “Not important. And you should know we have rules, you and I. Rules about what I can and cannot tell you about the future. What is allowed.” Her eyebrow lifted suggestively as her smile continued to pull him in. “Since I’ve done this before, we had a lot of time to prepare for the return trip.”

Without waiting for a response, she got up off the sofa and made her way over to the liquor cabinet, pouring two glasses of firewhisky.

Draco rearranged himself to a seat on the floor, resting his head against the sofa and took a moment to appreciate her arse. He still wanted to take it in both hands, even if she was fifteen years older. The thought of that very arse bent over every surface in his apartment always a frequent visitor to his imagination.

There was no doubt it was Granger, it just wasn’t his Granger. Catching himself, Draco felt guilty for lusting after the older woman.

“I’m not sure my wife would appreciate you and I—It seems like an invasion – A betrayal –” Draco could not form the words to express his concern. Was it possible to cheat on your wife with your wife?

Setting a glass in his hand, she took a small sip of her own, continuing to stand, looming above him. Gods, her breasts were even more perfect from the view below.

“It’s not cheating my love, if that’s what you are thinking. You and I have been over this a hundred times and are firmly in the belief that it is not cheating. We’ve come to view it as more of a... *gift*.” She leaned against the mantle, glancing at it briefly with a small frown.

There was something she was hiding; the flash in her eyes betrayed her. Could she be lying? She wore Pandora’s ring and the bracelet. The family magic would not allow her to wear the items if she weren’t his wife; the only exception would be if she were a widow. Draco choked on his firewhisky.

“Granger, am I alive in your time? Please tell me the truth.” He eyed her suspiciously.

She laughed at the question softly, but the pity in her eyes betrayed her. She could sense his worry. “You are very much alive. I promise you upon the Black family magic you are alive in my time.”

Setting his empty glass on the table, Draco stood, pacing quickly over to his wife by the fireplace, and took her small ringed hand within his own, pulling it upwards to place a kiss on her wrist. The exact place he kissed her this morning.

“Then tell me how the next three months are going to go, Granger.”

“You can start by calling me Hermione.”

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Tessellate* by alt-J

While Draco should for sure call her Hermione, this is the point I started to have trouble keeping everybody straight while I wrote. Eventually, I started to refer to this Hermione as Mother. And let me tell you, Mother will be MOTHERING.

Buckle up sluts.

February 13, 2019

Chapter Notes

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

February 13, 2019

A soft knock at the bedroom door woke Hermione from her deep sleep, and the morning sun shone brightly through the thin curtains on her window. She must have slept in, which wasn't a luxury she ever experienced unless hungover. With a silent thank you to Ginny for the dreamless sleep the night before, Hermione's head throbbed as she rolled to look towards the door, wishing she had taken something for the pain as well.

Malfoy stood tall in the doorway, silver hair gleaming in the morning sun, with a tray in hand. The sweet smell of pancakes wafted towards Hermione, and her stomach growled loudly.

"I can't seem to make it through the doorway, Hermione. Do you think you could invite me in?" he asked, lifting an eyebrow in question. "Or you could come get this tray yourself if you'd prefer. I made your favourite. Plus, a pain potion, if you need it."

Hermione sat up in bed, pulling the quilt up around her waist, and waved Malfoy into the room. The open doorway glittered as the Black family magic permitted him entry. Taking the vial on the tray as soon as it was set on her lap, she threw it back. The throbbing in her head ceased.

Thank the gods for modern magic.

She took in the breakfast on her lap, her favourite. The same meal her father had made her every Saturday morning growing up. A tall stack of pancakes, complete with a large pad of butter melting across the top, and a carafe of molasses on the side. Hermione never told Malfoy about this meal, the memory of her father too tied up in it to share with anyone. All it took was a family vacation to Quebec when she was young, and he promised her she could always have pancakes.

Regretfully tucking the memory away, she started into the breakfast tray that Malfoy set atop her lap. It was so delicious, she hadn't noticed he slipped away until she was one pancake deep, returning with a stack of worn books in his hand.

"I'm going to be out for the morning with work, so you'll have the flat to yourself, but you can call for Mipsy if you need her. Hermione said you would want some time to yourself anyway." He set the books on her nightstand. "She wanted to leave you with these journals, hopefully, it will help you understand."

Malfoy wore deep charcoal robes, hanging open over a knit sweater and trousers. A far cry from his usual auror robes. Hermione was deeply curious about where he was going.

"Malfoy, what exactly do you do for work?"

He hesitated before answering, rocking back on his heels, hands in his trouser pockets. “Ah. You should read the journals. I’m not allowed to answer that question.”

Allowed?

He leaned against the door; so much more relaxed than the Malfoy she was used to. “I’ll be back this afternoon Hermione. Explore the flat all you want, read the journals, call for Mipsy. Just don’t leave the flat without telling me first, please. We’re having dinner with everyone this evening; in case you were thinking of making a run for it. You’ll see them all later anyway.”

She grabbed the stack of books on her nightside table, shuffling through the worn covers. “I won’t leave the flat Malfoy. I promise.” She replied without looking back up at him. One of the books was her two-way notebook, corners curled with age and heavy use. Hermione smiled at the sight of it and waved it in the air at him. “I will write to you if I need you.”

A broad smile broke onto his face, one she wasn’t used to seeing. “Excellent. I’ll see you later.” His eyes narrowed suspiciously before he disappeared from the doorway. “Be good.”

Something within her warmed at the instruction, not to mention the look he gave her. She couldn’t deny the man was fit. Hermione ignored the feeling pooling in her belly and opened the first book. Her own rushed scrawl felt familiar on the page, and she began to read, sipping her coffee.

Hermione,

Welcome to 2019. I might say congratulations for besting the spiderwood cabinet, but we both know that it won this round. You climbed into it after all.

I’ve left you these journals as proof of our continued work on the cabinet. Fifteen years of research has left us without any answers as to why the cabinet exchanged us in time. We also researched the concept of time travel itself, those notes are in the second book.

Some theorists claim that time travel has the potential to create multiple realities, with each decision shaping the future. One could argue that a time traveller in these circumstances could change the course of the future with a single decision.

I assure you that this is quite far from the truth.

Time, if expressed correctly in arithmancy, is a flat circle. It will continue on its path, regardless of the choices people make within its orbit. The future is predestined, and none of your actions will change it, as much as you may argue otherwise. Consider the proof as this note to you. I only knew what to write because I once read it before.

I am your future as much as you are mine.

Surely, you don’t believe me. I know you don’t. I remember reading these words vividly. Test it for yourself. You will always return to the predestined circle of time. Draco will do his part in

2004 to test it as well. One day, you both will place your trust in fate and learn to embrace the joy of simply living your lives. I'm looking forward to it.

The real truth about your visit is that you're going to be in my time for three months, with my husband.

Make no mistake, Hermione, my husband is not yours.

Draco is different from the Malfoy you left in your time. He is more confident in himself and our marriage. The growth we have experienced together and the life that we have created for ourselves is the single greatest achievement I have accomplished in my life. Draco is my other half, and he would say the same for me. I can undoubtedly assure you that we are happy together.

All our time and experiences together means that he knows what you want better than you do. Don't scoff at me, you barely know yourself at all. Try to describe yourself without bringing up your work or school achievements. I'll wait. ---

Hermione scoffed at the page aloud before sucking the noise back in with indignation at the truth of the words.

--- You've already learned to trust him, Hermione. Trust him in all aspects of your life.

Yes, even in sex.

I know right now you are convinced it will be terrible, but you should give him another chance.

You have my permission to sleep with my husband – which is a ludicrous thing to write down on paper – but it's no less true. If it makes you feel any better, I will certainly be sleeping with yours.

As for living my life for the next three months. Draco and I have discussed at great lengths the rules that you need to follow. These are not to prevent changing the future, as we've already established that can't happen. The rules are purely for your own happiness.

1. No knowing about what it is you, Draco, or your friends do for a living. I've secured a temporary position at Gringotts for you over the next three months to keep your consistency. Theo recently decommissioned another one of his family's properties and the Nott vault is brimming with cursed items. You'll have more than enough in there to keep you busy.

2. Your friends will not be telling you anything about their own children. Some of them have tried long and hard to bring their babies into the world, and they don't want you to return to your own time knowing their burdens. Understand that everything will turn out the way it is meant to be.

3. As for your own child. You've already seen the pictures, so you know about Virgo. Under no circumstances do I want Virgo to know about you. It's too much for a child to absorb, and not have her mother with her to help her understand. She'll be at Hogwarts for the duration

of your stay, so it shouldn't be an issue. I'd also prefer that you not ask about her. Learning about your child's traits as they develop is a truly magical experience I wish to keep.

I've purposely not left you many rules, because you tend to toss rules aside when they don't suit you.

There is a reason that people shouldn't travel into the future. It's unhealthy to know one's destiny. It takes away the magic. Remember, breaking these rules will only hurt the ones you love.

I'll be keeping similar secrets here in your time.

See you soon.

Hermione sat with the book open in her lap, absorbing the words, already cataloguing the changes she observed in Malfoy. He was certainly more relaxed in the future, more confident. His seeker fit remained, including his delicious broom thighs, but his chest and shoulders filled out. The man only got more attractive with age, it seemed, taking on a look of ruggedness that so often complimented older men.

And here future Hermione was, encouraging her to sleep with him. Plus, an admission that she would be sleeping with Malfoy in 2004.

Older Hermione sounded a bit like a slag.

Hermione tossed the books aside and went to inspect the rest of the flat, but before making much progress, caught herself frozen at the mantle, staring into her daughter's eyes.

Virgo.

Hermione never gave much thought to having children before, always delaying the thought to the future, to be considered with a theoretical partner that never arrived. There would always be plenty of time she told herself, still too young to give up progress on the career she was building.

But looking at Virgo's beaming smile in the picture ignited joy in Hermione's heart. The brown flowing curls were identical to her own, hanging in soft ringlets around her face, charmed to avoid the frazzled mane Hermione grew up with before learning what worked.

Hermione wondered if she would charm her daughter's hair every morning, or perhaps Malfoy would. That idle thought warmed her heart even further.

The picture of Virgo at platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ in hand, Hermione began to run numbers in her mind. The girl looked at least 11, plus gestation, which meant Hermione would be pregnant in the next three years. Panicked, Hermione clutched the frame in her hand as she searched the flat for more pictures. None on the walls showed the girl looking any older, just more childhood photos.

Draco's door squeaked as Hermione peeked around the corner. It wasn't as if she hadn't seen the room before, but this was less Malfoy's room and more so the room she would eventually

share with her husband. Gone was the spartan use of space that Malfoy preferred, replaced by an amalgamation of their lives together. Small stacks of books littered every surface, including the nightstands on either side of the enormous four-poster bed. A set of glasses sat atop a stack of books on one nightstand, while a small jar of Hermione's favourite hand cream rested on the other nightstand.

That answers the question of who sleeps on which side. Hermione thought with a snort.

Soft cream linens covered the bed, with a Slytherin green throw hanging from the bottom. A leather reading chair in the corner, Hermione recognised it from her old flat, one she never brought with her when she originally moved in. The perfect chair for reading long into the night.

Hermione continued her scan onto the desk, finding additional pictures of her future family. All were of toddler and childhood years, none of which were older than the picture still clutched in her hand.

Anxious to leave Malfoy's room, she paced back to her own room, crawling back into bed. Setting the frame into her lap, she stared into the young girl's eyes, just as silver as Malfoy's. They were truly beautiful, Hermione thought, a well of sadness building within her.

How could she possibly give this child to Malfoy? She had no idea who she was or what she was meant to be. The brightest witch of her age and master cursebreaker were titles and occupations, not personality traits, as the notebook so rudely pointed out. If she kept on her path, chasing success after success, oriented on solving the next problem, where would that lead her?

Hermione set the photo aside as she hung her head in her hands, trying to catch her breath. There was nothing further she could learn about her daughter without Malfoy, so Hermione resolved to get to the truth as soon as he returned home.

Set to refocus on her main problem, Hermione picked up the second book, filled with her notes on time.

The worn text led to the exact conclusion older Hermione set out in her note: Time was a flat circle, a loop, a predestined fate, supported by cross-references to other texts, along with articles and notes from interviews with unspeakables and others who travelled through time filled the notebook.

One particular interview caught Hermione's interest. In 1978, Ernest Johannsen travelled forward five years, staying in the future for a week. Heartbroken to discover that both he and his brother died from a case of dragonpox in the intermediary years, Ernest returned to his own time and tried to intervene fate to a near state of insanity, eventually quarantining himself and his brother, refusing to interact with the outside world. The dragonpox came for them when the brother, in an effort to avoid going mad along with Ernest, set out one morning for a walk through the forest adjacent to their home. An encounter with a stranger along a trail was all it took for the two to succumb to the disease only a mere four days later.

The interview notes with their sister, Alice, who discovered them deceased in each other's arms, were heartbreaking. Alice issued a stark warning that knowing your fate was more than enough to trigger psychosis in the sanest of minds.

Hermione always thought of time as being easily manipulated, especially after her use of the time-turner. It seemed a foregone conclusion that the future could be changed after she freed Buckbeak and saved Sirius. Not once did she stop to consider that she was predestined to do all those things, as if she never had a choice in the matter.

After the interview with Alice, the tone of the notebook shifted.

It appeared that Hermione and Draco spent a fair amount of time together researching the concept of free will in relation to fate, with pages upon pages of notes in the two opposing writing styles. Eventually, the on-page debate meandered into love notes, with the two concluding that they were meant for each other in any timeline. It was all rather romantic, Hermione thought, imagining herself collaborating with Malfoy in the book over a period of years.

On the back cover of the notebook, a final aged note in Malfoy's perfect penmanship caught Hermione's eye:

My darling Hermione,

I will never have enough time on this earth with you. Uncovering the mystery of our lives has been the greatest gift you have ever given me.

You are my soulmate in this life and any other.

Eternally,

Draco

Tears swelled in Hermione's eyes as she rested her palm on the closing inscription. The man clearly worshipped her, and she began to wonder if she was even capable of returning the feeling, to him or any other.

Hermione wiped her tears away and resolved to finish her reading, shifting her mind back to the spiderwood cabinet. Opening the second notebook, she began to pour through her own notes. Pages upon pages of her research, which spanned years. Throughout the margins Draco added his own perspectives and questions.

They had explored the many translations of the runes of the cabinets and travelled to a spiderwood forest in Latin America, bringing back samples for Neville to examine and test. Hermione even included excerpts of her letters to an old magical woodworker on the cabinet. Many theories were scribbled out, but none were proven. Unlike the closure they found with the concept of time, no conclusion as to the magic of the cabinet existed.

Hermione picked up the third and final book, curious to read the history of shared messages in her two-way notebook. The image of Malfoy's final loving inscription burned in her mind.

But fanning through the worn pages, there was nothing to be read. After the last message she wrote in 2004, there were hundreds of blank pages. Hermione pulled at the ribbon near the back of the book to find a single message inscribed.

Hermione,

I'm helping you follow the rules and keep the mystery. I've charmed your notebook to hide the messages you haven't written yet.

I still keep my notebook in my pocket. Write to me if you need me.

Draco

The books consumed her for hours, sitting in her bed with the quilt wrapped around her. A cold breakfast tray sat on her bedside table from earlier in the morning. With a flick of her wand, she vanished the tray and organised her books, setting off to have a shower.

There was no way she would stay in this time for three months. She needed to get to work.

~

Hermione heard the whoosh of the floo just as the last curl of her hair charmed into place. It took her ages to get dressed, the comfortable knit sweaters and denims she was used to rifling through in her dresser replaced with luxurious fabrics now housed in her closet. The closet which used to hold her library, Hermione thought sadly.

Most of the clothes she tried on showed off more of her body than she was used to. And instead of the pile of trainers that usually sat in the corner of her bedroom, neatly organised shelves of heels reached the ceiling in her closet. Hermione eventually settled on a well-fitted pair of black trousers and a flowing cream top, leaving her bedroom barefoot to greet her husband, ignoring the shoe problem for the time being.

Malfoy's eyes raked over her as soon as she saw him. "How was your morning, love?" He asked as he hung up his outer robes. Something about his relaxed demeanour made her want to help him disrobe further, but she pushed the thought aside.

"I made it through all the books you left, not that our notebook had much to read," Hermione responded, lifting her eyebrow at him.

He didn't respond, but paced straight to the kitchen and started putting a meal together. It was well past noon Hermione thought, surely he ate lunch while at work. She followed him into the kitchen, sitting at the island to watch him work. Malfoy mixed magical and muggle methods in cooking, cutting the vegetables by hand, but beating eggs and heating a pan with a swish of his wand.

Dark steel eyes met her own up as he looked up from his meticulous chopping. "You've not eaten lunch. Sit down while I make you an omelette."

Hermione hadn't even realised she missed her own lunch, too deep in her reading this morning to notice. At the smell of the omelette starting in the pan, her stomach growled, loud

enough for Malfoy to hear and chuckle under his breath.

The plate hovered and landed in front of her, with a glass of pumpkin juice just as Malfoy placed a hand at the top of her back and sat next to her. "Eat."

"Are you always this bossy about my meals Malfoy?"

"Only when you forget to feed yourself. I enjoy taking care of you. Besides, you need the energy." Malfoy said with a smirk. "Now tell me, how are you feeling after this morning's study session?"

"I have more questions than answers." Hermione huffed as she ate another forkful of the delicious meal cooked by her husband. "I find it extremely hard to believe that I never figured out the curse on the cabinet. And then there's the time is a flat circle nonsense." She threw one hand up in the air to quote her disbelief, "Why didn't we dig deeper into the questions all these years?" Hermione rambled, avoiding the one question she really wanted to ask. "That much time on a problem unsolved I would expect a whole bookshelf of notes, not two little texts Malfoy. I once wrote ten feet on the topic of transfiguration on solid metals. And that was fourth year for a simple assignment."

He leaned against the island, tucking a platinum lock behind his ear where it fell free. "You destroyed the rest," he said with a sigh, putting his hands into his pockets. With a longing glance at the empty place on the mantle, he continued. "We had Virgo and your motivations changed. You refused to risk her very existence by changing the future."

Nodding slowly, Hermione began to understand. What mother would risk her child? "She is quite beautiful," she replied, tilting her head towards the mantle.

"Of course she is. She is the very image of her mother." Malfoy walked over to the rest of the pictures displayed, tracing his finger along the edge of the smallest frame. "She is the most amazing witch, Hermione. You are going to love her more than I could ever explain to you."

Hermione gripped her hands together in her lap, readying herself for the question that plagued her for hours. "How old is she?" The question came out in a near whisper.

"Twelve," he replied, without turning back to face her. "She's in her first year at Hogwarts, a Gryffindor if you must know. But that's all I'm going to be telling you about her, you can discover the rest in your own time." He turned around to face her. "You are staying in her room, you know. After she went back to school in January, we packed up her room and recreated your old room. It's not exact, but I think it's mostly right."

Almost, Hermione thought, except for the clothes and the library.

"Did your exploration of the flat bring up any other questions?" He asked with a raised eyebrow.

He obviously knew she explored their bedroom. And why wouldn't she have gone in? But the thought of the giant bed made her heart hammer within her chest. Redness crept over her

chest and up her neck in embarrassment. “None,” she replied, unwilling to admit her curiosity.

Hermione anxiously changed the subject. “You said we were meeting friends this evening?”

His eyes widened at the sight of her reddened neck and it seemed an eternity before he answered her question, rolling his wrist into his hand.

“Pansy’s planned a party of course,” he replied, regaining his composure. “Everyone has been so excited for your arrival, she’s a bit beside herself to see you, truthfully. Nothing fancy, just dinner with friends.”

Hermione couldn’t deny the interest that bloomed in her to see her friends in their late thirties. And while the written warnings resonated within her, not to spoil the mystery, she certainly couldn’t be responsible for what the others might let slip over a glass of wine.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Where’s My Love* by SYML

Make no mistake, Hermione, my husband is not yours, is one of my favourite lines in this fic.

I feel like it’s time for Hermione to listen to herself, yes?

**Time is a flat circle is the concept of True Detective, and not me. But it works here, so I borrowed it.

February 13, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

February 13, 2004

Draco awoke to the smell of bacon frying early in the morning; putting on a pair of grey joggers and a matching cashmere sweater, he followed his nose to the kitchen. He was filled with joy to see his beautiful wife waving a spatula in the air while dancing around a cooking breakfast.

She had not yet heard or seen him, caught up in her work at the stove. Curls were piled atop her head, secured with a fluffy velvet emerald band, a wand stuck through the centre. Rogue strands escaped around her face, framing her eyes and full lips as she sang along to a song only heard in her head. An oversized olive green t-shirt that Draco never saw before draped over her, exposing a bare shoulder and just reaching the tops of her thighs.

Her shirt pulled upwards as she reached to grab a teacup and a coffee cup from the higher shelf. Confirmation that she was not wearing any shorts but instead a pair of tiny white cotton knickers forced an inaudible choke from his throat. He could just see the creases where her cheeks met her thighs. Draco wanted to burn the image into his mind forever, put it in a pensieve so he could visit it daily.

He had never witnessed his wife so vulnerable and relaxed in their home.

A shriek left her lips as she turned around and caught his eyes on her, followed by a bubbling laugh. Gods, he never heard her laugh like that, either. He could die happy with that sound echoing in his ears.

“Good morning,” she exclaimed excitedly, setting the cups down and charming the tea and coffee to pour. Draco sat at the counter to watch her bounce happily as she plated their breakfast. He shook his head and blinked rapidly to make sure that the woman was, in fact, real, and he wasn’t lost in a dream.

She plopped down next to him and took a delicate sip of her creamed coffee, eyeing his teacup as if to remind him to drink it while hot. “Kneazle got your tongue?”

Reminded that he had yet to speak to the woman before him, Draco forced himself to regain his composure. Years of pureblood etiquette lessons reverberated through his mind as he set himself upright and reached for his tea. “Good morning.” He replied with as much decorum as one could muster next to a set of tanned bare legs.

Hermione was either oblivious to her effect on him or didn’t care. She wriggled in her seat, getting comfortable as she ate breakfast. A cluster of exposed freckles taunted him from her bare shoulder, but Draco persisted. “You’re up early. Dare I ask what you have planned for the day?”

She punctuated the air with her empty fork. “Draco, darling, I am so glad you asked. I will be dismantling the Marriage Act today. We’ll need to get your mother, of course,” she said, pausing to sip her tea. “Did you tell Harry yet that I’ve arrived?”

Draco shook his head, a mouthful of toast stopping his speech.

“Aha. Well, that should be the first order of business. Though I would rather tell everyone at once and not have to rehash the story a dozen times.” She hopped off her stool as she finished her last bite of toast, wiping her hands together to rid the last crumbs before pulling the wand from her curls. “Execto Patro—”

Without thinking he disarmed her before the blue otter could form, and her wand flew across the room into his outstretched hand. She arrived less than 24 hours ago, and already was rushing off without him.

His seeker reflexes moved faster than his brain, regrettably.

Amber eyes blew wide at the sudden lack of a wand and red sparks of magic crackled along her fingertips. She was pissed, but he didn’t care; it only made him more angry. He refused to sit by like some idle passenger in their relationship, the lack of control was maddening.

Draco gripped their wands in his fist. Her vinewood pulsed with magic, beating in time to the sparks still at her fingers. The wand sensed her intentions; she readied herself to cast without it, but Draco realised too late.

It was as if a hook lodged into his breastbone. He flew through the air towards her, chest first, suddenly stopping mere inches from her outstretched palm. She held him there, bound by invisible ropes, unable to move, her eyes venomous.

“Never take my wand like that again,” she fumed, snatching it out of his grasp and throwing his hawthorn to the floor where it clattered away.

Draco placed one brick atop another, sending the visions back to the recesses of his mind. He couldn’t escalate the situation further, he didn’t trust himself not to haul her into his bedroom, and teach her that challenging him came with consequences.

“Put. Me. Down.”

Red sparks shifted to yellow across her fingers. “And if I refuse?”

Visions raced through his mind of all the ways he wanted to punish her for keeping him bound and useless. Her rage ignited in his veins, sending all his blood towards his cock. The urge to prove to her that he was in control overwhelmed him.

A void of emptiness washed over him as he shook his head. “The plan, Granger. Set me down and tell me the plan.”

The sparks of magic surrounding her hands disappeared as she lowered him to the floor. “Hermione.”

“What?”

“I told you to call me Hermione. Please. It makes me feel safe.” The words tremored out of her as she pulled in her lower lip.

He could barely process her words through his occlusion, but the thought that she felt unsafe broke his walls like a wrecking ball. “Hermione.” The name rolled off his tongue, tasting forbidden. He loved to tease and rile her up by calling her Granger, but he never considered the history behind the name. The thought of her feeling unsafe around him, recalling his old actions towards her every time he uttered it, made him feel ill. He never asked her how it affected her.

Gods, he was an idiot.

She released her lip, reddened from being held between her teeth. “I’ll be here for three months, Draco. Our friends deserve to know.”

“And how do you plan on not ripping out the fabric of time by its roots? You can’t just tell people you are from the future, Hermione; they’ll want to know everything.” Fear coursed through his chest with the possibility of his wife never returning to him. “What happens when you start to change events that have already happened in your time? What if she gets stuck in the future?”

“She won’t. It’s impossible.”

Her grasp tightened over the vinewood, knuckles turning white with pressure.

If they were going to get anywhere, he needed to make her feel safe. There was only one thing he knew about his wife that would surely stand the test of time.

The chance to be a swot.

“Tell me about time, Hermione.”

The worry left her face at the request, and a small smile broke out in its place. “Time is unshakeable,” she began, starting to pace around the flat without a destination, her anger forgotten. “No matter what anyone does in the course of time, whether on their own, or travelling, fate will always win.”

She dove into her narrative as she moved gracefully, rage and nerves leaving her body. She told various stories and myths, all pointing to the same conclusion: it was impossible to change time.

“It’s unhealthy to know one’s future, Draco, so you’ll understand I must keep some secrecy while here. There are several things that I won’t be able to tell you, and even less, I will be able to tell our friends.” Counting off on her fingers, she listed topics she would refuse to speak of. Nothing about jobs or families. Children were most certainly off the table. Whether or not anyone died in the future and when was another no-go area, interspersed with another story about some poor old sod named Ernest and his idiot brother.

Draco was enthralled in her delivery, only partially because she had yet to put on pants.

“Most importantly,” she began to conclude her thesis, “I have no interest in changing time. I love our life together, Draco. If I thought for a second that my actions would risk our future, I would lock myself up for the next three months.” She paced over to him, resting her small hand on his chest. “I would never risk our family,” she said, amber eyes sparkling.

Hermione paused where she stood in front of him as if to communicate the seriousness of her message, waiting a moment before nodding and diving back into her lecture.

Draco grabbed his wife by the waist and tugged her into him. He stopped absorbing any of her messages since she called him *family*.

He gently brushed a fallen curl from her face and kissed her forehead. Nothing he did in this life made him believe that he deserved her, but clearly, fate intervened. A small sigh came from her as she nestled into him with a quiet sigh.

“You are my family,” he confirmed back to her.

He could feel her nodding in agreement against his chest, “yours” she whispered.

The words rattled his soul.

Mine.

Draco moved to set her upright by the shoulders, ready to face whatever she had planned. She prepared thoroughly for this trip and had researched it for years, and she was, of course, the brightest witch of her age. The swot probably invented a mastery in time travel just to complete it.

“Call them over then,” he agreed. “Time to tell everyone I’m married to an older woman.” Draco couldn’t resist but playfully swat his wife on the bum as he walked away to change his clothes. He could no longer resist after being subjected to the sight of her bare legs for the duration of the morning. He needed to feel her soft skin beneath his palm. But a split second of contact was all he would allow himself to have.

He did not expect the squeak of surprise that escaped her lips, followed by a tiny whimper. He couldn’t bring himself to look back at her reaction as he walked off, afraid that all the restraint in the world would not be enough.

~

Harry was first through the floo, pulling Daphne through behind him. “Where is she?!” he yelled. “Hermione, I swear to Morgana herself, you are too much stress on my soul.” Daphne fidgeted with the clasp on her healers’ robes, still trying to close them off while in motion.

She told them it was urgent, the daft witch. He thought, pacing out of his room, freshly showered and dressed to meet his guests. Looking around, Hermione was nowhere to be seen, but her bedroom door remained closed. Hopefully, she was in the process of putting on pants.

Ginny and Theo stumbled out of the floo next, Theo striding right into Harry's back. "Sorry, mate," he said, righting himself beside his new wife. Theo and Harry stared at one another silently, and Draco couldn't tell if they were about to go toe to toe with one another or embrace in a hug. Theo pushed a hand through his curls and bounced around on his feet, looking for an escape route.

Ginny dismissed them both with a wave of her hand as she went for Hermione's room, yelling behind her, "Far more than the two of you have seen my bits, so you can park any ill-placed sense of propriety, Harry. Get over it and shake hands."

He released a groan as he set out to take Theo's hand, clapping him on the shoulder. "Good luck, Nott. She's yours now."

A massive smile broke out on his brother's face. "Lucky bastard, aren't I?"

"Hermione, open the door!" Ginny yelled, fist pounding against the door, oblivious to the two men behind her. Draco didn't have a chance to stop the witch while she cast an *alohamora*, distracted by Pansy and Neville walking through at the front door, while Blaise, Astoria, and Luna all came through the floo.

The large flat was filled with the noise of questions from all the early morning guests in various states of dress, considering the time. Luna was apologising to Draco that Ron couldn't make it, but someone needed to stay home with the babies, and he barely caught her lilting voice above the din. "Is she much changed then Draco? I'm quite curious to see how her aura has matured."

Draco narrowed his eyes down towards the blond witch, who he kept a soft spot for since sneaking her food the duration of time spent in the Malfoy dungeons.

She had become like a little sister to him, and he was convinced of her eight years ago, even if it was occasionally disconcerting. "She's quite different, Luna. Wait and see." He said, squeezing her shoulder affectionately, setting off to intervene in the chaos at his wife's bedroom door.

Everyone already piled into Hermione's room after Ginny successfully charmed the door unlocked. Draco followed the crowd inside, relieved to see his wife, fully clothed in denims and an oversized blue knit sweater, sitting on the side of her bed and looking up at the awaiting group.

"Merlin Hermione. If all of this is over a haircut –"

"Shut up, Scarhead," Pansy called out, pushing through the group to drop to her knees in front of Hermione. Manicured hands lifted to set on either side of Hermione's face, tilting her gently to the left and right in examination. "I can glamour this for you, but you will tell us why you look like an old hag Granger."

"Pansy!" Astoria shouted before catching herself and lowering her voice. "Hermione, you look lovely, my dear. Don't listen to her."

“She’s *old* Astoria!” Pansy screeched back, arms waving wildly at Hermione on the bed. “Was it an ageing curse then that backfired? Whose vault was it this time?”

The men in the room began to slowly back away as the women inspected Hermione, arguing over the best glamours to use. She sat wordlessly underneath them, smiling and watching the debate bounce back and forth around the room.

Draco didn’t interject a word from the doorway; instead, he watched his wife clearly become entertained by the chaos.

She climbed to stand atop the bed, raising her hands in the air as if in surrender, with a clearing of her throat, and the room fell silent. “Thank you all for coming. While it is a bit chaotic, I only want to do this once.”

She turned to face Pansy, who was frozen, rifling through the makeup in her vanity. “Yes Pansy, I am old. I am the decrepit age of 39, and quite happy with how I look. However, I would like to avoid any commotion while I am here, so I will take you up on those charms.”

Pansy dropped the makeup back into the vanity, closing the drawer as quietly as possible behind her and snapping her mouth shut.

Hermione spun in place to address the whole room. “This,” she waved over her body, “was not from curse blowback. I’ve travelled back in time from 2019. Your Hermione is there now, in fact. Effectively, we have swapped places for the foreseeable future.”

The room broke out into a roar of questions; Theo pushed past Draco in the doorway, gasping for air between the laughs escaping him. Curls bouncing wildly in his entertainment. “A fucking cougar, mate,” he choked out between laughs. “A fucking cougar for a patronus.”

Draco’s eyes widened with the realisation that Theo reached before he did. He pushed his brother by the shoulder further into the living room to separate his maniacal laugh from the group.

“Enough!” Hermione yelled, standing tall over the group. “I will not be telling any of you anything about your future. It’s not healthy.”

Luna sat on the bed, crossed her legs, and nodded in agreement with the witch above her. “How very true,” she said melodiously, with a slight frown.

Hermione smiled sadly at the blond witch, resting a hand lovingly against one side of her head. They stared at each other in a quiet moment of understanding before Hermione nodded at her, lifting her head back up to resume addressing the group.

The sadness present on Hermione’s face washed away. “You all needed to know the truth as I will be in this time for three months and have a substantial amount of work to do while I’m here. Plus,” she added with a growing smile, “I’ve brought presents.”

~

Draco, clustered with the rest of the men in the living room, was dying with curiosity at the set of scrolls Hermione pulled out of her pocket. She failed to mention that her presents from the future were only for the women in the group, and the men disappointingly sulked off to watch from across the flat as their wives each received a gift.

Each witch reacted differently upon opening their scroll and reading the contents. Ginny, the first to receive hers, read it with a snort and immediately crumpled it in her fist, leaving through the floo without saying a word. Theo watched wide-eyed as his wife reacted, scrambling to follow her hasty exit.

Luna nodded in agreement with her scroll while Daphne let out a joyous squeal, tucking her's quickly into her pocket and regaining her composure. Astoria, the queen of pureblood grace, scarcely reacted to her scroll, apart from the tiniest smile escaping her face. Draco barely caught the look she gave to Blaise across the room, who returned his small smile in kind to his wife.

Pansy, upon reading her own, instantly pulled Hermione into an emotional hug. Hermione consoled the witch by smoothing down her jet-black hair; pulling apart from the hug, they held hands tightly, speaking in whispers before joining everyone again in the living room.

The men all pried their wives on what their gifts were, but none would share the details. Draco thought he heard Daphne whisper *later* into Harry's ear, but he couldn't be sure over the whispers occurring in every corner.

Curiosity winning him over, Draco paced over to Luna, who was rearranging the floral centrepiece on his dining table. If anyone were going to spill, it would be her. "Well?" he asked with a raised eyebrow. "Do I get to know?"

She tilted her head as she responded, "Oh, Draco. It was nothing I didn't already know. Only a reminder from my older self that Ronald enjoys having me in the missionary position now and then. Best during the full moon, of course, clears the wrackspurts." She picked at the air around his ear. "You've got quite the infestation yourself." She barely took her focus away from the centrepiece; as far as Draco could tell, she removed all the daisies and set them aside for some other unknown purpose.

He grabbed her wrist playfully to still the motion by his ear, regretting his question. While he might love the daft witch dearly, the thought of the weasel's preferred sexual position threatened his breakfast to make a return appearance. He released her hand back at her side, walking away with a slight nod, attempting to purge his mind of the revelation.

It was as if Hermione was a politician on tour. She sat with everyone individually in the corner, speaking softly and holding their hands. Draco overheard bits and pieces of the conversations, vague reassurances that everything would be fine, with no commitments or details given.

People began to leave the flat after their time with her, and now, on her last conversation with Harry, He leaned in closer to eavesdrop, only feeling slightly remorseful at the intrusion.

“-- I promise you, Harry, I am fine. I’ve already made the trip there and back again and then successfully lived another fifteen years without major incident. You’ve taken care of me for years. It’s time to let Draco take over --”

Draco stopped listening to the conversation upon hearing his name.

He already vowed to himself to take care of her, tricking her into a marriage contract so he could. But this Hermione would finally let him, it seemed, and he would succeed in that for her, even if it meant burying his darker urges away forever. She was worth any sacrifice he could possibly make.

Finishing their conversation minutes later, Harry took Daphne’s hand, and they left through the floo.

The silence was deafening as they were finally alone in the flat.

Hermione paced over to Draco and rested a comforting hand on his chest, holding a large tome under her arm that he had never seen before. “One thing off the list,” she smiled up at him and lifted onto her toes to place a lingering kiss on his cheek, “are you ready for another?”

Heat burned into his cheek where she kissed him. She dropped back onto her heels and stared up at him with amber eyes, waiting for his answer.

He would do whatever she wanted him to if it meant she would kiss him again. Wrapping her in his arms, he leaned in to breathe deeply the smell of jasmine from her hair. “With you? Anything,” he murmured, kissing the top of her head gently.

Hermione took his hand and pulled him towards the kitchen, breaking their moment of affection. With a thud, she set her book down on the island.

“It’s time to take down the marriage law.”

~

They spent the next several hours walking through her detailed plans.

She had been productive over the last fifteen years, apparently spending most of her free time digging up dirt on members of the Wizengamot. Draco could not help but shudder at the similarities with his mother that she displayed, but that was a mind healer’s problem, not his own.

The large text she brought with her from the future included detailed dossiers on every last member of the currently seated Wizengamot. Voting records were only the tip of the iceberg of the information catalogued within the overflowing book. There were notes and pictures of sordid affairs, receipts from bribes, and even records of illegitimate half-blood children.

Posterboards, spanning one wall to another, were conjured along the flat as she mapped out her plan to repeal the act. Red string hung from one picture to another, looking more like mugshots as the evening grew late. Draco assisted as best he could, organising the evidence

against each member and ensuring she ate while they continued to work. He offered his thoughts on each member from his seat on the sofa, seeing enough underhanded actions from the Sacred 28 heads of house to last a lifetime.

“We’ll need your mother eventually, Draco, but only once we are ready to strike,” Hermione called from the far corner of the flat, where she was scribbling below a picture of Amelia Bones. “You can keep this from her for now, yes?”

“Sure,” Draco replied regretfully. He’d rather his mother not be involved at all in the situation; she would pay a high sum to get her hands on Hermione’s massive book. “Any chance we could leave her out of this entirely?”

“Wish we could, darling, but she needs to finish what she started,” Hermione replied, bent over a picture of Cornelius Fudge, tacking a booklet of receipts under his name.

Draco’s brow shot up at the new information. He paced over to her so he could get her full attention. “You know about the bribe, then?” he asked, leaning down so his nose brushed her hair, resting his hand against the small of her back, his *amortentia* mocking him.

“Which bribe are you talking about?” She cooed, not taking her focus off Fudge’s picture.

He honestly did not want to know the depths in which his mother was involved, but curiosity got the better of him. “I only know of one bribe. How many should I be aware of?”

She stood tall, shaking him off her back and waved her hand as if to dismiss the question. Her neck craned upwards to meet his gaze as she smiled sweetly. “Which bribe, Draco?”

“Theo’s,” he lowered his voice, “how many bribes, Hermione?”

She lifted her nose to graze his own seductively, “more than one” she whispered in return before ducking under his arm and returning to her book for the next victim she needed to plot against.

Annoyance rolled down his shoulders at the thought of his mother’s interference, but he was no longer surprised by the depths of Narcissa’s involvement in any scheme. More concerning was the sea of pictures that now graced his flat. Photos of the most influential people in wizarding Britain, and Hermione was planning to take down every one of them; Draco’s stomach churned with the sudden realisation of the danger she was about to put herself in.

~

Sometime after midnight, Hermione sat down on the sofa, finished mapping out her nefarious plans. Hints of dark circles formed under her eyes evidenced the long day of work, but the witch was still just as radiant as she was early in the morning.

Draco sat beside her and pulled her into his arms, breathing in the sweet scent of jasmine that mocked him all day. “Hermione...” He murmured into her hair. He yearned to pick her up and lock her in his room, ensuring she would be safe. An attempt to blackmail the entire Wizengamot would have blowback unlike any curse she had ever encountered.

He could not allow her to put herself in harm's way.

"Yes, Draco?" She whispered back, nuzzled into his chest.

"I don't want you to do this."

Hermione leaned out of his embrace. "You don't -- Is that an order?" She asked, looking up at him and raising a single defiant eyebrow.

His brain screamed yes, but the words couldn't escape his mouth. He would tie her down and lock her in his room if it meant she would stay safe. "Hermione... It's not --"

She pressed her small hand against his chest, ending the conversation. "It's been a long day, Draco. Why don't we talk about this tomorrow? We have time."

Draco nodded as he watched the witch walk away to her bedroom, closing the door softly behind her.

Her screams echoed in his mind from years ago, along with Bellatrix's maniacal cackles. He had failed her once in his life, not protecting her.

Failing her again was impossible.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *You're Somebody Else* by flora cash

Draco. You are 23. BAMF Mother Hermione is 39. Do you honestly think she can't protect herself? Read the room kid.

Extended Author Commentary on POVs, End Credit Music and General Vibes:

When I wrote the whole fic, regardless of the POV, it has always been in my head from Draco's perspective. The fact that he doesn't know how to express his feelings, nor has the capability to act on them or communicate them, just felt authentic for a young adult who PINES, without foundation. So, I wanted to give him the opportunity to build that foundation, and still, not really know what to do with it.

On the flip side, you have this mature, 38-year-old Draco, who has spent the last fifteen years with HIS PERSON, only to be faced with the 23-year-old wife who isn't in love with him yet.

It's actually a bit heart-wrenching for both Dracos.

So, I really used music with each chapter to get into Draco's head when I was writing, and there are a few key songs that really personify the entire vibe of this fic.

In Chapter One/Prologue, *Steal by Maribou State, Holly Walker* is the suggested listening. Every word in this song is teenager Draco vibes, but includes lyrics:

*What if I only ever took what's mine
I wanted to tell them
That if I could have led a different life, could have led a different life
But now I need somebody who can ease my mind*

Fast forward to this chapter, and you have *You're Somebody Else by flora cash*. This, to me, perfectly personifies the days and weeks post time travel accident, from both versions of Draco's perspective, and includes lyrics:

*Well, you look like yourself
But you're somebody else
Only in ain't on the surface
Well, you talk like yourself
No, I hear someone else though
Now you're making me nervous*

I don't know how many people listen to the end credits or read the author's notes, for that matter. But here I am, yelling into the void about how music makes art better. There are a couple more songs in later chapters that I will point out the lyrics on, assuming one person is interested. Plus, I may add each of the instrumental songs that I used to write each chapter in the opening author notes. TBD on that one.

Happy reading/listening.

February 13, 2019

Chapter Notes

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

February 13, 2019

The cottage outside Hogsmeade Pansy and Neville called home was nothing short of picturesque. A crumbling stone wall that circled the property's perimeter braced Hermione's landing as Malfoy side-alonged them to their destination. Debris rolled down the stone as it crumbled under her hand before her husband pulled her upright.

The walk up the meandering path to the cottage took ten minutes, guided by the chimney smoke that pillowed into the air. Malfoy picked lingonberries off a row of bushes that fenced the path, offering Hermione a few in his outstretched hand. "Neville imported them from the Netherlands a few years ago for Pansy. She kept telling him the path was too long to force guests to walk without offering a snack. And he refuses to connect their floo," he explained. "Though I much prefer the raspberries in the summer."

Tart juice burst into her mouth as she tasted a single berry. Her jaw tightened enjoyably at the flavour as she stole another handful from his upturned palm.

"The jam is better," he added, picking more off the bushes to stock his depleted handful. "I'll ask Pansy for a few jars before we leave."

Hermione nodded in agreement, tossing the last of the cold berries into her mouth.

They were the first to arrive. Not that Hermione knew who would be joining; Malfoy only told her that everyone would be there. She was grateful for the quiet as she saw her close friends for the first time, Neville pulling her into a tight hug the moment she stepped through the front door. He was the size of a bear, at least.

Hermione didn't know that the last time she saw him, he was still in the process of putting muscle onto his once gangly form. But years of working with plants favoured him, looking every bit a formidable woodsman, complete with a flannel shirt and a short beard.

"It's so wonderful to see you, Hermione," he exclaimed as her toes lifted off the ground from his embrace.

Pansy's voice came ringing out behind her. "You're going to suffocate her, Nev. Let the witch breathe."

Neville placed her down on solid ground, and she turned on the spot to take in her friend. Gone was the angular bob and fringe that she always sported. Raven hair piled atop her head was bound with a silk kerchief, only a few greys sparkling in the light. She was dressed all in black, a slightly transparent chiffon shirt tucked into billowing trousers and her high heels clicked across the tile floor.

Hermione ran to greet her friend, arms wrapped around each other as if neither had seen the other for fifteen long years, which was almost true.

“You’re so young!” Pansy cried, pulling her face out from the hug and placing it in both hands. “Nev, were we ever this young?” Her eyes were rimmed with red as she took in Hermione’s face so close to hers.

“Once, Pansy,” Neville called from the dining table, already uncorking the evening’s wine.

Hermione wanted to know everything about the witch the moment she took in her radiant form, how they came to this place, what their life was like now and if she was happy. “Pansy. It’s so good to see both of you. How are you?”

Pansy’s eyes darted over her shoulder to where Malfoy was still leaning in the doorway, silently watching the reintroduction. Hermione didn’t see his returned response, but she could infer it based on Pansy’s words.

“I’m supposed to follow the rules, Granger.” She smiled. “But I will tell you everything I am allowed.”

Luna was next through the front door, pulling Ron behind her with interlaced fingers. He funnelled a handful of berries into his mouth as he nodded a greeting in her direction.

“Mione,” he said, chewing the pre-dinner snack. A small pudgy sat over his belt, and he bore many more freckles than she remembered, but he was otherwise the same. He looked like a dad, Hermione thought fondly, thinking of her father.

“Hermione!” Luna abandoned her husband in the doorway to pull Hermione into a tight hug. “You look brilliant.” The blond witch started to pick at the air around her head. “But your wrackspurts are back. I haven’t seen these around you in years.”

Malfoy chuckled from behind her. “I’ll help her get rid of them, Lune, don’t worry.” He pulled the small witch into a quick brotherly hug, squeezed into his side. “Weasley.” He nodded over Luna’s head to Ron, still snacking away.

“Malfoy.” Ron wiped his hand on his trousers before extending an arm to shake hands. “It’s been a while. How are you, mate?”

Hermione catalogued any hints she could find in the conversations happening around her. Ron and Malfoy no longer worked together, meaning one or both were no longer at the DMLE. Malfoy’s auror robes in their flat were also suspiciously missing, concluding that it was most likely her husband who enjoyed a new occupation.

“Good, good. Trying to figure this one out again.” He tilted his head towards Hermione, the corner of his mouth ticking up in a smile meant just for her.

“Is she here yet?” Harry’s voice rang from outside as he strode in the door, Daphne shortly behind him.

He was exactly as she remembered, with wild black hair and glasses, a few more creases around his eyes. "Harry!" She cried, running to jump into his outstretched arms for a hug. "You're here!"

"Where else could I possibly be Hermione? I will always come when you call." He placed a chaste kiss between her eyebrows, smiling through the kind gesture.

"Hey, Hermione." Daphne waved from behind Harry, slowly making her way into a seat in the corner, one hand holding her swollen belly as she sat down. "It's lovely to see you."

"Daphne! You're pregnant!" Hermione clapped Harry on the shoulders, pulling him in for another tight hug. "Harry, congratulations!"

"Yes, well, you'll forgive us for breaking one of your rules; it's a bit hard to glamour at this late stage," Daphne replied as she shifted in her seat. "Maybe you could go back in time and remind my husband of the mechanics of the contraceptive charm? This one was a bit of a surprise."

A half-smile crested Harry's face at the mention of his name. He paced over to his wife and placed a small kiss behind her ear before sitting on the armchair of her seat. "Like you didn't also *forget* to take your potion," he muttered, "what's one more."

One more. Hermione thought. *How many could they possibly have?*

Hermione blushed at the affection the couple freely displayed. Harry had so long deserved to be happy after his childhood, and watching him lean close into Daphne satisfied Hermione's worry that her best friend found the contentment he longed for in life.

Blaise, Astoria, Theo and Ginny were the last to arrive at the overflowing cottage. Ginny gave Hermione a hurried kiss on the cheek before setting off to help Pansy and Neville in the kitchen. Astoria, seemingly next in line in the queue, took Hermione in a hug.

Stress that had begun to form in her belly, being the main attraction of the evening, was quickly replaced by worry over Astoria's thin form. The petite witch was always tiny, but the rigid feeling of a ribcage beneath her shift dress pressed against Hermione's heart. She pulled away from the hug and inspected Astoria's face closely. She was just as beautiful as ever, but the telltale shimmer underneath her eyes spoke of heavy glamours working their magic. The witch barely said a word, kissing her on the cheek and following Ginny into the kitchen.

Hermione caught Daphne eyeing her sister closely, a look of worry etched across her face from her seat in the corner. Something was wrong, but before Hermione could ask, Malfoy pulled her across the room into a conversation with Blaise and her Theo.

"Blaise, Theo." She nodded. The two men quickly shuffled her between them, each wrapping an arm around her in a light hug.

"You look stunning, Granger."

"Easy, Theo." Malfoy eyed his friend.

“What? She looks great. Am I not allowed to compliment your wife?” Theo chuckled, his arm bounced atop Hermione’s shoulders.

“No. Go compliment your own wife.” If Hermione didn’t know any better, she would think Malfoy was jealous of Theo. But they looked at each other like brothers, happy to take any opportunity to tease the other.

“I complimented her *effusely* just this afternoon. In fact, there I was, pants around my ankles on the balcony –”

“Theo.” Blaise groaned, “My ears are bleeding.”

“You look well, Hermione.” Blaise looked down at her with a reserved smile and solemn eyes, and Hermione wondered if his appearance had anything to do with Astoria’s evasiveness. “How was the trip?”

“Minor scrapes and bruises.” Hermione waved her hand to dismiss the question, bracelet catching the room's candlelight. “He always takes care of me.” She nodded towards her husband, who looked down upon her proudly.

Pansy weaved through the small group, interrupting the silent thank you Hermione was trying to communicate to Malfoy. “Dinner is ready. Go sit.” She continued about the room, ushering everyone to the laden dining table.

Hermione watched intently as Blaise pulled out Astoria’s chair at the table, much more delicately than any of the other men did for their wives. Always the most refined of the group, Blaise cared for his wife deeply, but this was beyond any expectation of pureblood etiquette. Astoria was surely sick somehow, and Hermione’s bones ached with worry for the younger, healthy friend she left behind in her own time.

Food floated around the table and onto their plates, and Hermione resolved to temporarily set her concerns aside as she poured her wine, letting her mind rest with the familiar din of friends' conversation.

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“You are absolutely telling us!” Theo teased loudly across the table at his wife, his wine splashing over the edge of the glass. “We’ve been living in secrecy for fifteen years about those gods damned scrolls.”

They dined together for hours, dessert long since cleared away, and everyone stayed, drinking into the evening. Hermione picked up odds and ends of secrets, but nothing earth-shattering. They all seemingly followed *the rules*, even inebriated.

“Mate, some of us know what they said.” Ron lifted his eyebrow. “Not our fault Gin wouldn’t share with you.”

No longer following the conversation, Hermione assumed it had something to do with her older self meddling in 2004.

“Can I, Draco?” Pansy asked over the table to Malfoy. His last glass of firewhiskey remained full for the past two hours. Only he and Daphne remained sober amidst the rowdy crowd.

He shrugged, “Sure, Pans. Why not.”

“Granger.” Pansy drawled. “When the original visit happened, you brought all the women around this table gifts.” She waved her wine glass from her seat at the head of the table. “A couple of months ago, we each wrote a message to our younger selves on a set of scrolls. Our husbands were understandably put out at the time that they did not get any presents.”

Ginny barked across the table. “He doesn’t need to know Pansy, it's irrelevant.”

“Mine was great,” Daphne interjected, ignoring Ginny’s outburst.

“*Daphne, no!*” Harry yelled back from the bar cart, refilling his firewhiskey.

“I found out that Harry likes to play aurors and dark wizards. It’s how we ended up with Albus”

“Daphne,” Malfoy warned, voice lowered.

“I quite enjoy getting to be the auror too.” Daphne laughed, her husband turning a bright shade of red.

A delighted squeal came from Theo, raising from his seat. “They were sex scrolls?! Oh, Merlin and Morgana, now I need to know. Out with it, Ginevra.”

“Theo, no.”

“Ronald enjoys having me in the missionary position now and then. I was a bit more self-indulgent those days; easy to forget that life’s pleasures can be simple.” Luna rang out.

Ron hung his head into his hands with a groan, “*Luna!*”

Blaise trailed his thumb over his wife’s small hand atop the table. Hermione caught the slight shrug he gave to Astoria as she asked an unspoken question.

“Well, I discovered that Blaise is quite particular about what he has for dessert.” Astoria giggled, slightly slurring, “the dining room in Italy has long since been stripped of its portraits. A bit off-putting when you are perched on the table trying to enjoy your husband's mouth on your –”

She was shut up by a kiss from Blaise, whom she soundly kissed back. A smile broke out on her face as he whispered into her ear.

“Fine.” Ginny started, staring at her husband, tears welling in her eyes. “I told myself to stop inviting other people into our bedroom. I said *let him love you.*”

The table fell silent, everyone looking at Ginny with concern.

Theo's voice sank to a whisper. "Why wouldn't you just tell me that?"

"I was scared."

"And now?"

"I haven't been scared for a long time, Theo." Ginny got up from the table, circling it to sit in her husband's lap and weave her hand into his curls. Hermione barely caught the whispered *thank you* that she muttered into Theo's ear.

Ron interrupted the quiet moment, catching up to Ginny's confession, "What the fuck do you mean other people. Merlin's balls, I need to stop drinking with my sister."

The table roared with laughter before all eyes turned to Pansy.

"Don't look at me. I never agreed to tell you idiots anything."

Neville winked at his wife from the other end of the table.

Pansy locked eyes with Neville, ignoring everyone else in the room. "Besides, my husband is a gentleman. I would never kiss and tell."

~

Hermione was well drunk when they arrived back in the flat, only slightly improved from the cold walk back down the cottage path to the apparition point. Malfoy didn't say a word about it; he just offered his arm for balance, ensuring she remained upright.

After spending the whole evening in clothes that were not her own, Hermione was anxious to get more comfortable. "Can we read together before bed?" She asked him, wanting to end her night in a familiar way.

"Of course."

An oversized black t-shirt and cotton shorts were all she found at the bottom of a dresser drawer in her search for comfortable clothing. Options of silk and lace overflowed the drawers, and it was all profoundly unfamiliar. Hermione tossed the t-shirt and shorts on her bed and stripped down to her white cotton bra and knickers, startled into awareness when she heard him at the bedroom door, clearing his throat.

"Did you mean to leave the door open, darling?" His eyes raked over her exposed body with appreciation.

Hermione paused. She didn't leave it open on purpose, but subconsciously?

Maybe.

He lifted his foot slightly, wiggling it against the invisible barrier usually present at her door. With a raised eyebrow, he took a single step into the room, hands tucked in his pockets. "That answers that question."

Hermione scrambled to grab the oversized T-shirt and threw it hastily over her head, not bothering with the shorts still laying on the bed. His mouth twitched upwards, gaze directed to her nipples that tented the fabric.

“You’re wearing my shirt.”

She should have known it wasn’t hers; so out of place with the rest of the lingerie, “Shit. I’m sorry. It was in the drawer. I assumed...” Hermione pulled at the hem to take it back off and return it.

“It’s alright, Hermione.” He grabbed her wrist to stop her from pulling it up over her breasts. “I’m just not used to seeing you like this. It’s quite attractive, actually.”

The hand on her wrist burned, sending warmth up through her veins and into her chest. Together, their hands pulled the hemline back down to the top of her thigh, his knuckles brushing her skin the entire path down.

“I brought you a sober-up potion.” Malfoy broke the moment, taking a vial from his pocket. “Take it. Otherwise, you’ll feel awful tomorrow.”

Hermione couldn’t find any space to refuse his instruction, taking the vial from his palm.

“I’ve got *Persuasion* in the living room.” He added lowly, turning to leave her bedroom. “When you’re ready.”

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Strange* by Celeste

If you haven’t figured out already, absolutely everything in this fic should be considered Chekov’s Gun.

Pansy, you little minx.

Also. I live for the Hot Neville Agenda. I’ll just be here, imagining him chopping wood in my backyard in all his shirtless glory. That man is fire.

February 14, 2004

Chapter Notes

****Throws chapter at the internet and runs.****

NEW TAGS! TW/CW in the end notes.

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

Saturday, February 14, 2004

Draco woke with a start early in the morning, deeply unrested from the nightmares that plagued him through the night. Bellatrix haunted his dreams, with Hermione's escalating screams on repeat. She gave him an empty stare from the marble floor, lying limp in a pool of her blood after his aunt finished the vile carving into her forearm.

The only variation the dreams took from history was that this was an older Hermione. The version from 2019. She sobbed at him, murmuring *you promised me over* and over, clutching her maimed arm, distraught that her husband did not protect her.

Draco sprinted to the toilet and vomited, purging his stomach of its empty contents, wishing he could purge the dream from his mind. His skull ached with the recent overuse of occlumency; he was out of practice. Vowing to himself to stop, he would feel every emotion if it meant keeping his wife safe. Covered in a sickly sweat, sitting on the tile floor, Draco rushed to shower and get dressed; he wanted to get ready before Hermione awoke, presenting himself as someone she could rely upon.

~

Draco was just setting his wife's coffee down on the counter as she emerged from her room. The bubbly persona he enjoyed the morning before was gone, replaced by a witch that could only be described as needing caffeine. Still just as beautiful and tempting him again in a baggy shirt and bare legs, dark circles under her eyes exposed her tiredness. Draco wondered if she got any sleep at all after last night's extensive plotting. She strolled into the kitchen, pulling her hair lazily onto the top of her head, twisting it securely with her wand.

Taking her coffee with both hands, she leaned into his side, burrowing her head into his chest. "I miss you," she whispered.

His heart cracked at the admission. Reaching down to pull her chin up with his thumb, he placed a chaste kiss on her forehead. "I'm right here."

“You’re different,” she sighed, “plus I don’t sleep well without you next to me. It’s been years since I’ve had nightmares like the ones last night.” Amber eyes inspected his face closely. “You had them, too,” she stated as if it was a fact and not a question.

There was no fooling the older witch. “Bellatrix,” he whispered, pulling her closer to him. “I will never forgive myself for that day.” Drawing her scarred forearm upwards, he took her coffee to set it down and kissed the silver etches that marred her skin. It faded over time, but it was still just as jagged and angry as the day in the drawing room.

She closed her eyes as he raked his lips over the scar, looking increasingly tranquil while he moved as if meditating on his affections. When he finished, she rested her palm gently on the stubble of his face, giving it a soft scratch. He forgot to cast a shaving charm in his rush this morning.

“I forgave you a long time ago, Draco. You should consider doing the same for yourself.”

Without glancing at the red-stringed walls they created the night before, she walked away silently with her coffee, closing the bedroom door softly behind her. Draco was sure he heard her begin to cry quietly just as the sound of a shower drowned out the noise.

~

“We’re going out!” She exclaimed, bursting out of her bedroom hours later, looking unexpectedly rejuvenated.

Draco busied himself around the flat while she was locked away. No noise emanated from her room after the shower, so quiet that she must have cast a silencing charm. Unwilling to leave the flat in case she needed him, but unsure if he was permitted to intrude upon her space. The result was a sad breakfast alone, followed by a lonely attempt to read their latest novel. He wondered if she would continue to read with him in the evenings, missing her wiggling feet resting on his lap.

Setting his book down to take in her appearance, Draco was in awe of her radiance. Dressed in a white sundress that skimmed the top of her knees, her hair hung around her face in soft ringlets. His fingers itched to tug on one of the brown curls to see how far it might bounce. The tanned olive skin he admired on her legs over the past two mornings spanned her chest and shoulders, dusted by freckles. “Where are we going?”

“It’s Valentine’s Day. I’m taking you out on a date.”

His heart sank. In the week's chaos, he had forgotten Valentine’s Day entirely. Draco wanted to court his wife, convince her to return his affections, even stupidly asking Potter for his advice. But that was before the woman before him arrived, already confident in her declaration of love.

He was at a loss on how to proceed.

She giggled, catching the look of confusion all over his face. “I will cede the next fifteen years of Valentine’s Days to your planning if you let me have this one,” she said, pulling him

up off the sofa. "Come on. I've already made plans. We are skipping all serious conversations about this," she waved her hand at the decorated wall, which promptly rolled into a tight scroll and shrunk down in size to rest in the corner, "in favour of enjoying each other's company for the day."

Now, he was even more confused. "You've been here for two days. How have you possibly made plans?"

"Ginny and Theo, of course. They do love to meddle."

Of course, that wanker involved himself.

She grabbed their cloaks from the rack by the fireplace and tossed them over her arm, reaching out her hand to take his own. "I'll side-along you."

Draco didn't get the chance to respond as the heavy sensation compressed his body, pulling them away from the flat.

With a pop, they reappeared in what looked to be a locker room. It certainly smelled like one, he thought, wrinkling his nose. "Where are we?" he asked. "It smells like old socks."

"I'm so glad you asked Draco," she exclaimed with a broad smile, swatting his arm to push him down to sit on one of the benches. "We are in the Hollyhead Harpies team locker room." Reaching up to her shoulder in her beaded bag, she grunted as she pulled out his quidditch kit and a gleaming broom he didn't recognise.

"That's not my broom, Hermione."

Glee radiated from her as she bounced from foot to foot, handing the broom to him. "Technically, it is your broom, but this particular model isn't released yet. I'm sure you'll be rather put out in the future to find that I have stolen it."

Rolling the broom in his hands, he found the inscription of his name in gold cursive font on the handle, directly underneath a stamp reading *Firebolt X*.

It felt like years ago when Draco told Hermione the source of his patronus, but it would have only been a month or two, exchanging stories of their happiest memories over a quiet dinner in their flat. She knew that the feeling of flying on a brand-new broom, experiencing the speed it was capable of for the first time, had long been his reliable memory. Draco could barely contain his excitement when he realised what he held in his grasp. Taking her face in both hands, he kissed her forcefully.

"You beautiful fucking witch."

She leaned into the kiss, giving just as much force back, before shoving the kit into his hands so he could change. "We have the stadium to ourselves for three hours. You get one to yourself to learn the broom, and then you are taking me flying."

He was bewildered. The gift of a brand-new, unreleased broom to test fly was akin to a five-year-old getting a unicorn for their birthday. But today, of all days, Valentine's Day, his witch,

who hated flying more than anything on the face of the earth, wanted to fly with him for two whole hours. In a quidditch arena.

“You want to fly with me?” he asked sceptically, frozen while shirtless in his rush to get ready, rooting around for his vest and jersey in the bag.

“I’ll even let you chase the snitch while I sit between your legs... As long as you promise to make sure I don’t fall.” She said, ogling his bare chest.

Draco choked and nodded furiously. Leaving him alone in the change room, Hermione sauntered off to the team viewing box. As she walked away, Draco swore her arse swayed just a little extra under the white dress.

~

The broom was the fastest thing he had ever ridden, beating his current Firebolt’s top speed by at least 30 kilometres per hour. The handling, much more precise than he was used to, took Draco a good twenty minutes to adjust to the sensitivity of the broom, forcing himself to stop overcorrecting.

Aerial loops and manoeuvres were a breeze to execute at breakneck paces, but his favourite aspect of the hour spent flying solo had to be the look on his wife’s face from the stands. Each time he would loop around to pass her in the Harpie’s viewing box, she would lean over the railing to get a fraction closer. Her breasts spilled over the top of her dress as she bent forward, Draco tightened his hold on the broom, lest he end up crashing into the stands. Pure joy crossed her face as she watched him fly, and Draco was sure that if he were a professional quidditch player in another life, she would be his biggest fan.

Eventually, she waved him over to the box, signalling the end of his hour. She had changed into protective leathers, which hugged every curvaceous inch of her irresistible body. As he hovered just above the ground in front of her, Draco spied a tiny golden snitch clutched tightly in her fist, wings fluttering to escape between her fingers.

“Having fun yet?” she asked, looking adorable in her leather helmet, with her curls pulled back into a neat bun below.

“You have no idea.” He replied, letting his gaze roam over her body. “Are you allowed to tell me when you learned how to fly?”

“Oh! I’ve never actually learned to fly. Still terrible, truly.” She laughed, opening her palm to set the agitated snitch free. “But I enjoy flying with you immensely.” Turning his blatant leering back upon him, she stared at his thighs, licking her lips.

Emboldened by the last hour of flying and the obvious look she gave him, Draco wasted no time in scooping her into his lap on the broom and nestling her hips between his thighs. She smelled of leather and jasmine, and Draco's heart soared with her wrapped up within his body.

As if the unspoken message of her ogling wasn't clear enough, she wiggled to set herself further back, pressing her bum into his crotch. He was sure she would be able to feel his growing erection, even through the padded clothing.

Reminding himself that he would not let her fall, he regained his focus on the broom, launching off the platform to fly again. He started in slow loops around the pitch, not far off the ground, if only to get a sense of her apprehension. Every time they talked about flying previously, she was so adamantly against it that he could hardly believe her present position.

They were flying at 10% of the broom's capability, not to mention Draco's skill. Years of seeker practice and preferring to fly as an auror kept him physically fit and proficient. The witch in front of him knew it, too. She leaned her head back, and spoke close into his ear.

He could feel her lips graze his earlobe as she chastised him. "You're holding back."

Happily, he took the dare, speeding up and lifting them further into the air. He bobbed and weaved through the goalposts, enjoying the bliss of a relaxing ride with a beautiful woman between his legs, but still only brave enough to take the broom to 50% of its potential.

She goaded him again, this time taking her hands off the broom and wrapping them up and around the nape of his neck. "More," she breathed into his ear.

The squeal that escaped her lips was all but drowned out by the wind roaring against his ears as they zoomed through the air. They reached new heights and speeds that he never dreamed possible and he took one arm off the broom to wrap around her waist, pulling her as tight as possible into his chest as they leaned down to reduce the draft. He barely caught the tilt of her head as she spied a golden gleam off in the distance, zipping along the grass.

Draco sent the broom into a straight dive after the snitch. The force of the dive pushed her body impossibly close within his own, and he knew that he would have a new memory for his patronus the second his free hand closed around the golden orb, pulling up the broom a split second before they landed intact on the ground.

He sprinted in tight circles on the pitch, releasing loud whoops from his chest, echoing into the empty arena. He smiled so broadly his wind burnt face would surely crack in two.

Hermione stood next to the hovering broom, in a matching joyous expression to his own, her nose and cheeks dusted a bright red. As soon as their eyes met, she ran over to him, jumping into his arms to be spun around as if he had just won the quidditch cup.

He kissed her deeply as legs wrapped around his waist. He wanted to taste her joy, to worship her for giving him the most perfect, unimaginable day. Nightmares long since forgotten, she tasted like honey and sin, and he wanted to lay her down on the pitch where he could devour her whole.

Just as she began to roll her hips into him, igniting his aching erection, a voice called out from the stands.

“Oi! Ferret! Time’s up loverboy. Witches with actual skill in flying need to practice.” Ginny hollered from the entrance to the locker room, red hair flying in the wind.

Feeling nearly as possessive over his new broom as the witch still wrapped around his body, he accio’d it into his hand, along with the beaded bag still hung over the stadium rail. Draco disappeared them off in a swirl of black mist, not bothering to put his wife down before setting the destination of their flat in his mind.

~

Draco dropped their things unceremoniously in the flat before continuing to kiss his wife, squeezing her arse in his hands to remind her to continue her rolling movements.

She acquiesced to his unspoken request, aided by his hands holding her tightly against his body. He teased the seam of her lips for entrance with his tongue, finding her willing, pushing and pulling for control over the kiss. The whine that came from her throat while they tasted each other sent vibrations down into his straining cock before she forcefully pushed herself off of him and held his face within her hands.

The sight of her red, kiss-swollen lips was intoxicating. She looked utterly debauched, and he only wanted more of her.

Not moving to remove her legs from around his waist, where he still stood in the middle of the flat, she pulled his face upwards to force eye contact. Typically amber irises were reduced to a sliver around blown pupils. “Draco. We need to talk.”

His heart sank. Draco set her down onto her own feet, desperately trying to compose himself in readiness for what she would tell him.

Hermione paced back and forth across the living room. Unlike her academic lecture, she was all nerves, wringing her hands as she walked. Reluctantly, Draco sat down on the couch, itching to touch her again. He only wanted to grab her by the wrist and pull her into his lap to reassure her, but she needed to get something off her chest. So, instead, he leaned back into the couch and waited for her to unload.

“Three months from now, when I return from the future, I’ll be different than you remember.”

Draco tried to remain calm in his response. “Different how Hermione?”

“Changed? Matured, I suppose? I was more certain of what I wanted out of life. You taught me a fair bit while I stayed with you.” A slight grin escaped her mouth as she looked at him. “I will be much more like the person I am today than the person you knew last week.”

He raised his eyebrow at her, unsure of what her point might be. The witch in front of him, who he spent the day with, was still very much the woman he married, but she had changed. She was much more carefree than his Granger. He loved them both, he realised, even if they weren’t the same.

“The thing is, it wasn’t just me who returned different. You were different, too.”

“I was different?” Draco uncomfortably shifted in his seat.

“Yes. Different... More, yourself, I would say.” She continued to pace.

“How am I not myself already, Hermione?”

“You’re afraid to show me your whole self, Draco. We’ve been excellent friends and partners until now, because that’s what you were willing to give me. But you never truly let me in. Nor was I capable of returning the intimacy, even if you did.” Hermione stopped pacing and stood before him, just out of his reach. “Most importantly, you are afraid that if you give in to what you want, it might take you back to the darkness, and I know how much you want to be good. For me.”

Moving to get off the sofa, he couldn’t engage in this conversation anymore. What she implied had no chance of being truthful. “Hermione, you have no idea what you are talking about.”

She pushed against his shoulder with her hand to stop him, stepping between his legs, her bare thigh grazing the inside of his knee. “You knew what you wanted. Knew what you wanted from me. You understood me. How to touch me, how to kiss me, how to make me yours.” She stared down at him, pulling her bottom lip into her teeth.

He wasn’t sure if she was going to continue, but he waited her out just in case, frozen in place on the sofa, terrified to touch her.

“I think you should know that what you want and what I want are the same thing.” Hermione brushed away the hair from his forehead, and picked up his hand in hers, placing it on her thigh, just under the hemline of her dress. “You’ve told me countless fantasies over the years, including the ones you had in school. I want you to know... I need you to know that those fantasies are what I want, too.”

Her thigh was warm and soft, and all he could think of was holding it in place so he could lean forward and put his teeth into her. In the place that he knew would be the softest. On the inside, right below her hip, close enough to her cunt that he would be able to smell her.

She wants the same things I want.

“Hermione.” Draco held his hand firmly in place, not moving a muscle. He kept his eyes on hers, imagining how she might taste as he licked his lips. “You are going to have to be very clear with me right now on what exactly you are talking about.”

Shifting to stand closer in between his knees, Hermione leaned down towards him until her lips skated his ear. Her hair fell forward and the rush of jasmine invaded his senses, closing his eyes to breathe her in. “Make me yours, Draco. Own me. Control me,” she whispered.

Draco let his hand drift upwards under her dress and firmly grasped her by the bare hip. She had vanished her knickers.

Gods, the woman would be the death of him.

His other hand swiftly wrapped around the back of her neck, fingers threading up into her hair.

He pulled her down into his lap and teased her mouth open with his tongue.

His forwardness unlocked something within her. She stopped being tentative and let go; her nerves dissipating into want.

Her hands ran through his hair and down to his chest, unbuttoning the top two buttons of his shirt as she ground down on his length through his trousers. He could feel her moisture through his pants as he rocked her hips in his tight grasp.

Desperately, he pulled her closer into the kiss, needing to taste more of her. Her chest pressed so tightly against his he could feel her breasts pushed up against him. Draco needed to see them again. Her rosy nipples and how they would tense up if he blew on them, what they would feel like between his teeth. He didn't appreciate them enough the first time he saw them. Didn't worship them the way they deserved.

He explored her mouth with his tongue, demanding control, hand moving up from her neck to hold a handful of hair at the base of her scalp, pulling it just enough so that her head tilted back to expose her neck.

Her throat exposed, he kissed the length of it, tasting every inch, nipping at her behind the ear. With the hand on her hip, he continued to rock her back and forth on his lap, ready to burst. He had thought about this moment, this feeling, a thousand times, and now he was finally getting it.

He moved his head further down to kiss her chest, spilling out of her dress. One of her shoulder straps fell off to expose the cluster of freckles that burned in his mind. He made sure to kiss those slowly, tenderly. He would kiss those freckles every day for the rest of his life if she let him.

"You love those freckles." Hermione laughed softly. "I've missed you, Draco."

"Tell me what you want, Hermione. I'll give you anything."

"This isn't about what I want. We can save that for another time. This is about what you want. What you need to take from me," she whispered into his mouth, holding his shoulders while she continued to grind her core against him.

His hands froze in place. She could never understand what he truly wanted. The desires he harboured were dark and twisted, and there was no way he could treat her in the way his shameful fantasies turned him on. "Hermione. I can't," he choked out, unwilling to voice his desires out loud.

"You can. Please take it from me, Draco. Pleasure. Release. Control. Whatever you want to call it is fine. And know that as much as you want to take. I want to give." Hermione slowly climbed off his lap and pulled him up to stand before her. "I trust you."

Putting both hands on his face, Hermione stared into his eyes knowingly, cradling his jaw, reassuring him with the lightest caress.

“Draco. I’m going to get on my knees now. Think about the fantasy you have about me in the potions lab and make it real. And before you say no, or deny that you want it, understand that I have given you this more times than I could ever count.”

He watched with fascination as she pulled at him to stand and slowly got down in front of him on one knee, then the other. Sitting back down on her heels, Hermione pulled the edge of her skirt up. If she shifted up just an inch further, he was sure he would see curls peeking out.

Draco groaned as she lifted her hands to slowly to open the placket of his pants, confidently reaching in to pull out his cock and set it free. He clenched his fists repeatedly at his sides in a poor attempt to restrain himself while his erection grew obvious.

Demurely, she looked up at him from beneath her eyelashes as she clasped her hands behind her back in what Draco was sure was slow motion. She was the picture of submission and beauty, wrapped up in a fucking sundress while he stood there like an idiot with his cock out.

She knows about the potions lab fantasy. I’ve never told a soul about that fantasy.

It was like she was a leglimens with what she knew about his darkest thoughts. The potions lab was a particular favourite of his, often revisited in the shower when the humidity reminded him of the warm dungeon classroom.

Still on her knees with her hands behind her back, Hermione stared up at him knowingly.

Waiting.

Waiting for him to initiate his darkest fantasy.

He tested the waters, putting both his hands into her hair and pulling her back abruptly, yanking her head up to look at him straight on. “Is this truly what you want, Hermione?”

A whimper escaped her throat as she jerked upwards. Draco couldn’t tell if the sound was one of pleasure or pain, though he hoped it was both if he was truthful with himself for once.

“No, Draco. It’s what I need. It’s what we both need.”

Her permission was his salvation. If this fantasy was truly what she needed, then who was he to deny her?

“Lick,” he ordered, lowering his voice and leaning forward to press the tip of his cock against her closed mouth.

She opened her mouth wide and stuck her tongue out but didn’t move to take him between her lips. Nor did she unclasp her hands from behind her back.

Draco grabbed his cock, squeezing it with one hand and smeared the tip of it up and down her tongue. She fidgeted on the ground and exhilaration ran through him as she shifted to rub

her thighs together.

She was enjoying this.

Her attempt to pleasure herself discreetly emboldened Draco, enabling him to take on the persona he did not think existed outside of his mind. “In the potions lab, you never get to come. Only me. And I’m assuming you know that. Come up off your heels and spread your legs while you are down there.” Draco ordered, pulling her up by her hair.

Hermione groaned, her eyes fluttering closed as she lifted off her heels and spread her knees on the hardwood floor. Her cheek grazed the side of his cock as she adjusted her stance.

Little tease likely did that on purpose.

“Now be a good wife and keep your mouth open while I take what’s mine. You are *mine*, aren’t you, wife?”

Hermione stayed still with her mouth open and tongue out.

“I asked you a question. Answer me, Hermione.”

A wide smirk burst across her face before she responded. “Yes, Daddy. I’m yours.”

Hearing *Daddy* fall out of her lips for the first time outside his imagination was like coming up for air. His cock was pained, and he knew he wouldn’t last long, not with her acting like this. Likely, she knew it too as she stuck her tongue back out of an open mouth and stared straight into his eyes, daring him to move.

He eased himself into her mouth with a tight fist and rested his aching erection on her tongue. It was everything he imagined it would be, warm, wet, and inviting, only feeling like more. Once settled in her mouth, Draco returned his hand to her hair, both hands now grasping onto her curls, moving them out of her face. He wanted to watch the witch bounce on his cock. But she didn’t move a muscle, sitting there motionless with a mouthful and eyeing him again knowingly.

It seemed that she knew every last detail about this fantasy.

With one thrust, he pushed into her waiting mouth until he felt the back of her throat at the tip of his length. A satisfied hum vibrated around his cock while he stayed there for a moment, lost in the feeling of her consuming him. But he needed more.

She must have sensed his hesitation, lifting her hands from behind her back to grab onto his own, still firmly in her hair. She gave them a single squeeze before returning them to behind her back.

It was all the approval he needed to clutch her hair tighter and push his length into her, down her throat, until he could feel her lips pressed against his body and used his grasp to move her head back and forth, sliding her mouth up and down his shaft. Tears streamed down her face, but she didn’t once break eye contact with him; she just kept staring with her all-knowing amber gaze as he fucked her throat.

He was going to die. He was going to die at this moment a happy man and never regret a single moment of his life.

His balls tightened against his body, and his movements of her head became erratic under his hands.

She knew about the fantasy.

She knew how he would want it to end.

“Keep your mouth open.” He growled as he pulled her off just in time. Ropes of cum shot over her open mouth and tongue as he stroked his release onto her. It dripped down the side of her lips, down her chin and onto her chest. She gasped for air, breasts heaving in her sundress.

She was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen, covered in tears and his spend.

Her hand drifted up, and a thumb slowly pushed a drop onto her tongue as she closed her mouth around the digit and sucked, eyes drifting closed and releasing the tiniest whimper.

Still kneeling, she waved her hand to cast a non-verbal scourgify, cleaning them both and gently tucked his cock back into his trousers, buttoning up the placket with care.

Her hand reached up, emerald ring glinting, to ask his assistance in standing, startling Draco back into his dark reality. “Hermione. I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to –” He dropped to his knees in front of her, clasping her small hands within his own.

She smiled seductively, looking wholly debauched. “Did you enjoy yourself... *Daddy?*”

“Yes... No... Don’t call me that. Why would you call me that.” His mind was at war with what just happened, guilt consuming him over how much he enjoyed it.

She kissed him softly before answering the question, wrapping her arms around his shoulders where they knelt together. “Because you always take care of me.”

The answer sunk deep into his bones, and he knew it to be true. Above anything else, he would always take care of her, protect her. “Tell me how to take care of you, Hermione. Tell me what you need.” His voice lowered to a whisper as he rested his forehead against her own, ashamed he didn’t already know the answer.

“I have everything I need right now, Draco. The rest will come in time, don’t worry. We have three months to spend together, during which you can learn everything that makes me happy. For now, I’d like to climb into bed with you and sleep if that’s alright. You can learn about aftercare and I could do without the nightmares.”

Draco pulled her in closely and kissed the top of her head. He lingered there, losing himself in her scent.

“Of course, Hermione. Anything. Anything at all.”

Lowering his hands further down her back and grasping her arse, Draco lifted his wife into his arms. He picked her up, kissing her gently into the bedroom, and set her down to sit on the edge of his bed before slowly backing away.

Perched atop the cream sheets, she peeled her dress off over her head and tossed it on the floor, climbing into bed naked. He only briefly saw her full breasts before she tucked herself into the sheets and crooked her finger at him sleepily. “Come on, Draco, I’ve already seen everything, and it’s only sleep. Come to bed and hold me, please.”

Feeling increasingly guilty that he didn’t reciprocate her efforts, Draco pulled off his clothes and climbed into the bed behind her, pressing his chest against her back and held her tightly. He let his hand drift lower into the soft thatch of curls before she grabbed him by the wrist.

“Sleep now, Draco.” She whispered, moving his hand up to hold her breast.

Kissing her softly on the temple, Draco could see she already fell asleep, her breathing slowed to a soft snore. Likely exhausted from the previous evening’s nightmares and the day’s activities, he couldn’t blame her.

He drifted off after her into his most peaceful sleep in years.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested listening: *Woman* by Doja Cat

MOTHER! Get it you slag.

**TW/CW/New Tags: Dubious consent, rough oral sex, Daddy!Draco

February 27, 2019

Chapter Notes

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

February 27, 2019

Hermione settled into her familiar routine after two weeks in the future. She and Malfoy danced cautiously around each other morning and night, preparing breakfasts, reading before bed, and collaborating on an array of cursed items through their paired notebooks.

The Nott vault overflowed with hideous treasures, dark magic rolling off them like a low, ominous fog. Theo must have been busy clearing out his other properties. The items would keep her occupied for at least six months, not that she would be here for that long.

Hermione's bracelet shimmered as she waved her wand to uncurse an onyx brooch, the last of the items in the vault's jewellery case.

It was only late afternoon by the time she finished, enough time to visit the spiderwood cabinet, now in the Malfoy vault, before returning home. A meddlesome older Hermione apparently saved it from the Ministry's restitution claims, unlike the rest of the Lestrange vault items, for a reason Hermione didn't even want to consider.

The cabinet had not changed. Its large looming form mocked her with each diagnostic she cast. There were no longer any curses on the enormous monstrosity.

The only thing that had changed about the cabinet since she was ungracefully launched from it two weeks ago was a small silver padlock that appeared on the door handles, effectively sealing it shut.

Like the cabinet, the lock was free of dark magic. Hermione hypothesised that the cabinet fueled the lock's magic; its blue veins pulsed towards the lock with every spell she cast. The only clue she was provided was a faint inscription etched upon the back of the lock in neat cursive writing.

Unos Erit Duo

Her Latin was rusty, but a second-year could translate that phrase.

One becomes two.

She was sure it referred to the cabinet not having a true mate, a reference to it being paired with itself in another time. But unlocking the cabinet would be her ticket home, and a simple *alohamora* didn't even rattle the tumblers.

She needed to get back to her books.

~

Hermione entered the flat, settled by the warmth of the familiar wards. She set her outer robes on the hook, surprised to find Malfoy's already there. There would be no time for secret lock research today.

"Malfoy?" She called into the flat.

He strode out of his bedroom, clutching a rolled parchment: "Mother has summoned us for dinner."

Hermione's heart sank. Narcissa was an intimidating figure in her own time, and while Hermione had sat down to a few dinners at the Manor, none of them could be described as friendly.

The older witch watched her closely, asking penetrative questions about her intentions with her son. Hermione always felt as if she were trying to measure up to some undefined, impossible expectations, with Malfoy running interference to varying degrees of success.

"Oh? Both of us, then?"

"Yes. And she knows about you, whether that makes you feel better or worse about the evening."

"Alright, just let me get changed, and we can go." Hermione paced off to her bedroom to find something suitable to wear. At least her new wardrobe would steel her for battle.

Emboldened by their exchange after the night at Pansy and Neville's, Hermione continued to leave the door ajar to her room each night as she changed into her sleep clothes, now a fully stocked drawer of his T-shirts and boxers.

At first, it felt daring. Nervous excitement sent her bouncing on tip-toes while she threw the clothes on hastily.

His seat in the living room lay in direct eyesight of her door. A finger neatly held his place in the book as he watched her with darkened eyes, not moving from his seat.

But as time passed, she took a little more time in her new routine. Aflame with the thought of him watching her in bra and knickers, Hermione would bend over to feign a futile search through the dresser drawer or reach her arms up to pile curls atop her head, pushing out her chest, grateful for older Hermione's taste in bras. She didn't have an end game in mind, but the rush of feeling his eyes on her turned addictive.

With a flip through the unfamiliar items in her closet, Hermione searched for clothes worthy of a dinner at the Manor, and a surge of bravery ran through her. Curious if he had ever touched the same dark green lace she wore, Hermione traced the edge of her bra before unclasping it and throwing it to the floor. She tossed a chiffon dress onto the bed where she could change in full view of the doorway, first putting on a pair of tall, red-bottomed, nude pumps.

Hermione covered her breasts with her forearm before exiting the large closet, heels clicking across the hardwood. She secretly hoped the noise would catch Malfoy's attention, but it was unnecessary. He was already leaning in the doorway, eyes locked on her body, jaw rolling with tension.

"I didn't hear you there," she lied.

"Would you prefer I leave?"

She hesitated, pulling her breasts tighter into her body. "No."

He took a long step into the room, past the barrier and stood before her. Even with her heels on, he still stood a foot taller, towering above her.

"May I?" He asked, reaching towards her wrist, eyes molten with desire.

Tentatively, Hermione nodded and untensed the limb she used as a shield. He grasped her forearm and pulled it up to place a soft kiss against her palm; his breath warmed her wrist as a sigh of satisfaction exited his lips.

Her nipples pebbled as he pulled her arm outwards, exposing her nakedness and putting her breasts on display. Wetness took over her green silk knickers; she was sure he would be able to see them darken as his eyes raked down her body.

"Those are my favourite shoes," he murmured, his gaze reaching the floor.

Hermione wasn't used to wearing them; they left her feeling unbalanced and vulnerable. But the way Malfoy looked down at her with hooded eyes made her think these particular heels weren't meant for walking.

His free hand skated up her side to rest at her ribcage, spanning from her front to her back. A flutter shot through her core as he raised his thumb to the underside of her breast, the edge of his nail brushing past the outside of her nipple.

The whimper she could no longer hold back barely escaped her body before he consumed it with his mouth.

They kissed frantically, searching for tongues, nipping at each other's lips. His hands wrapped around her back, pressing her nearly naked body further into his own. The coarse material of his oxford scratched against her skin as she melded deeper into him, desperate to find friction.

"Fucking hell, baby," he growled into her mouth, scooping her into his arms and kneading her arse with his hands. She hardly noticed the back of her head hit the wall as he slammed her against it, never ceasing their kiss.

Dark want unleashed within her, hearing him call her *baby*. She rolled her hips downward to slot his hard length against her core as her knickers dampened even more; surely they were ruined by now.

With a rumbling groan, he met her intentions, rolling his hips back into her, allowing the underside of his cock to provide much-needed friction against her clit. He peppered her jaw with kisses before moving his open mouth to drag down her neck and a playful bite to the spot behind her ear sent her limp with pleasure, yearning for more.

It was as if the man had a map of her body and knew the exact balance between affection and forcefulness that made Hermione forget her name.

“We’re going to be late.” He breathed into her neck, scratching his stubble against her before ceasing all movement, leaving her wanting.

Her feet stumbled as he set her down and walked away, not looking back, boots clicking all the way to the floo.

She was a heaving, naked mess. Lips swollen from their kissing, her core ached for release. She would have to change her knickers before they left; the ones she had on were decidedly soaked.

The sound of him calling her *baby* echoed along her skin, making her feverish with want. Never before had Hermione become so aroused by another person’s simple words, much less their touch.

How could he get her that worked up, simply to walk away?

~

“Hermione, darling! How wonderful to see you!” Narcissa greeted them at the floo, arms outstretched, awaiting a hug from them both.

Hermione was deeply flustered from scrambling to get dressed only five minutes previous. But Malfoy rushed them through the floo as soon as she emerged dressed and ready to go from her bedroom. She was only thankful she exchanged the tall heels for ballet flats before leaving. There was no way she could wear the heels further into the night, knowing the way he eyed them earlier. His sly grin mocked her as he held his hand out to escort them through the blue flames.

“Ready, baby?”

She was still off-kilter as they greeted Narcissa, entirely unsure what to make of her suddenly friendly mother-in-law.

Malfoy must have sensed her discomfort at the situation and moved to hug his mother, manoeuvring her to walk towards the dining room ahead of Hermione.

“Mother,” Draco said loud enough for both women to hear, “Hermione doesn’t remember you like this. Please give her a minute to adjust.”

Narcissa tutted her son, taking Hermiones' arm in her own. “We will be fine my dragon.” She waved him off to lead the way to the dining room, slowing her pace with Hermione in hand.

“I’ve been very excited about your arrival,” she whispered down into Hermione’s ear. “Tell me, do I look much older?”

“Mrs. Malfoy –”

“Narcissa, please, it’s been years since you’ve called me that.”

Hermione adjusted uncomfortably. She was curious about what could have possibly occurred to make her mother-in-law so... familial. “Narcissa, then. You haven’t aged a day.”

The older witch had a few extra white hairs tightly wrapped in her elegant chignon, but time had been kind to her. Dressed in a beautifully embroidered navy blue set of robes, she was as regal and threatening as ever.

“You flatter me, darling.”

“Mrs. Mal– Narcissa, Can I ask when you and I–?” Hermione couldn’t quite find the words to ask her question.

“Began to get along? Well, you put me in my place rather well about fifteen years ago,” she said with a wink. “Plus, giving me a grandchild certainly didn’t hurt. You are one of my own now, sweet girl. You can ask Draco what I do for those I love.”

Her future self had meddled, Hermione thought, almost thankfully.

“And it didn’t bother you that Virgo was a half-blood?”

While Hermione had known Draco’s stance on the issue long ago, she never once asked his mother. It hardly seemed like polite dinner conversation, and Hermione was always keen to end their dinners at speed. But the Sacred 28 were notorious for harbouring their blood purity nonsense after the war, and one could never tell who was truly *reformed*.

“Not in the least. My grandchild is the light of my life. My son is happy. You are the best thing that has happened to the Malfoy name in a long time.” Narcissa paused their long journey through the halls to smile at her sincerely. “Now come, let’s eat. Mipsy is dying to see you.”

The little elf bounced from foot to foot in the dining room as they arrived, clad in red and white sneakers that said *SUPREME* on the back in large abrasive font. Hermione never understood Mipsy’s taste but made a mental note to pick her up a few pairs the next time she was shopping.

“Mistress!” Mipsy ran over to jump into Hermione’s arms. She crouched down just in time to catch the elf mid-flight. “Mipsy is so glad to see you; she’s even made your favourite dinner.”

Narcissa wrinkled her nose. “Yes, thank you, Mipsy. Nothing says formal dinner like spaghetti and meatballs.”

Hermione laughed at the exchange, glad to be distracted from the emotional roller coaster of the previous half hour. Mipsy had obviously won the battle on the evening’s menu. She was

thankful for it, too. The less formal the meal with her mother-in-law, the less pressure she might feel over the whole event.

Once seated at the dinner table, Narcissa began her usual inquiry of their lives. The woman thrived on information and collected it with ease, and the pureblood etiquette of hosting conversations was only one of her impressive skills.

Malfoy evaded some questions, eyeing Hermione across the table as he skated around answers she wasn't allowed to know.

The questions continued, eventually moving through each of their friends. "And Astoria? How is she feeling these days?"

"Mother."

"Draco, the poor girl is dying. I'd like to know how she is doing."

"Mother!"

"She's dying?" Hermione dropped her fork. Food turned to ash in her mouth. "I knew she was ill, but dying?!"

"You knew?"

"She had about a dozen glamours on Malfoy. It was obvious." Her eyes burned with tears, and her throat tightened around a sob threatening to escape.

He placed his fork and knife down silently and dabbed a napkin to his mouth. "She has a blood curse, Hermione." He turned to glare at his mother, looking regretful for exposing someone's secret. "And she was adamant that you did not find out about it."

"I'm terribly sorry, darlings. I overstepped," Narcissa said, setting her napkin on her still-full plate.

Malfoy waved his mother off in irritation, keeping a concerned eye on Hermione. "Yes, Mother. What's done is done now."

"There must be a solution," she implored them both. "Hermione, I could obliviate you with your consent?"

"No!" Hermione and Malfoy shouted back in unison.

Narcissa nodded curtly, acquiescing the conversation to her son.

"The blood curse was triggered after the birth of their child. It has run in the Greengrass family for generations, affecting women at random."

"Oh, gods. Daphne?" Worry coarsed through Hermione's chest.

"No, Daphne doesn't have it."

Hermione sighed in relief for her friend, feeling guilty she had forgotten about Astoria for a split second. “How long has Astoria been ill then? What have you tried so far?”

His mouth twitched downwards into a frown. “Blaise and Daphne have taken extraordinary care of her. But about a year ago, she became very ill. Her illness was triggered by the birth of —” he paused, almost exposing a name, “they did the best they could with what they knew from the Greengrass archives and new advancements in healing. But there isn't a cure. She's dying, Hermione.”

Spines of reference books that spanned Hermione's small bedroom library raced through her mind. There were endless possibilities of what kind of blood curse Astoria suffered from, and Hermione would need to break the work into manageable chunks. First, identification, then a combination of potions and curse work to find a cure. “I need to go back,” she whispered, standing from her chair.

Malfoy stood from his chair, his face etched with concern, “You can't, my love. You can't change the future.”

“That's bullshit, Malfoy. I can fix this,” her voice escalated, tears escaping her eyes, “I can warn her, warn Blaise! I can work with Daphne. I can fix this!”

“Hermione. She is dying. She is at peace with it. We all need to support her now.”

She couldn't believe what she was hearing. His blind acceptance of one of their oldest friends dying infuriated her. “I will not be supporting this Malfoy. I'm going back.”

With a throw of her napkin into the half-eaten dinner, Hermione stormed out of the dining room. Tears streamed freely down her face as she ran as fast as her legs would carry her through the hallway and towards the floo. She didn't turn back as he called her name.

Nothing he could possibly say would be enough.

“*Gringotts!*” She yelled into the flames.

~

Malfoy found her sobbing hours later, leaning against the cabinet within the vault.

She had tried everything to open the padlock: severing charms, freezing charms, and a few of the nastier blasting charms from her repertoire. At the realisation that none of her spells had any effect, Hermione conjured a large muggle hammer and poured every ounce of rage into beating the thing off the cabinet. But it was useless. The lock looked like someone had recently polished it, without a scratch evidenced by Hermione's rage.

“I need to go back, Malfoy.” She cried into his shoulder as he sat down next to her, tears dampening his knit sweater, “I need to save her.”

He responded softly, “It's not time for you to go back yet.”

“You can’t keep saying that. Just because you believe in fate, or predestination, or whatever, doesn’t mean I have to. I can save her.”

“I’m so sorry, Hermione. You can’t.”

She hung her head between her knees, wrung out from the rage and sadness that consumed her.

“Did you already know about the lock?” He asked quietly.

She considered lying, but what use would that be? He knew about everything. “I’ve been trying to go home every day.”

“Without telling me?”

“Did you know? Is this another one of those fucking things that you just know about and wait for me to figure out, like some sort of idiot?”

“This one I actually did not know.” He leaned his head back against the cabinet, closing his eyes. “You probably kept it a secret, knowing how much it would hurt me.”

“Malfoy... I”

“It’s fine, Hermione. I should have known you would be trying to leave. Since when have you blindly trusted anything anyone has said to you.” He pushed himself off the cabinet, brushing an invisible piece of lint from his trousers as he stood.

Hermione’s face ached from crying; she didn’t have the energy to explain herself further. “It’s not that I don’t enjoy spending time with you! I just... This isn’t right, Malfoy. I should be in my own time.”

“You are exactly where you need to be. With me.”

“You’re not my husband!”

She regretted the words as soon as they left her, but he didn’t seem hurt. His face only drew concerned, radiating compassion as he offered his hand to help her to stand.

“Maybe not. But I could be. If you would only let me.”

Hermione stared at his outstretched hand. The sight of it was so familiar, reminding her of their many trips into the mines together, squeezed together in the rail car for an eternal eight minutes before he attempted to assist her to the platform. But she never once accepted it. She was determined to do everything by herself, and she didn’t need his help.

She reached out to place her hand in his, allowing him to pull her up to stand.

Surprisingly, it didn’t feel like help.

It felt like home.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Life Worth Living* by Laurel

Sorry, Astoria. Nothing personal, but you're a good plot point.

*** Extended Commentary on Song Choice ***

This is another selection that I listened to on repeat while writing this whole fic, getting myself in older Draco's head. Here is the lyric that stuck with me:

*Even though you're not shy
It's not the first you've got me high on expectations
You've got a thing for letting me down
Not always around when I want you to stay with me
Make me feel better
There's no other day when I'm not thinking of you
The day you think of me, times I'm feeling better
It's your love, it's your game*

There's clearly so much that Hermione didn't tell him about her visit to the future, after she returned, in the interest of keeping the mystery between them. But there is a deeper layer, too; there are things she didn't tell him to save him from pain. And by doing so, she inadvertently took away bits of his control. So when young Hermione (who he is in love with) tries to run... how is he supposed to respond?

The reaction he had towards her is certainly not the same reaction he would have to his wife of fifteen years.

February 15, 2004

Chapter Notes

CW/TW: Implied Sexual Assault. If this is not something you need to read, skip the flashback to Hogwarts shown in italics. A TLDR version is included in the end notes.

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

February 15, 2004

A shift in the usually empty bed woke a satisfied Draco. Dreams of flying with Hermione pressed between his thighs, a welcome reprieve from his usual nightmares. His naked wife wriggled in her sleep to wrap her body more tightly around his, and their legs tangled as she settled her head on his chest, her mess of curls draped across his shoulder.

It was all he could do not to lift the edge of the sheet and take in her bare form pressed firmly against him, but after her refusal to be satisfied the night before, he did not want to overstep any yet unspoken boundaries.

Instead, he closed his eyes, surrounded by the calming jasmine scent that washed over him, and mentally catalogued the satisfied noises she made while she slept peacefully.

Some twenty minutes later, long after his morning erection began to ache, she stirred awake. Draco could feel a taut nipple brush against his skin while she stretched her arms above her head, and a quiet moan vibrated from her chest. Curls pooled over his chest as she lifted her head and wiped the back of her hand against the small amount of drool that had escaped her lip. A drowsy smile played on her face as their eyes met.

She didn't have nightmares either. Draco thought with pride.

He tucked his chin down to greet her, "good morning," his voice gravelled with sleep.

Draco laughed to himself at the sight of her. Her hair was a disaster, at least twice the size from the night before. Reminiscent of the bushy mane she had yet to gain control over in third year, he thought fondly. A web of creases formed on her cheek from where she had slept against him.

Regardless of time, she would always be the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

"Good morning, Daddy," she purred up at him. A single fingernail raked down his bare chest, its path abruptly ending just above his navel. The sensation sent shivers further down his abdomen, straight to his already hard cock. He stretched his legs further to absorb the tingling that skated his thighs.

With a flick of her hand, his mouth felt minty and refreshed as she pressed her lips firmly against his. Draco wanted to ask her when she had learned wandless magic but now was not the time.

He leaned into her kiss with enough force that he rolled them over, desperate to feel her petite form beneath his own. Their tongues danced together lazily, and her hands drifted up his chest to settle at the base of his neck. Wetness coated the tip of his cock as he let it slide between her, wordlessly asking permission to enter.

Overwhelmed by the need to have her entirely within his control, Draco stole both her hands in one of his, pulling them upwards to hold her wrists above her head. Her back arched in acceptance, breasts grazing up against his chest.

Hermione whimpered underneath him as her lips froze. With a tuck of her chin, she broke off their kiss and wriggled her hands free to set her palms firmly against his bare chest, pressing him upwards. "Not yet," she whispered, sounding regretful. "We should talk first... Clothed."

Another groan was all he could respond with as he set his forehead down on her bare chest. A mistake he realised too late, his mouth a hair's breadth away from a pebbled nipple, taunting him.

She wriggled free, rolled out from underneath him with a huff, and sat on the edge of the bed. A glimpse of the top of her arse peeking over the sheet she twisted around herself had his cock straining with pain into the mattress.

"I'm going to shower in my room. We can talk over breakfast."

The mattress lifted slightly as she hopped off and walked away, sheets trailing behind her, leaving him frustrated and naked, his arse exposed to the cool air. Resigning himself to a shower and the company of his fist, he buried his face in the bed with a final groan.

~

By the time Draco eventually exited his room, he was decidedly less than satisfied. Hermione had already set the table with tea and toast, and she sipped her coffee delicately, one denim-clad leg perched on the other, her free foot tapping the air. Her fingers twirled a scroll that sat atop a small pile of books.

In a failed attempt to release the last of his pent-up frustration, Draco released a heavy sigh before setting across the flat to meet her at the table.

"You look refreshed." She shone up at him as he greeted her with a respectful kiss against her forehead. Her coffee cup gestured towards the light breakfast. "I made your toast."

He didn't feel refreshed. The scroll and texts loomed under her hand.

No sexual gratification ever came from homework, at least not any assignments he had ever completed.

"You wanted to talk?" He asked, not taking his eyes from the stack.

She casually sipped her coffee before responding, “Yes. That would be the healthy thing for us to do before this goes any further.”

While the statement was ominous, nothing about her expression was threatening, Draco thought, tearing his stare away from the stack of books to look at her. She was hesitant, but the smile that graced her lips was one of contentment.

“It’s time to talk about your... urges.”

Toast lodged in his throat. She sounded like his mother, lecturing him before the yule ball on the implications of not knowing how to cast a contraceptive charm. Draco banged his fist on the table to dislodge the food, glaring back at his wife, who did not seem at all concerned about his current predicament.

A conjured glass of water appeared in front of him with a lazy wave of her hand. He took large gulps, setting the glass down firmly on the table as he breathed air again. Regaining his composure, he repeated the awful word back at her.

“*Urges.*”

“Yes, Draco. Urges. The things you would like to do to me... sorry.” She sat upright in her chair, setting her agitated foot down to the floor. “The things you would like to do *with* me. The urges you falsely believe make you a terrible person.”

The scroll continued to twirl in her fingertips as she stared at him, penetrating amber eyes locked on his face. “You seem to have created a false correlation in your brain that wanting these things is somehow intertwined with your status as an ex-death eater.” She glanced briefly at his covered forearm.

Draco tucked his marred arm underneath the table to rest on his lap and stroked the sleeve that covered it, feeling the itch of wool against the dark tattoo. “This has nothing to do with me being a death eater.” He sneered at her.

“Ex-death eater,” she corrected, her voice lowered.

A slam shook the table and rattled his teacup as he brought his forearm down upon the solid wood, yanking back his sleeve. The mark had faded over the years but was still just as repulsive as the day he received it.

The day his father had forsaken him.

“I will always be a fucking death eater, Granger,” he shouted. “All the pretending in the world, prancing around as an auror every day, chumming it up with the chosen one, nothing I do will ever change the fact that *I. Am. A. Death. Eater.*”

In an instant, he regretted the tone he lashed out with. But she would never understand the evil he witnessed, how seductive it felt to have dark magic coursing through your veins.

“Not to me. Not to your friends.” She shook her head while speaking calmly, not rising to meet his ire. “You were a child. And you served your time, turned your life into something

light instead of dark. Everyone else has forgiven you, Draco. It's time you forgive yourself."

He rolled his sleeve back down to cover the mark, palm pressed against his forearm to relieve the burning itch. "Hermione, nothing is healthy about what I want to do to you. If you knew the twisted state of my mind... how I dream of you. There is no way on earth you would want to be with me. I'm sick."

Tears rolled silently from her eyes at his admission, and his heart lurched. He wanted to wipe them away, take her into his arms and promise to bury it down all if she would stay, but he was frozen in fear of the truth—that he could not bury it any longer.

"You are not sick, Draco." She wiped her tears with a shirtsleeve and set her fist on the table. "Yesterday, when we were together, what was the difference in how you felt on the broom with me versus what we did," she waved her arm at the living room, "here."

Their date had been one of the most incredible days of his life. It was elation. Feeling her pressed between his thighs high in the air and the look on her face while she took his cock into her mouth, it was all the things he had ever wished for.

But the aftermath was like drowning. The remorse he felt over his actions had been unbearable.

"Guilt. The difference was guilt." Draco stared blankly at the spot she knelt on the floor for him, remorse churning in his gut. "I should not have done that to you, Hermione, and I am so sorry. I promise it will never happen again. I can control it. Please, let me control it."

"No, Draco. I won't stand by and let you warp this in your mind any longer. Both experiences provided you with a sense of euphoria. I saw it all over your face. You only felt the guilt once you finished." She pushed the stack of books across the table, keeping the scroll tightly within her fingers. "Which is something that will get better once you learn about aftercare."

He stared at the stack of books on the table, not understanding what she was implying.

"Go read Draco. Educate yourself on what comprises a healthy dominant and submissive relationship. Stop hiding from what you want and learn to accept it." She pushed the stack towards him with a single finger. "Once you are finished reading, write down a list of things you would be interested in exploring with me."

Draco shuffled the books in his hand. The titles flashed before him: *Dominant Wizards*, *Please Sir*, and *Conjuring Care*. He had heard of dominants before, but that wasn't what he was. The dark mark had activated a desire to take, to own, and Hermione was just the unfortunate witch he was already obsessed with. "Hermione, I am not —"

"You are Draco. And I'm a submissive. A fairly good one, too, if you would let me, barring the occasional bratty moment." She winked and got up from her chair to leave the flat, pausing at the front door, waving the scroll between her fingers at him. "Once I see your list, you can see mine."

The door closed behind her with a click.

Draco only let a minute pass before he tossed the the books back down on the table and set off through the floo.

~

Draco barely poured a glass of fire whiskey after he arrived through the floo, before Ginny Weasley barreled through the doors of the study.

“Ferret,” she drawled. “Ever hear of calling first?”

In his rush to leave his flat, he didn’t even consider that Theo might not have been home. But the four walls closed in upon him the moment Hermione shut the door, and he needed to escape. “Where is Theo?” Draco asked.

Ginny strolled forward, snatching the glass of fire whiskey out of Draco’s hand for herself, taking a large drink. “Upstairs,” she retorted sharply, “he’ll be down shortly.”

He raised an eyebrow at the redhead, glancing behind her at the changed manor study. It was decorated differently than the last time he visited. Hollyhead Harpies memorabilia littered the space, and an antique broom was mounted over the fireplace.

“Weaselette. Do you live here?”

“Yes.”

“And you are both –”

“Yes.”

“I see.” Draco nodded. “Is Theo -”

“Yes.”

“You had no idea what I was about to ask.”

With a shrug of her shoulders, Ginny replied, “It doesn’t matter. Theo and I are together now.”

“And do I need to give you the talk about what I will do to you if you hurt my brother?”

“No.” She waved him off. A smile met the last sip of her stolen drink just as Theo rolled through the study door, tucking in his shirt.

“Brother!” Theo exclaimed, both hands in the air before he strode over to clap a hand against his shoulder. “What brings you by? In trouble with the old lady already?”

Ginny chuckled from the bar cart, where she poured two additional firewhiskeys.

“Don’t call her that.” He regretted coming over to Nott Manor. Blaise would have been an immeasurably better choice for this conversation, he thought, in hindsight.

Theo plopped down on the sofa, raising both arms briefly in surrender before resting them outwards. Handing Draco a fresh drink, Ginny sat on the sofa next to her husband, nestling underneath his arm. She wiggled in to get closer, ignoring Draco's confused glare at the couple.

The look of joy on his best friend's face, looking down upon his wife, startled Draco into a long-forgotten memory from seventh year.

The Weaslette burst through the large doors of the great hall, as usual, late for the meal by at least twenty minutes. Her red hair had streamed behind her, crackling with rage, and she only looked more fearsome with the greenish bruise that snaked around her throat and up her face.

Amycus had been particularly violent with her that week, it seemed. She likely took another younger child's punishment yet again. Draco never knew what went on atop the stairwell of the repurposed headmaster's office, he had long been relegated to menial tasks for his failure in the astronomy tower.

A stream of first and second-year Gryffindors trailed behind her. They followed her as if she were their mother duck, poised to snap at any stray fox that dared come her way. Draco wondered if ducks too were known to be vengeful, unforgiving creatures, unafraid to hex anything that walked. She escorted the frightened children to the Gryffindor table, and only once they were all safely tucked in did she flip a two-finger salute to the collection of professors at the head table.

Her gaze moved to the Slytherin crowd for a split second as she sat down. Draco would never have seen it if he hadn't been watching her so intently.

She rapidly scanned the table, the look of unbridled rage leaving her face only as her eyes found Theo, uncharacteristically jovial, eating his pudding.

"When did the two of you get together?" Draco asked, suddenly curious about their history. He knew they had slept together on and off through the years, but Theo always gave him the impression it was a casual encounter—convenient more than anything else.

"October," they replied in unison.

Draco snorted at the rehearsed answer. "October of which year, assholes."

The redhead brushed her husband's thigh and stood from the couch, briefly spinning around to kiss him on the temple. "Theodore. Tell your friend," she said calmly before nodding at Draco and sauntering out of the room.

"We have different versions of the beginning," Theo said into his drink. "Put all the steps out of order. Though her being *on a break* with Potter during seventh year didn't help anything." He threw air quotes lazily up into the air at the expression.

"After the Carrows... She needed time. Protecting everyone came with a price she shouldn't have been responsible for paying, and she needed to be free. Ginny needed time without

having anyone rely on her, including me. Enough time to put behind her what happened there.” Resting back into the sofa, Theo continued. “I set her free, Draco. And I prayed to any god that would listen to return her to me.”

Draco couldn’t believe the confession, nor his obliviousness during their seventh year. “And Amycus?”

“Money can do many things, brother, including a private visit to Azkaban.”

“The prophet said he died of malnutrition. A hunger strike.”

“He didn’t deserve to live.”

Draco’s forearm itched under his oxford. But he refused to scratch it in front of Theo. Not when Amycus Carrow bore the same mark. “I’m sorry, Theo. I would have helped you. You know I would have helped you.”

“You were on house arrest; I wasn’t going to risk you ending up in Azkaban, too. Plus, I needed to do it alone. But thank you, all the same.” Theo nodded sharply, ending the discussion of Amycus, “As for Gin and I… Eventually, we ran into each other at a pub one night a couple of years ago. I was out on a doomed date with Tracy Davis, and one thing led to another, and we all went home together. It sort of became our thing, crashing one another’s dates now and then. And if that was all she was capable of giving me, then so be it.”

“Until the marriage law.” Draco understood now, leaning in.

“Until the marriage law,” Theo agreed. “The thought of her marrying anyone else, even if it was only temporary; it broke me. What if they fell in love? What if he was terrible to her? I couldn’t risk it, Draco. So Cissy –”

“Did what she does best. She pulled on her puppet strings.”

Draco’s mother was calculating in everything she did, never willing to risk one win for another. Unless the manoeuvre affected her children.

After the death of Theo’s mother, Narcissa practically raised him, hiding the boys away from both of their fathers as best as she was able. She was the only safe adult in both their lives for years.

Draco waved at the redecorated study. “And now, Theo?”

“We’re working through it together.” Theo brought his hand to rub the back of his neck. “I’m not sure that either of us will ever be whole, but we’ve decided to move forward and be with each other. Whatever that means.”

Guilt surrounded Draco. He had failed everyone he loved. “You could have told me.”

“Right. While you were barely hanging onto your own sanity with that cabinet and a doomed mission to kill Dumbledore, I was going to ask for your help on my illicit love affair with the

youngest blood-traitor Weasley.” Theo rolled the ice around in his empty glass. “It was never really my story to tell anyway.”

Draco nodded. “Can I at least get you a wedding present? Considering you’re a happy couple now?”

A broad smile broke out across Theo’s face. “You give my wife whatever fucking broom she saw you riding yesterday, and we’ll call it even. She hasn’t shut up about it since she came home from practice.”

“Done,” Draco agreed. “She’ll have to keep it at the manor, though. It’s not exactly regulation, considering *when* it came from.”

Theo slapped his legs soundly, ending the conversation. “Now. We’ve talked about my wife. Time to talk about yours.”

“Hermione says I’m a dominant.”

“Ah fuck.”

~

Stepping through his floo hours later, Draco was resoundingly drunk.

He and Theo talked for hours about their fathers. If they were destined to become them, or if history would repeat itself endlessly through their cursed family names. The more they uncovered about the long list of offences their fathers committed, the more they needed to drink.

It was cathartic.

Unlike Draco and Theo, none of Lucius’ or Theodore Sr.’s unsavoury actions were ever centred on justice or protecting another. They were maniacal psychopaths who found joy in committing their heinous acts and were entertained by darkness.

One bottle of 200-year-old fire whiskey between them and a conclusion was forged.

They would begin their houses anew.

The flat was conspicuously quiet as Draco stumbled through to his rooms, and thinking back to the morning, Hermione never mentioned where she was going. He had no idea where his wife was.

He pulled out the familiar two-way notebook and briefly wondered how the Hermione he usually wrote to in the book was faring. Rereading pages of their old notes together, Draco realised he missed *his* Hermione.

It was easier with her, they reached an easy state in their relationship, an understanding.

It was ironic, Draco thought with a snort, that in hindsight, perhaps they did not understand each other at all.

A golden glow emanated from the well-used book, and Draco fanned back to the incoming message.

Out shopping with Astoria. Will get dinner on my way home.

-H

Draco checked his watch. It would likely be another three hours until the witch arrived home—enough time to sober up and make himself look respectable. Thankful that Mipsy always kept their stores well stocked, Draco rummaged through the basket of vials in his bathroom and knocked back a sober-up potion the moment he spied the light purple hue. Sensation came back to his body in an instant, and his head cleared of muddy thoughts.

With a wave of his wand, Draco summoned Hermione's favourite worn quilt from her room. He did not want to test whether the barrier would let him through today; ambiguity a superior option to being denied entrance. Setting onto the couch in his usual evening reading spot, quilt rested atop his legs, Draco began to read one of the books Hermione had left.

A dominant wizard (or witch) may be motivated to express their desires through dominance for a multitude of reasons. Some dominants appreciate a sense of control over their partner or partners, enjoying an exchange of power. Others enjoy inflicting pain, which can be mutually enjoyable in an informed, consensual relationship.

Dominant and submissive relationships may be limited to sexual scenes or expand into daily life. Preferences and limits can be documented for ease and clarity, or scenes may simply be discussed beforehand. Safewords are strongly encouraged for all activities.

Ultimately, both the dominant and the submissive have a duty of care to each other. Trust, respect and open communication are fundamental to fostering a healthy and satisfying relationship for all involved.

A duty of care.

Draco had felt this way towards Hermione for months. The scroll with his wedding vows, tucked away safely in his closet, was proof of that. Thoughts of her safety consumed him, and her tendency to forget to eat sent him to madness.

But he wanted to own and control her for much longer than that. His fantasies didn't include discussed limits or safewords. They were simply experiences he could let his mind wander to when he needed to unwind.

None of his previous sexual relationships had ever been satisfying, limited to one or two night stands with simpering witches that were only attracted to the Malfoy name. He had only ever pursued them as a distraction, never able to pull his mind away from fantasies of Hermione long enough to enjoy them. And he had certainly never dominated a witch. It was always transactional to him.

Draco fanned open the first book again, his chest filled with hope that he was simply missing a piece of the puzzle.

~

The scent of curried chips announced Hermione's arrival home before she entered the door. Her nose glowed red from the cold winter air, and curls fought to escape the red knit hat atop her head.

Packages and boxes littered the entryway as she waved her hand to pull them from her robes and expand them to normal size. Draco never knew his wife to enjoy shopping, but she had clearly attempted to put a dent in the vaults during her day out.

Not that they could be dented.

She preemptively explained away the pile upon seeing his raised eyebrow. "I have very different taste in clothing than I did fifteen years ago, Draco. And it's not like I could pack up all my things and bring them with me, then your wife would have nothing to work with when she arrived."

Takeaway containers hovered in front of him as she plopped down on the other end of the couch, her normal reading spot. The blanket drifted over his legs as she rearranged herself underneath, tucking her toes under his leg. Draco hadn't realised how much he missed the simple intimacy of their easy routine.

He opened the two little white boxes and passed one to his reclined wife with a conjured fork. They ate in silence next to one another, apart from the sounds of satisfaction at their meal.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw her glance towards the book he just finished, lying open on the table.

"Which did you read?" She asked. The same way she would have asked if his meal was any good.

He flipped the book closed so the title faced upwards. *Conjuring Care* written in gold cursive font on the cover jacket. "It was... informative," he stuttered apprehensively.

She nodded back at him, closing up her takeaway container. "It's my favourite. But I always prefer the theoretical. You might like the other two more."

"How so?"

"They would be more... inspirational," she replied, searching for the right word.

"Do you think I need inspiration?"

"No, I think you have plenty of ideas locked away up there." She wiggled her fingers at his head. "But perhaps they will be more validating for you, help you figure out how to enact those ideas in a safe way."

“Speaking of safe.” Draco poked at the cold curry in his container, avoiding his wife’s knowing gaze. “Can I know your safewords?”

Sparks crackled at the tips of her delicate fingers, first yellow, then shifting into a bright red. “*Yellow* to pause and check in, *red* to stop.” She smiled seductively at him. “The sparks come in handy when my mouth is full.”

Draco was thankful for the quilt atop his lap, covering the erection that responded to her insinuation. He was determined to have this conversation with his wife fully clothed, just as she wanted.

“What would you like yours to be?”

“My what.”

“Safe words of course.”

“I don’t need —“

“You do Draco. They’re important for both of us. You can use them if you start to feel guilty, or if it becomes too dark.

“Oh.” Draco hadn’t considered that the safewords would go both ways, he assumed only she would need them. “That might be okay. Can I use yours?”

“Of course darling.”

She shuffled into the couch further as she summoned two matching old muggle fiction books from the shelf and handed him one. Her feet came up to rest on his lap, underneath the blanket and she wiggled her toes in expectation.

Draco’s cock twitched as her heel grazed the placket of his trousers. “We could do other things.”

“Not until I see your list.” She replied with a smile, already reading her book.

Draco tossed his copy of the book onto the table, exchanging it for the *inspirational books* she gave him earlier in the day. Her heel pressed further into his crotch as she hid her giggle behind her book.

Chapter End Notes

CW/TW: Implied Sexual Assault. This chapter includes discussion of Ginny’s time in seventh year at Hogwarts, and how it impacted her ability to move forward in life. While not explicitly stated, it could be inferred that she was sexually assaulted during that time by the Amycus Carrow.

Suggested Listening: *Brazil* by Declan McKenna

Before you come at me. Everyone deals with sexual assault and trauma in different ways. Ginny (and Theo by extension) are more than welcome to process it in the way that they did. That doesn't mean it's entirely healthy, but I don't judge.

And another thing! I have yet to mention Draco's dark mark until this chapter on purpose. It is his POV, after all. Either he is subconsciously burying the fact that he has it, or it's a conscious effort, and we have an unreliable narrator on our hands. I like both options. Choose your own adventure.

March 16, 2019

Chapter Notes

New tags! Check the end notes for CW/TW if you need to.

Remember that time I warned you in the tags we were going to earn that E Rating? I didn't come to play. For those who remember the very first author's note, where I mentioned that this fic started as a smut scene and spiralled out of control? This was that smut scene. And once you write one of these, you need to write another, and another, and so on.

An eternal thank you to thistlethread for beta'ing this chapter when it was nothing but an idea and a filthy hot mess (that time I didn't even understand what tenses were) and encouraging me to keep writing.

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

March 16, 2019

Hermione spent the two weeks after her breakdown in the Malfoy vault trying to adjust to a new normal with her husband. She couldn't dwell on trying to go back and help Astoria any longer. The lock stayed firmly in place on the cabinet, and Hermione reduced her efforts to merely checking it at the end of every workday.

She continued to goad him as she undressed each evening, but never again did he cross the threshold into her room. Hermione wasn't sure if the barrier was keeping him out or if it was his choice, but he seemed to be waiting for her to make the first move.

Indecision trapped her in place; she didn't know how to escalate her feelings of want into something more, nor could she find the words to articulate how desperately she wanted him to touch her again. So they continued to dance around one another as her heart ached for closeness with him.

To hear him call her *baby*.

She had just finished cleaning up after their dinner, readying her mind to read *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which they started the night before when Malfoy pressed his firm chest into her back and leaned down to whisper in her ear, arms bracketing her in place.

"Bend over and place your palms on the counter."

Panic ripped through her spine as she caught sight of his fist clenching before it unfurled, still tense.

“No.” She rooted her feet in place, staring defiantly forward, unwilling to turn and face him. She didn’t know why she denied him; it was only instinctual.

Broad hands grasped her shoulders as he turned her around. He loomed over her, eyes dark with want. “We are not getting anywhere like this. You keep shutting me out. And you conveniently continue to forget that I have spent the last fifteen years with you.” His hands slowly drifted down to her upper arms; the heat radiated from his palms straight to her chest.

“We’ve spent the last month dancing around each other, and I’m a patient man, but enough is enough.” He ran his fingers through his hair, sending pieces free from the knot tied at the back. “Every morning, you touch my arm and kiss my cheek goodbye after I make you breakfast. You leave your bedroom door open whenever you are changing, knowing that I might see you. I haven’t read a single page of my book when your feet rest on my lap, inches away from my cock. I know you want this, Hermione, so what is it that makes you so afraid of *us*?”

Caught up in the deep tone of his voice, Hermione tried to conjure the answer she was once so confident in. She honestly wasn’t sure anymore.

She used to fear losing her independence, sacrificing her career, or risking her successes for another. But she hadn’t felt that way about Malfoy for weeks now. If she was truly honest with herself, she was terrified of losing him once the marriage act ended. Terrified that she would have everything she wanted in a partner but have to suffer through terrible sex for the rest of her life.

Yet here her husband was, making her think she could have everything she wanted, without a price to pay.

Malfoy leaned down to whisper in her ear. “I can hear you overthinking, so I’m going to quiet your brain for you now.” Teeth nipped at her earlobe before lips dragged down the side of her neck. “At this point, it’s only getting in the way.”

Hermione shuddered as the whisper travelled down into her belly, “Malfoy. I don’t know.”

“Do you trust me?”

She nodded, feeling his stubble scratch against her jaw as she moved.

Hands squeezed gently around her arms as he whispered into her neck, “I need to hear you say it out loud, baby.”

Hearing *baby* again, the words were instinctual. “I trust you.”

Hermione didn’t stop him when he turned her back around and pulled her flush against his chest. The scent of leather and parchment fell over her as his hands drifted up and down the sides of her arms, lulling into a sense of safety. She leaned her head back into his chest with a settled sigh.

It was true. The man had more than proven he would keep her safe and cared for; she trusted him more than even Harry at this point.

“The thing you haven’t realised yet, witch, is that you keep focusing on the wrong problem,” his voice ghosted the shell of her ear, “this has nothing to do with sex.”

His hands made their path down her arms again, but they did not return. Instead, they latched firmly on her wrists. “This is about control.”

Hermione’s eyes shot open. No sooner had Malfoy grabbed her wrists did he push them forward, her hips stopping at the kitchen island. In a quick motion, he placed her palms at the centre of the countertop.

The weight of his palm settled in the middle of her back, urging her forward until her forearms touched the cold marble. She attempted to push back and face him, realising too late that he cast a wordless sticking charm.

She was trapped.

Heat bloomed across her face. She could move her feet around, but there was no escaping the vulnerable position she was in. Just from the sound of clicking boots on the floor, she knew he backed away, but Hermione couldn’t angle her head well enough to see what he was doing. A scrape across the tile floor, followed by his soft sigh and Hermione *knew* he sat down on the stool next to her.

She was desperate not to show the panic that took over her whole body. Hermione looked over her arm to see his smug face, idly spinning his signet ring around his pinky finger. “What are you doing, Malfoy?” She whispered, voice cracking.

“Educating you. *Wife.*”

Hermione’s pulse quickened at the endearment. His wife.

His.

“Before we begin, you should know that we’ve discussed our *preferences* numerous times over the years. They have evolved as we learned more about each other, and we’ve adapted in different stages of our lives.” His eyes raked down over her exposed body as he released a low chuckle. “We’ve gone so far as to write them down and negotiate a few items because you are a delicious swot who gets turned on by a quill and parchment.”

She knew this Malfoy was more forthcoming than her own, but she could never express how she felt about it until now. The air was thick around her, and all she wanted was to ask him what he wanted her to do and where.

“We are not going to have that conversation right now, because if we do, you’ll use it as yet another excuse to deny yourself,” he tucked his hand into the back pocket of her denims, squeezing her arse roughly. “There will be no more talking tonight. We will have the

conversation in the morning,” He pulled his hand out of her pocket, moving to take off his ring and set it beside her. “But for now, knowing that you trust me will be enough.”

Heat pooled in Hermione’s belly. “Yes,” she choked out, “I trust you.”

“If this gets to be too much, and you need to stop, say the word red. If you need to pause, say the word yellow.” Gone were his usual steel eyes, pupils turned blown and starving. “Do you understand me?”

Hermione had yet to kiss the man, and here he was, setting her skin on fire with his words. She had never in her life experienced being so turned on by a simple set of instructions. “Red to stop, yellow to pause.”

“Good girl.”

Her cunt fluttered at the expression. The heat on her cheeks pooled down to her chest, and it was all Hermione could do not to rub her denim-clad legs together for friction.

Malfoy stepped behind her, out of view once more, and she jumped when a palm gently smacked the inside of her thigh, the motion immediately stilling her movements. “None of that.” He spoke low and heavy. “Spread your legs, Hermione.”

Tentatively, she widened her stance on the floor. A groan escaped her lips as Malfoy pressed his hips against her from behind. The hard length hidden inside his trousers was unmistakable against her arse. With a single grind, her thighs pressed into the hard edge of the island. One hand wound up her curls and pushed them to the side, forcing them to cascade over her left shoulder and pool on the counter.

He continued to slowly grind against her as he unbuttoned her oxford until it hung wide open. His fingertips skated across the delicate lace that lined the edge of her blue-laced bra, the graze of his hands teasing out her desire. With a practised flip, he moved the cups of her bra downwards and lifted her breasts out with both hands, thumbs grazing the nipples as they were released.

Hermione couldn’t move; she was at his mercy with the tops of her thighs pressed against the counter, but all she wanted was more. To feel the heat of his skin against her own.

Malfoy rolled and tugged her nipples between his fingers, arousal thrumming in her core from the sensation. Hermione moaned into the counter, desperate to see his expression, only to be locked into her limited view. She pressed her hips backwards in an attempt to increase the friction against her core. Her knickers were soaked, but she didn’t care; she only longed for release.

“Keep still,” he growled behind her.

Gone were his calm whispers; he sounded like a man possessed. He abandoned her breasts, hands dropping to unbutton her jeans. With a quick pull, the denim and ruined knickers bunched around her thighs, exposing her to the cool air and trapping her further.

A broad hand pushed down on her back, and Hermione had no choice but to obey his silent command. Her already tender nipples pebbled against the cold surface, sending an ache into her ribs. He moved quickly, his large palms grabbing onto each bare cheek until his fingers dug into her hips. Hermione could feel the weight of his gaze as he spread her apart, studying her arousal.

She didn't move a muscle. Her heart hammered with anticipation, desperate to know what he was about to do.

"Gods Hermione, we haven't even started yet, and you're soaking wet." Malfoy's voice had dropped lower, he must have gotten down on his knees at some point, but she didn't even notice the movement. She realised with alarm that his face must have been inches from her naked centre, but the embarrassing thought only made her wetter.

Without warning, a wide, flat tongue licked a single, achingly long, strip up her core. The force of it pushed her forward until her forehead rested on the marble. His hands kept her spread open, fully exposed. "You're so fucking *delicious* baby, do you know that?"

In response, Hermione could only whimper, trying to curl against herself, but she was unable to move against the cold marble.

Hands left her hips. Relief washed over her as he appeared in her line of vision, she watched intently as he circled the counter until he was in front of her. He tugged her chin upwards, pulling her into an angle that had her neck craning and nipples just skating the cold stone. He leaned forward and placed a single kiss on her lips, still cradling her chin.

It wasn't enough. She wanted to feel his tongue against her own, consume him whole, but he stood back up too quickly and moved out of reach.

He was the picture of utter calmness as he leaned back on the other side of the kitchen. He had retied the knot in his hair and captured the locks that had previously escaped. Tiny lines around his eyes formed as he smiled at her mischievously.

Leisurely, he rolled the sleeves of his white oxford up to the elbows one at a time, "Are you ready, baby?"

Hermione nodded, panting. The outline of his cock strained against his dark trousers, begging to be set free. A trail dripped slowly down the inside of her thigh.

The emotion fell from his face in an instant. With a single stride, his abdomen came to eye level and she had to crane her neck just to gauge his expression, unsure of what she had done to cause such a shift in his demeanour.

"I asked you a question. Answer me. And be respectful while you're at it." Malfoy's eyes hardened as he grasped her chin.

Hermione was at a loss for whatever it was he was looking for. "Yes.... Please, Sir?"

One corner of his mouth twitched upward. "I prefer Daddy."

“Please... Daddy” As soon as the word escaped her mouth, Hermione knew she could call him that forever. Whatever he was about to give to her, she would take willingly. Happily.

With a flick of his hand, her bra vanished away from her skin and the counter softened against her thighs. He paced over to her side, pushing her hair over her shoulder once more to lock eyes with her from above.

“Keep your eyes on me, baby. Remember your safe words.”

Hermione didn't have a chance to respond before his palm came down hard on her bare cheek, just where it met her thigh. A shocked yelp escaped her as she was propelled forward, curls swinging and thighs pressing into the charmed counter. Her palms began to sweat against the marble, and a slow ache weighed down her arms.

As the initial impact left her system, heat radiated outwards and soreness turned to arousal as heat reached her aching core.

She forced herself to stare back up at him, trying to silently tell him that she could take it. That she could take more. He held her stare, not breaking eye contact as he rolled his jaw.

Heat continued to blossom as he rubbed small circles on the sore area, and Hermione leaned back into his soothing touch. Somehow unsatisfied with the small range of motion that was left available to her, Malfoy grabbed her opposite hip roughly. He pinned her so that the only movement left available to her was to hang her head or lift her feet off the ground.

Just as Hermione resolved to stay completely still for him, another palm landed sharply on the other cheek. Both heels lifted to absorb the shock, unable to move otherwise. Unlike the initial impact, this time she did not look away from his unyielding gaze. If this was what he wanted from her, this level of power and control, she was determined to watch as he took it from her.

Their stares were unflinching as he delivered twelve more blows. He alternated sides, and she was given only enough time between each to feel the heat radiate further and stronger into her core, before another landed, sharper than the last.

He didn't pull away after the final smack. Instead, he began to rub and massage her now sore bottom with the offending hand. Finally, he broke their gaze, looking back to what he was doing with a sharp intake of breath.

She could feel his already stiff cock twitch against her hip.

“You turn the most beautiful shade of red baby. Every time I see you blush, I think of the exact same shade on your arse.” He continued to knead her aching muscles, admiring his work.

The soreness under his hand was exquisite, and she was torn between asking for more and waiting to see what he was going to do next. She wanted to give him every ounce of control if it meant continuing to feel this connected to him.

“Mine,” he murmured.

“Yours, Daddy,” Hermione responded proudly, blinking away tears that had formed in her eyes.

The title clearly affected him. He closed his eyes as he leaned back to revel in it. Hermione took a moment and reconsidered who was actually in control, if a single word could make him look like that.

He removed his hand from her burning redness and reached into his pocket, pulling out his wand. Hermione shivered in anticipation for whatever it was he was planning.

“Open your mouth, baby.” His voice dropped an octave.

Confused, Hermione paused before reminding herself that she trusted him implicitly and opened her mouth slightly.

He placed his wand sideways in her mouth, and a knuckle brushed her chin, pressing upwards to close it. The hard wood rested between her teeth, mouth just barely closed as it pressed against the corners of her lips.

He smiled proudly at her. “Don’t drop it, and don’t get any teeth marks in it either. I quite like that wand.” His finger trailed up from her chin and grazed lovingly along her now tensed cheek. Hermione felt as though she had a horse’s bit in her mouth, and suddenly she wondered if his intention was beyond simply stopping her from talking. “If you need to use the safe word, send red or yellow sparks from your fingers. Show me you can do it.”

Hermione sent yellow sparks from her fingers, where they were still adhered to the counter, followed by red. She was determined to please him earlier, but now that she had his wand in her mouth?

She was fucked.

A wand was an extension of one’s very being, Hermione wouldn’t dream of letting another person touch her wand. To have Malfoy’s in her mouth? The trust was unparalleled. Any doubt she had on who was in control of the situation was long gone.

It was her.

His hand dropped between her legs, moving up past the wetness that had escaped onto her thigh and palmed her cunt. He rubbed two digits along her entrance, grazing her clit and gathering wetness before thrusting them both into her in one fluid motion. His long fingers reached the spot that made her see stars, and she clenched around him the moment his thumb swiped against her sensitive nub.

The heat from his earlier work radiated into her core; already on the edge and ready to burst from his expert fingers, Hermione could barely keep herself upright with the high he was determined to give her.

The wand rattled slightly as Hermione tried to keep it still within her mouth, careful not to bite down upon the hawthorn. She tried to balance not letting the wand drop whilst not leaving teeth marks, but it only drew her focus from the pleasure he demanded. There was no space left in her head for a single thought to pass through.

Hermione let her head hang down, grunting loudly as he assaulted her with his fingers. With the wand in her mouth, she couldn't rest fully onto the counter. There were only fractions of movement available to her.

He was relentless in his attentions, curling his fingers inside her, reaching places she never could. The knuckles of his two other fingers pushed up against her in a rapid rhythm. Pressure built within her belly, and she was suddenly terrified of losing control. Panic shot down her spine at the sensation and her whole body tensed.

He must have sensed her shift, as he jostled her roughly between his hip and the hand on her hip. Still holding her firmly in place. "Stop thinking, Hermione." He growled.

Letting the deep voice roll over her, she relaxed once more, tilting her head slightly to see a look of pure determination on her husband's face.

Just as she fluttered around him, feeling her peak within reach, he ripped his hand free. Another hard smack came down upon her, palm connecting sharply with her soaking core. In shock, a garbled scream came from Hermione's throat, unwilling to release the wand from her mouth.

Hermione rolled her hips back for any possible amount of friction, clenching down on emptiness, desperate for her denied release.

"I'm not finished with you yet baby. You can take a little more." Malfoy chuckled as he bent low to hook his arms around her knees, lifting her feet off the floor.

She could feel the tip of his nose graze the inside of her thigh as he lifted her, and it nearly made her ignite into flames, her cunt throbbing for release.

He gently bent her legs, setting her knees spread apart atop the counter. The wand tingled softly in her mouth as Hermione felt her arms release from the counter, hearing him mutter finite behind her.

"Move forward. Hold onto the edge." He instructed, with a light smack to the inside of her thigh.

If she wasn't on display before, she surely was now. Hermione adjusted her hands to grip one edge of the counter with forearms still pressed on the cold marble. Even if the charm was lifted, she wouldn't dare move them. Her head hung low, curls tumbling over her white knuckles, gripping the countertop so hard she wondered if it would break. The desperate exhaustion was too much for her to lift her head, nor was she willing to risk the wand still in her teeth. On the other edge of the island, her toes dangled over. There was just enough space for her elbows and her knees to touch, forcing her arse high into the air.

Malfoy's shoes echoed around them until he was in front of her, but this time he was carrying one of the barstools. As if she wasn't nearly stark naked atop their kitchen island, he set the stool down in front of her, leaving it empty as he paced the kitchen.

Without saying a word or making a move to look in her direction, the infuriating man took a bowl of strawberries from the fridge and set to rinse them in the sink. Then, unreasonably acting like a muggle, he set the bowl of fruit down next to her, using a knife to fastidiously cut the leafy top from each berry.

Obviously, he is using a knife Hermione, his wand is still in your mouth. She thought furiously. A squeal of indignation came from her throat. Was he just going to leave her here as he went about his fucking day?

He refused to even look at her.

It might have been five minutes, but it felt like hours as he inspected each berry, as if it were an ingredient in a potion and must be in exact proportions. Finally satisfied with his ill-timed snack, he sat back on the stool, small bowl and fork in hand and began to eat.

Hermione stared at him with as much incredulity as she could communicate whilst keeping the wand between her teeth. His eyes raked over her, breasts hanging out below her, arse in the air as he continued to eat berry after berry.

"Would you like one love?" He waved a fork at her, chuckling before eating it himself. "I've not seen a single spark from those beautiful fingers, so I'll assume you are continuing to enjoy yourself. Surely you would have told me otherwise by now." His laugh shook his shoulders.

"I told you I was going to quiet your brain. Have I succeeded yet?" Malfoy asked once his laughter subsided, a single eyebrow raised at her.

All Hermione could manage was a muffled groan. Saliva pooled in her mouth and began to escape the corners of her lips. The aching need in her core had reached a heightened throb, but she would not give in.

"That sounded like a yes." Malfoy sent the now empty bowl and knife hovering away to wash in the sink. He tucked a single curl behind her ear as he leaned forward and whispered. "You've been such a good girl for me, Hermione. Would you like to finish now?"

Whimpering, Hermione nodded vigorously.

"Use your words, baby," He ordered as he took the wand from her mouth, holding it delicately beside her face.

Finally, she swallowed the saliva that had pooled in her mouth and licked her lips as she stared down at the bulge in his trousers, and then back up into his dark eyes. "Please, Daddy. Please, may I finish?"

He placed the wand back in her mouth, grinning like the cat who had gotten the cream. His hand trailed down her back as he circled behind her before grasping her hips and pulling her as far up as she could lift without knees leaving the marble.

Broad hands moved to grasp the still reddened spots at the tops of her thighs and held her open. Fingers dug into her hips; bruises in the morning would be inevitable. Both thumbs massaged up and down the outside of her entrance. She was soaking wet, and he spread her slick with his thumbs as continued his ministrations.

Hermione screamed through the wand in her teeth as she felt his unforgiving mouth on her.

He was a man starved, licking everywhere, moving his tongue up and down her cunt and circling her clit. His thumbs continued to stroke outside of her folds while his tongue dove inside. She rocked backwards, desperate to get more of his skilled tongue into her body. There was no way she was going to last more than a minute with the relentless pace he was going.

In an instant, his tongue disappeared from inside of her, replaced by thumbs pushed deep enough she wouldn't feel its absence. His mouth returned lower, enveloping her clit, sucking and nipping at her from below, bringing her further and further towards her peak. She tried to scream out, to whimper his name and beg for release, but everything became muffled behind the wand. She couldn't focus enough with the wand still in her mouth to find release. It was too much of a distraction.

"Don't you dare drop my fucking wand," Malfoy barked from behind her, as if reading her mind. She could feel his hot breath on her core.

Hermione closed her eyes and hung her head low as drool leaked out of her mouth and trailed down to the counter. She clenched as tight as she could to the edge of the countertop, pressing her hips back into his face and hands, begging for more.

"There you are, baby. Take control," he growled, as his mouth left her throbbing clit. He moved upwards, clearly satisfied enough with himself to admire the state he had put her in. His thumbs moved deeper into her, and Hermione clenched down upon them.

The second Hermione felt the flat of his tongue against her asshole, the wand clattered into the pool of saliva that had accumulated on the counter.

Hermione screamed through her climax, but he was unyielding, continuing to bury his face between her arse and his thumbs pumping her in and out. Her forehead pressed into the cold marble; she was unable to hold her head up any longer.

He was relentless, his tongue darted around her rim, thumbs working in and out of her and brushing her sensitive nub as they manoeuvred.

He fucked her through her orgasm without even unbuttoning his trousers.

Hermione sagged as limp as a ragdoll, gasping for air as he picked her up and sat her down on the edge of the counter, stepping in between her legs.

Taking her face in both hands, he wiped her cheeks to clean the tears and saliva. Lips against the corner of her mouth where the wand bit into her face felt like heaven compared to the overstimulation she just endured.

He trailed his affections along her chin, and back up to the other side of her lips, until finally taking her mouth with his own. Demanding entrance with his tongue along the seam of her lips, Hermione had nothing left within her but to accept.

Their tongues danced together softly as he cradled her head with his hands. Her wetness covered his chin, but she didn't care, and leaned in to deepen the kiss. Her thighs still trembled, but she wanted to climb the man like a tree, become enveloped in his willingness to take care of her.

"You dropped my wand," he whispered, breaking their kiss, and touching their foreheads together.

She opened her eyes in confusion, not understanding the implication.

Obviously, she dropped his fucking wand. How could anyone possibly hold onto a wand in their mouth during a bone-melting orgasm?

He saw her confusion immediately, and stepped back from the counter, leaving her sitting there alone. Without his hands and mouth on her, his absence sent shivers through her thighs.

Malfoy unclasped his belt and pulled it through the loops. "There are consequences when you disobey me, Hermione."

Hermione looked at the belt in fear, it was one thing to be spanked to near completion, she had no idea something like that could be so enjoyable. But the thought of a belt coming down on her already aching body was unthinkable. Surely, it would be more pain than pleasure. "Yellow!" she cried as she panicked, hoisting her knees up to wrap into her arms.

Malfoy froze in place, his dark gaze immediately replaced with a look of concern. "What's wrong love?"

"The belt." Hermione couldn't take her eyes off it, hanging from his hand.

His smile quickly returned. "Baby, I'm extraordinarily proud of you for using your safe word, but I had no intention of using this belt on you. I know your limits, and belts have always been one of them. They are a limit of mine too."

The belt dropped to the floor with a clang as the buckle landed. With a kick, the buckle skated across the floor until it hit the wall. "Do we need to discuss anything else Hermione?" He asked, tilting his head at her.

Hermione released her knees from her arms and let her legs hang back down. The brief moment of panic was gone, returned to trust and desire for the man. His ability to make her feel overwhelmingly safe was absurd, but she was determined to repay him.

She leaned back on both her palms, spreading her legs just enough to put herself back on display for her husband, inviting him in. “No, Daddy,” she said with a teasing smile.

A low rumble escaped his chest. Malfoy began to unbutton his oxford, exposing the pale muscle underneath. The angry scars Hermione had seen only a couple of times previously had faded to silver ribbons upon his skin, pulled taut over his sculpted chest.

He tossed his shirt to the floor and quickly took off his boots, trousers and pants as well, adding them to the pile tossed aside. The cock that sprung free was as hard as the marble Hermione was sitting on.

Hermione was determined to get a good look at it, unlike the first time they slept together, which she still regretted. She took her time staring unabashedly, allowing herself to lick her lips, imagining how the weight of it would feel in her mouth. It was perfect, long and thick, and as he pulled up upon it with his fist, she could see a bulging blue vein snake up the underside. The thought of running the tip of her tongue against the vein sent a shiver down her spine.

Startling her out of her blatant ogling, Malfoy walked back between her legs, resting his cock on her entrance. “You’re going to give me another orgasm.”

There was no way, Hermione thought in her exhausted state. “Malfoy I –”

“Daddy,” he corrected.

Hermione was completely wrung out. “Daddy.” She whimpered, resting her forehead on his hard chest. “I can’t. I’ve never come more than once. Why don’t you let me give you something else instead?” She resorted to bargaining, hoping to taste him.

He fisted his cock to gather her wetness at the tip and pulled her face up by her chin. “Say red if you really can’t baby. Otherwise, I’m going to fuck you now.”

She had never come more than once, not on her own, but especially not with a partner. It was a struggle enough to reach the first time. But here was her Adonis of a husband, standing before her, pressing the tip of his swollen length into her and waiting for a response. She was determined to satisfy him.

No words left her mouth as she lifted her arms to rest limply on his shoulders.

Malfoy nodded his head in understanding. In a single thrust he buried himself to the hilt and she sobbed at the immediate sensation of fullness, it felt twice as large as it looked.

With one hand holding her hip in place, the other weaved into her hair and grasped a handful against her scalp. He pulled her head upwards to take her mouth with his own. Moving his tongue against hers while he harshly fucked up into her on the counter.

He angled her hips upwards with his hand, enough so she barely sat atop on the marble. His thighs connected with the tender areas that still ached from his palm, soreness radiating through her as the fullness from his thrusting became overwhelming.

The pressure in her belly built higher. She broke away from the kiss, leaning her head back into his hand, while he relentlessly pounded into her. “I can’t Malfoy. I can’t.” She cried.

Her skin was on fire. The thought of another orgasm was impossible.

“You can Hermione. Come for me now.” He moved the hand from her hip around to her front and pinched her clit roughly as he continued to drive into her with his hard length. A burst of wetness came with her orgasm, turning her vision black as she clenched around him.

He growled into her neck as he buried himself into her, meeting his own climax. Arms snaked around her waist to pull her close against his body, and they rocked slowly against one another as they rode out the aftershocks together.

Hermione rested her head against his chest, gasping for air. Never in her life had someone wrung out that kind of pleasure from her body—she hadn’t even gotten halfway close to that in her own efficient achievements.

Her eyes drifted closed with the feeling of being picked up from her seated position. She wrapped her arms and legs tightly around her husband, mourning the loss of fullness as he slipped out of her.

She nestled into him tightly, breathing in the smell of leather and parchment, now mingling with proof of their exertion.

She didn’t register their movement through the flat until she was atop the bed in Malfoy’s room, and he was tenderly cleaning her with a washcloth.

Not caring that she had never slept in his bed before, Hermione didn’t have the energy to move to her own room. The feeling of his broad chest against her back enveloped her with a sense of security. Gentle kisses trailed along the base of her ear down to her shoulder, and Hermione was sure she heard him say *I love you, baby* just as she drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

TW/CW: Dom/Sub, Impact Play, Mildly Dubious Consent, Forced Orgasm, Inappropriate Use of Malfoy's Wand, Ass Eating/Play

Suggested Listening: *Howling* by RY X

Well. That was... something. Would you like more? Mother, are you behind the next door?

February 19, 2004

Chapter Notes

New Tag! TW/CW in the end notes.

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

February 19, 2004

It took Draco four days to complete his list for Hermione. He wanted to ensure he was thorough, taking the time to consider each act outlined in her *inspirational* books. Many of the scenes, as he now understood them to be called, were similar to the fantasies he had harboured for Hermione for years. Still, others sparked his imagination; he never once considered the variety of things he could do to her to pull enjoyment from her and take what was his.

Most of the examples seemed fantastical to Draco, as he dared to imagine that Hermione wanted to be on the receiving end of much of it. The mere idea of trying some of the scenes suggested gave him such a raging erection he needed to excuse himself to his bedroom for relief multiple times, leaving his wife in a fit of giggles while he walked away.

There were other scenes included that held no appeal to Draco. A childhood of watching death eaters inflict pain on others turned his stomach at the thought of intentionally causing harm to Hermione, especially with the use of knives or other implements. The idea of adding another scar to her endless collection repulsed him.

He would take care of her completely if she agreed to be his.

With a flick of his wand, Draco's scroll tied up neatly and wrapped itself in a shining gold ribbon. He twirled the ribbon between his fingers, briefly imagining winding it around her neck, fashioning a collar to decorate her throat and tell the world she was his. But a ribbon didn't even come close to the level at which he wanted to spoil her, nor did he want to rush that particular aspect of their relationship that he now understood to be so serious. The descriptions of collaring within the texts were illuminating.

Draco flagged several pages to return to and reread, allowing his mind to wander to which jewels he would select out of the Malfoy vault to place in such an adornment.

He strutted over to her bedroom door and tapped the invisible barrier with his foot, testing for its presence, disappointed to find he wasn't permitted in. Unsurprised at the barrier; he knew there would be no more between them until he produced his list. "Hermione?" He called into the room; he could hear her moving about in the bathroom.

She popped her head from the bathroom door, hair still dripping wet from a shower. At the angle at which she leaned out to greet him, he could only see her bare shoulders as she covered herself behind the doorframe. “Yes, my love?” Her eyes crinkled with a sly smile.

He was desperate to go to her and take her into his arms, let her wet hair drip down upon him as he kissed every inch of her neck. He knew she would smell deeply of that familiar jasmine scent so soon after her shower, but the barrier remained.

He wagged the scroll at her, hoping it would act as his entrance toll. “I have a present for you.”

Her sly smile broke into one of excitement before she disappeared back into the bathroom, only to emerge again wearing nothing but a fluffy white towel, her hair charmed into damp curls. She bounced into the bedroom and crooked her finger at him seductively. “Show me.”

The bedroom door shimmered, a glittering wave skating from top to bottom as the barrier disappeared. Draco took a tentative step forward and offered her his scroll.

The gold hue of the ribbon shone brightly next to her olive skin, sending thoughts of emeralds and rubies racing through his brain. Their hands lingered, fingers weaving together as she took the scroll, and with a wave of her hand, she conjured her own, handing it back to Draco.

The parchment was furled tightly, without a ribbon, its corners curled and worn with age, and the paper showed small creases throughout. He wondered how long this had been her list and if she would exchange it with him years into the future, negotiating new items. The idea strained his cock within his trousers; fifteen years of having her.

He scanned through it quickly, nearly identical to the one he completed, with a few notable exceptions tucked away in a box titled *Willing to Try*. He would consider those later.

Maybe.

There were more than enough options for now, Draco thought with excitement.

She moved closer into him, her towel filling the small space between them.

“Would you like to tell me why you want to do all these things with me, Daddy?” she mewled at him. “Do you understand your motivation yet?” She must have already finished reading his list; it was gone from her hands.

He rolled her scroll up tightly and placed it in his pocket, looking down into her amber eyes. “I want to own you, Hermione,” his voice dropped involuntarily, “to take care of you. To control you.”

“And do you understand that the aspect of control is limited to our bedroom? Or wherever else we might enjoy a scene with one another?”

“Yes.”

“Good. I’m glad we understand each other.” She unfurled the towel from her body, letting it drop to the floor, white cotton pooling at her feet. “Now. Tell me what we’re going to do.”

His mouth went dry at the sight of her nakedness. She didn’t move to get any closer, waiting for him to instruct her on what the scene would include. He knew exactly what he wanted. It was never a fantasy he dreamed of before, only because he didn’t know the possibilities. But the moment he saw the illustration in her textbook, it lived in his mind relentlessly.

He dropped his voice to a low growl in an attempt to convey how desperately he wanted her to comply with his orders, “You’re going to get on the bed and spread your legs for me, and I’m going to make sure they stay open the entire time.”

Her chest began to heave, nipples rising to brush against his oxford.

“I want to see you. Taste you. Feel your cunt clench around my fingers and my cock. I will wind you up so much you’ll beg for it.” The tiniest whimper sounded from her mouth, and he knew how to push her further. “Is that what you like, baby? To beg?”

“Yes, Daddy.” Her hand reached up to trail against his chest, inciting him further. “Tell me more.”

As much as he could see his instructions affecting her, they were having just as much impact on him. The more he spoke, the more he believed he was in control, that he could mold her to his will. “I’m going to make you beg to finish. I promise I’ll get you close, but you’re not allowed to come until I say so.” He was bursting with anticipation, needing to act out what raced through his mind, to watch how she reacted when he denied her.

“Now, be a good girl for Daddy and get on the bed.”

Deftly, she bent over to pick the towel up off the floor and paced over to the closet instead of the bed. Draco didn’t understand what went wrong; he thought he was clear with his orders. He raked his mind, searching the instructions he consumed over the last two days, but it wasn’t long. She emerged only a moment later, still gloriously naked but for a staggering pair of nude stilettos clicking across the floor.

She circled the bed seductively, trailing her fingers along the edge, letting her heels echo against the wood floor until she was directly in front of him. Draco let his eyes rake down her body as she climbed atop the bed on all fours, putting herself on display as she crept up to the pillows, swaying her arse directly in his line of sight.

Her pink cunt glistened at him, a string of her slick already connecting with the top of her thigh. With an arch of her back and a wiggle, she turned over to rest against the fluffy pillows and spread her legs, pulling her knees up so her heels indented the bedding near her arse.

Draco’s cock throbbed in his trousers, aching to be set free as she looked up at him from hooded eyes, her damp curls extending past her shoulders. He wanted to bury his face into her hair and take in her scent to consume her. But this was nothing if not an exercise in patience. Draco conjured a leather armchair at the end of the bed, sitting to watch her. As if it were a performance just for him.

Her hands pressed into the bed as she sat upright and jutted her breasts out at him. “Like this, Daddy?”

Tease.

He clenched his fingertips into the soft leather of the armchair, willing himself to stay seated. He needed to stay in control. “Show me how you like to be touched,” he ordered, staring at the apex of her thighs, still mostly hidden and tucked into the sheets.

She sent him a seductive smile and a slight nod before grasping her throat lightly with her small hand, sending her index finger along her jawline. The hand skated down her chest to cup her breast, pulling its fullness up into her hand and rolling the weight of it around, pinching her nipple between her thumb and forefinger. She tugged and pinched and rolled as her free hand fisted into the bedding, keeping herself upright.

Draco adjusted in his seat as inconspicuously as he could. She couldn’t know how much she affected him. Yet.

The hand abandoned her breast to trail down further, beside her navel and through the barely there thatch of curls, grazing up and down her thigh in a hypnotic rhythm.

“Wider,” he growled, needing to see more of her.

The top of her thigh glistened with wetness, and she taunted him with it each time her fingers passed through, pulling its trail further down her leg with her ministrations.

One by one, the red bottoms of her heels shifted and moved further outwards. Her arse lifted slightly off the bed as she rolled her hips upwards and set herself back down.

She sat proudly on display for him, her cunt parted to show the deepest pink of her centre, soaking wet with want. Her fingers trailed up her thigh to reach her centre, taking three fingers together to move the wetness around, up and over the hood of her clit. Small circles enveloped the nub as she leaned her head back in enjoyment, losing herself in the sensation.

He took the opportunity while she wasn’t watching to conjure a slim steel bar between her feet. Delicate chains appeared on either end of the bar, wrapping around her ankles, softly clicking as they clasped themselves closed. The backs of her thighs tensed sharply as the cold metal sank down her ankles to rest upon the tops of her feet.

The textbook’s illustration came to life before him and was better than anything he could have imagined.

Her hand froze in motion, covering herself, and she whipped her head back up, staring him down defiantly.

“I told you I would make sure they stayed open. Now get back to work.”

“Yes, Daddy.” She bit her lip, resuming her ministrations around her clit, building up the speed at an achingly slow pace.

He watched with rapt attention as she ignored her core, only focusing on the repetitive circular motions, hypnotising him. “You don’t want to put your fingers inside?” he asked. Surely, she needed more than slow circles to reach her peak.

“They’re too small. I need you.” Her eyes were blown with want, amber irises reduced to nothing as she stared back at him, panting with her mouth slightly open while continuing her circles methodically.

She held back. But he didn’t care; the thought that she needed him drowned every other emotion in his brain.

One at a time, he unfastened the emerald cufflinks from his black oxford, tucking them safely away in his trouser pocket before folding each of his sleeves upwards. He rolled his fingers into a fist to keep his emotions in check, veins bulging atop his dark mark, not that it meant anything to him anymore. It was simply a scar, matching the myriad of war wounds his wife displayed without regret.

Draco sat watching, considering his options. He could let her continue on her own, but the overwhelming need to feel her wetness was excruciating. The memory of her tightness wrapped around his cock all those months ago propelled him forward.

He stood from his chair, slightly remiss to leave his seat of the performance, and kicked off his dragon hide shoes and socks, climbing atop the bed to encase her underneath his large frame, the bottoms of her thighs resting against his knees. She scooted downwards, her hair dragging up against the pillow as she laid flat atop the bed, fully beneath him.

The chains around her ankles clinked as she shifted, but he gave her no room to move further, forcing her knees up and the bar to graze the underside of her arse.

Draco didn’t move to kiss her; she didn’t deserve that yet. He stayed staring her down, enjoying the look of submission painted across her face while he forcefully shoved two fingers deep into her core. Her back arched in response, breasts heaving upwards as she gasped from the intrusion. He pumped in and out as she continued her small circles, her wetness sliding down the back of his hand.

“Thank you, Daddy!” she cried out, her cunt fluttering around his hand.

“That’s my girl.”

She was getting dangerously close.

Draco watched intently as her eyes squeezed shut in concentration, and her hand froze. But he was relentless with his fingers; he wanted to bring her right against the edge before he took away her pleasure. “You can take it.”

Her body writhed around his fingers as her feet twitched to lift off the bed, but he held a knee firmly in place atop the bar, keeping her within his control.

“Stop, Daddy, please! I can’t!”

He pulled his fingers out quickly as he sat back against his heels, watching in delight as she squirmed. Her hands fisted into the bedding, and her hips rolled into nothing.

“You have two minutes to calm yourself down. Then we go again.”

Her breath came out in rapid pants while Draco counted silently, needing to focus on the numbers. His cock ached against his trousers, but it was all worth it to watch the redness bloom on her chest while she arched her back and wrenched her eyes closed.

His to pleasure, his to deny.

As he finally reached 120 in his head, he spent the last two minutes meditating to her needy image.

She was so determined to please him and comply with his orders that his heart pounded in his chest in response.

He lifted his knee off the bar and took it within his hand, grabbing her waist with his other hand while he flipped her over onto all fours.

A squeak of shock escaped her as he threw her around the bed. The sound delighted him, spreading warmth across his chest as he became enraptured with the potential of her new vulnerable position.

The bar kept her knees wide, enough room to roll over and slide himself underneath her dripping core; the cold steel radiated through his oxford against his shoulder blades.

“Again,” he growled, before grabbing her waist and pulling her down to his mouth. Her warm thighs bracketed his face as he tasted every inch of her, burying his tongue into her swollen centre while he gripped her hips to hold her in place. He could barely hear her whines from above from his covered ears, but he persisted.

She rolled into him, taking her pleasure as he held his tongue out flat and allowed her a moment to pretend she was in charge.

Wetness covered his chin and dripped down his face, but he only wanted more. A familiar flutter pulsed against his tongue before she snapped her knees together as far as the bar would permit and pulled herself upwards, away from his face.

“Two minutes.” He barked up at her, refusing to move. The view from below was spectacular. Her cunt red and swollen; it was all he could do to imagine the sight of his length sinking into her, what she would look like wrapped around his cock.

“Please, Daddy. I need to feel you inside of me.” Her hips rolled above him; he could just see the undersides of her breasts as she swayed back and forth.

Her pleading was addictive, and he only wanted to hear more of it. “You call that begging? Try again.” He lunged upwards, pulling her clit into his mouth to suck as he worked two fingers back inside her wet core.

A sharp scream escaped her before she started begging furiously.

“Daddy, no, I’m going to come.

Please, Daddy. Please.

I need to come.

I can’t hold it back anymore.

I need your cock inside of me.

Please fuck me.

Please don’t stop. Daddy.

Please, can I come?”

She rambled and strangled out her pleas incoherently as her hips shook within his hands.

The words sent a pang to his aching cock, but he refused to give in to her. Two fingers took a final swipe inside the soft, swollen centre of her cunt, and a sharp pull of her clit into his mouth satisfied him before he left empty and wanting, sliding himself off the bed to watch the results of his work.

Her hands and head dropped forward to the bed and she squirmed wildly, trying to fend off her release. A string of wetness hung down from her core, clear and glistening and he sat back onto the edge of his chair to watch the performance, unbuttoning his oxford and tossing it to the floor before taking his cock from his trousers to squeeze it within his fist. He burned with the urge to feel her, his head weeping with need.

The soft bedding she buried her face into absorbed her cries. He would have pitied her if it wasn’t so enjoyable to watch. Instead, he felt pride—she succeeded in listening to his orders, and he wanted to reward her for it.

“You did so well,” he praised her from his chair, unsure if she could hear him through her muffled cries. “My good girl. Beg me a little more, and maybe I will give you what you need.”

She stopped abruptly and pulled herself back up, pressing her hands against the bed to remain steady. Awkwardly, hindered by the bar, she turned around on her knees to face him and lowered to sit atop the bed, her arse nestled between her spread-out heels. Her whole neck and chest were splotched with redness from exertion, matching the bottoms of her shoes.

Her chest heaved as she whimpered, “Please, Daddy. I’ll do anything. Just let me come.”

With a single nod, he stood, pulling off his trousers to climb back atop the bed. Gently, he took her hips within his hands and lifted her upwards, creating enough room to place his knees between her legs and pull her forward above his lap, sliding the bar underneath his shins as he held her up. He took her shoes off before reaching behind himself to pull the bar

out from underneath him, letting the soles of her feet rest against the bed and allowing her knees to come up around his sides.

His cock stood angrily, resting against his abdomen, and it was all he could do not to laugh at her desperation as she rolled her hips towards him, pressing her sopping cunt against the tip.

“Look at you, so needy for me. Shall I give you my cock? Do you deserve it?” He yearned to hear her beg.

She wound her hips up and down, sliding against his length, staring down intently as she spread her wetness all over him. Draco wasn’t sure if she was blatantly ignoring him or if she was lost in her own need.

“Eye’s on me, you greedy witch.” He grabbed her chin roughly to force her gaze back up, irritated with her non-compliance. “Answer my question.”

She kept her eyes downwards as her tongue darted out to taste her lips. Abruptly, he shook her chin, startling her back to attention.

“Yes, Daddy. I’ve been so good for you. Please, may I have your cock?”

Draco considered momentarily if he should express his disappointment in not obeying him immediately. But it was their first time together like this, and she would be his for years. It would need more discussion anyway, and he was no longer capable of that kind of conversation.

He lifted her hips to slide her down atop him, seating himself fully inside her. It was all he could do not to finish the moment he felt her lips at the base of his cock, strangling him tightly. There was no way he would be able to fuck her; he would lose control.

“Well? Don’t just sit there. Ride me until you come.”

She let her head drop to rest on his shoulder as she ground down upon his cock, rising and rolling her hips to drive it deep inside her heat.

Draco could barely breathe; she was so intoxicating; listening to her whimper and moan next to his ear was like hearing an orchestra for the first time.

Her breasts heaved as she rolled, and her nipples grazed against his chest. It was only a minute or two of her slow, methodical movements before she shifted her feet on the bed, the bar rattling against her chains behind him. She began to bounce up and down, sliding his cock out to the tip before slamming back down, picking up her pace until she was a frantic mess, grunting and heaving loudly. Sweat gathered on her collarbone from exertion, and Draco leaned into her neck, licking a thick stripe up to her ear, tasting her saltiness.

Her shoulders snapped forward as she convulsed with a garbled scream, cunt pulsating around him while her pace became erratic.

He took her hips within his hands, digging his fingers in and kept up the consistent, frantic pace she could no longer maintain.

She milked his release, stroke by stroke, as he spilled into her, pulling her tightly atop his lap so he could feel every inch of her while he finished.

Shudders wracked her body in aftershock as she nuzzled her face into his chest.

He remembered this part vividly from her books.

His wand was in his trouser pocket, still on the floor. Draco cursed himself for not knowing any wandless magic. He was trapped between her legs and the bar and did not want to move away from her—not while she needed him most.

“Vanish the bar,” he whispered into her ear.

Her hand twitched next to his chest, and the hard metal that rested against his lower back disappeared. He made a mental note to begin practising; he shouldn’t have had to rely on her for the spell. It wasn’t her responsibility.

She nuzzled further into his chest, not moving from atop his cock.

“Tell me what you need, Hermione.”

“Praise. Affection,” she murmured into his chest. “Call me baby, please.”

His heart swelled at the opportunity.

Finally, he could take care of her. He kissed the top of her head gently before picking her up off his lap, letting his spend leak out between them, not that he cared about the mess. As cautiously as he could manage, he pulled them to the top of the bed, resting his back against the pillows and setting her in the crook of his arm while she wrapped her leg atop him, and he pulled their bodies into the blankets.

He let his arm trail her soft skin, mapping every inch in his mind, every raised scar and freckle committed to memory. “You did so well, baby. My perfect little wife,” he murmured lowly. “You looked so beautiful on top of me. Watching you come apart was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.”

She lifted her head to place a tender kiss at his jaw before weaving her hand into the hair at the nape of his neck, ushering his head down to kiss her.

Draco realised regretfully he hadn’t kissed her once during their scene. He was too enthralled in the control over her, mesmerised by watching her submit. He took her mouth within his, kissing lazily, weaving his tongue with hers, living in the low moan that ruminated from her throat.

They spent ages weaved together like that, sated in each other’s arms. Draco’s heart was full of pride for the witch, paired with a deep relief that with each caress, he held no guilt for the way he treated her.

Soft adorations were doled out and exchanged with languid kisses before they both fell into a deep sleep, naked and entwined.

Chapter End Notes

TW/CW: Edging

Suggested Listening: *Lunch* by Billie Eilish

I really wanted to have a healthy dom/sub dynamic as best I could in this fic while still keeping the reader entertained and providing good buildup. I think the way Hermione coaches Draco at the beginning of this scene is so nuanced and smart for her experienced position in this relationship. She's trying to get him to communicate and outline the scene beforehand, reminding him this aspect of their relationship is limited to the bedroom. Plus, the tiniest hint of brattiness to expose how his mind is processing everything.

March 17, 2019

Chapter Notes

New Tag! TW/CW in the end notes.

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

March 17, 2019

Woken by a trill chirp outside the open bedroom window, Hermione found herself nestled snugly in her husband's arms. Her hair inexplicably managed to stay within the knot tied atop her head, exposing her neck to his warm breath, a slow, steady exhale as he continued to sleep soundly.

As covertly as she could, she turned slightly to take in his sleeping form, careful not to wake him.

His face was relaxed in sleep, and his upturned mouth betrayed his usual stoic expression. Hermione wondered if he was dreaming of her or his actual wife, stuck in the past. She couldn't figure out which alternative was more appealing.

In either situation, she was *his*.

Strands of his shoulder-length blonde hair draped over his forehead, making him look more unkempt than she was used to seeing. Hermione had never witnessed this version of her husband, so unpolished and vulnerable, and she brushed his hair back deftly to inspect him further.

The blond stubble that spanned his upper lip and jaw gleamed in the sunlight, sending a shiver down her legs as Hermione recalled the sensation of it scratching between her thighs the night before.

Not wanting to wake him, Hermione carefully slipped out of his grasp and padded her way to the bathroom. It was at least twice the size of the one in her room, a double vanity spanning one wall, with an enormous walk-in shower in the corner. An asymmetrical clawfoot tub that could surely fit more than one person sat in the middle of the room, complemented by a short wooden stool at the higher end.

Hermione started the tub to fill and took her time rifling through the shampoos and oils on what was obviously her side of the vanity before setting them onto the stool and climbing into the piping-hot water.

A bruising pain on her arse came to life as she sat in the tub, a stern reminder of the previous night's activities. Hermione added the vial of murtlap essence oil along with some jasmine scented bubbles from the stool into the tub, and the night sped through her mind as she assessed the rest of her body, cataloguing the after-effects of their play. She ached everywhere, but her arse and core felt particularly bruised. Satisfyingly so.

It was as if she had exercised the day before, and all her muscles were strained from a successful workout.

Successful workout indeed.

Hermione let herself sink into the water up to her neck, surrounded by fragrant bubbles and closed her eyes to relax into the restoring effects of the oils. She didn't notice Malfoy entered the bathroom until the stool scraped behind her, and his broad hands began to rub into her shoulders.

He whispered into her ear, "Would you like a pain potion, my love?"

Hermione shook her head to decline the offer, luxuriating in the dull ache that persisted across her arse. She wanted to keep the reminder of him with her throughout the day.

"And would you like anything else?" He asked as one hand dipped below the water line, lightly pinching a nipple before returning to her shoulder.

Hermione arched her back as she leaned against the tub's rim, looking up at him. She wanted to say yes, but the events of the night still ran through her mind, puzzle pieces trying to fit themselves together. "About last night..."

"Ah." He moved to get a small jug from the vanity and sat back on the stool. "Lean your head back, my love; I'll wash your hair for you."

She complied, mind racing, as he dipped the jug into the water and gently poured it atop her curls without a drop running down her face. Fingers prodded along her scalp as he massaged shampoo methodically through her hair, the dull sensation helping her pull her thoughts together coherently. "I enjoyed myself. Much more than I expected I would."

He continued working the shampoo through her hair, allowing her the silence to think out loud.

"After Halloween, I thought it would be... boring with you. That wasn't exactly the best first time between us."

"Ah, well. Neither of us were very good at communicating our needs in that moment." The jug returned to the tub, and he rinsed out the foamy soapsuds. They pooled around her chest, mixing with the jasmine bubbles that were slowly diminishing.

"But last night, it was amazing. And it was the first time I've ever been fully immersed in sex. It was like my brain went quiet." She had always been distracted during sex with other people. The day's puzzle continued running in her mind, or she would dwell on someone

else's problems. Even when she satisfied herself, her default was to be efficient, needing to return to the day's requirements and her never-ending to-do list.

But with Malfoy, it was different. There was nothing but the two of them. "You made it go quiet."

It was all true. Hermione had never experienced that level of satisfaction with any partner. Truthfully, she didn't even know it was possible until the night before.

"You did so well, too, baby. I was proud of you."

"Why did you call me baby? Last night. It was the first time you called me that." Her cheeks burned with embarrassment. "And you made me call you daddy..." She trailed off, heat pooling in her belly at the endearment.

Creamy conditioner worked through her hair, and he responded lowly, "It works for us when we are in a scene. Helps us to focus on our roles."

Hermione twisted her neck around sharply, causing his hands to pull back from her hair. The tips of his fingers were white with conditioner as he held his palms up in defence. She raised her eyebrow in silent question.

"Me calling you baby, it helps you get into a submissive role." He circled his finger in the air to suggest she return her gaze forward.

She snorted as she complied with the wordless order, turning in place. "I am not a submissive, Malfoy."

His hands returned to her hair, ushering her back to relaxation. "Certainly not in your day-to-day life. But sex is different. It's what we both enjoy."

"Malfoy, that's ridicul—"

He leaned down to her ear. "Care for an experiment?" His voice was low and commanding, and Hermione could only melt into the sound as she nodded.

He picked up the jug again, tilting her head back to rinse the conditioner. Fingers weaved through her curls as the last of the water ran through. The bubbles were nearly gone from the tub, putting her naked form increasingly on display.

With deft fingers, he wrung out the wetness from her hair and fashioned a tidy braid, pinning it to the top of her head so it wouldn't fall back into the water.

Hermione watched intently as he picked up the stool to move around to the side of the tub, where he sat down, dipping one palm against the water to skim the surface.

Hermione could finally take a moment to appreciate his shirtless form. A smattering of pale blond hair dusted his chest, while a thicker, darker trail sent Hermione's gaze to the elastic of his light grey joggers. She could just see the thick outline of his cock, resting atop his thigh before he adjusted himself, concealing her view.

His hand sank into the water and grabbed her knee, pulling it upwards. Hermione's chin dipped below the surface as her upper half moved lower, accommodating the adjustment within the tub. The water lapped up at her earlobes, sloshing back and forth from the movement.

The hand trailed lower into the tub, tracing the inside of her thigh until his palm completely covered her cunt. She barely caught the sight of his mouth moving, distracted by his darkened eyes, before feeling completely slick underneath his hand. He must have cast a lubrication charm.

Hermione wanted to test the charm and attempted to roll her hips against his palm to create friction, but the moment she moved, her mouth and ears sank under the surface of the water. Just like the night before, he had trapped her in place.

"Would you like me to move my hand, baby?" He asked with a sly grin.

She spluttered as she moved back up to the surface, spitting out a mouthful of water. "Yes, please."

In an instant, his hand turned ice cold, and two freezing fingers thrust roughly into her core. She scrambled to move away from him beneath the water but couldn't find enough leverage to push herself up. The other end of the tub was too far away to press her feet against, and her toes unsuccessfully searched for a landing place.

"Daddy," he growled, crooking his icy fingers up to massage her inner wall.

The sensation numbed both her core and her brain, and Hermione let herself sink into it, allowing a shiver to roll up her spine in the still hot water of the tub. "Please... Daddy." The response escaped her mouth without even processing its meaning.

"Better." His fingers returned to room temperature inside her, which only felt like fire as the numbness left her centre. He continued to weave tight circles along her inner wall, lifting her arse off the porcelain tub with the force of his ministrations.

Pressure began to build in Hermione's belly, and she let her eyes close to succumb to the blooming heat under his skilled hand. He worked her quickly, faster than even she could with the use of a toy.

"Eyes on me," he snapped, adding a third finger and thrusting his fingers harder into her. Hermione winced at the pinch of the stretch but quickly accommodated the additional digit, adding only to the growing pressure.

Without stopping, he leaned over the tub, leaving his stool to kneel against the tile floor. His eyes were molten with want as he put his other hand under the water, resting an open palm against Hermione's belly, pushing her down until her arse sat firmly back on the porcelain.

The pressure was overwhelming, building to a breaking point that Hermione wasn't sure she could withstand, and a single swipe of her clit with his thumb sent her scattering over the edge. Her legs straightened out involuntarily as she climaxed, and Malfoy's hand left her

belly to seize her by her braid, keeping her head above the water as he worked her through her orgasm.

A scream tried to escape her mouth, but she could only choke on the noise, resorting to low grunting sounds resonating from her throat as he pulled every last ounce of pleasure from her body.

He pulled her head well above the surface using the braid in his palm and kissed her firmly on the mouth as his fingers left her. Hermione ached in the sensation of loss, she was still clenching down, rolling into the aftershocks of a powerful orgasm.

Abruptly, he ended the kiss and stood, leaving her heaving against the rim of the tub. With a wave of his hand a stack of books appeared on the stool. "These are your favourite books. Read up."

He patted her on the head as he strode to the door, adjusting his joggers.

~

Hermione was most certainly, without a doubt, sexually submissive.

Six books later, her knickers were soaked with the scenes she had read. Some books were theoretical, which was an educative introduction, and Hermione made a series of notes for reference, but the other books... They were just hot.

When Hermione ran through the list of titles the books suggested one might call her dominant partner, she recalled the feeling of calling Malfoy *Daddy* for the first time. It was as if nothing she had ever spoken before had been so natural. She wanted him to take care of her. To know her so well that he didn't have to ask what she wanted, that he would just give it to her. To challenge her when she needed it, reward her for being good.

It was all so delicious.

The final book she read outlined the need for understanding one's partner's limits, including perforated checklists to tear out and complete. Intuitively, Hermione knew that Malfoy had learned hers over their time together.

But, the book had assigned her homework.

Hermione tore the pages from the book without remorse, conjured a self-inking quill, and began to complete the questionnaire, noting definitely, maybe, and no down the list of suggested acts.

By the time her husband returned home, she had filled in each of the torn pages with technical names and page references from the books she read, along with notes in the margins of her additional opinions on some of the acts.

"Malfoy, You're home!" She exclaimed, leaping off the couch to greet him at the door, lists in hand. "You would not believe what I learned today. Well, I suppose you would... Anyway, I made lists!"

Hermione thrust her homework into his chest, looking up to see his face only when his hands met her own, stilling her.

His eyes were rimmed with red, and his hair had come loose from its usual tie. She realized, belatedly, wrapped up in her homework she didn't even know how long he had been gone, nor where he went for the hours she lost herself in her homework."

"Where were you today?" She whispered, afraid of the answer.

"Italy," he responded, staring down at his hands. "I took an international portkey and went to see Astoria and Blaise. They had owled earlier yesterday that Astoria was having a hard day and could use some help. I'm sorry I didn't tell you. Blaise didn't want you to come, it would have upset Astoria too much."

"And? Were you able to help?"

He stumbled back against the wall, letting his back sink down to sit on the floor, cradling his head in his hands.

Hermione crouched down in front of him and placed her hand atop the back of his head. The papers she had been so excited just minutes ago about floated to the floor between them.

His back heaved with three deep breaths before he lifted his head to catch Hermione's eye. He sank down further on the floor, extending out his legs and pulling her into his lap, wrapping his arms around her body as she tucked into his chest. She didn't know if they were to still her or console her, but he seemed to need the gesture as much as she did.

"No, Hermione." He wept into the top of her head "There wasn't anything I could do. None of us could do anything for her, in the end.

Astoria is gone, love. She died."

Chapter End Notes

TW/CW: Temperature Play, minor character death

Suggested Listening: *Jungle* by Tash Sultana

Astoria! You buzz kill.

March 12, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

March 12, 2004

Draco returned home from work, haggard after an astonishingly long day of conflicting witness interviews, only to find Hermione waiting with two packed suitcases at her feet.

The MacMillan and the Bones families were fighting like cats and dogs after Ernie and Susan married under the new act, and petty crimes between the families were increasing at an alarming rate.

Ironically, Ernie and Susan were getting along swimmingly.

“Are you going somewhere?” he asked, concerned she would respond with something related to the Marriage Act. Her plans of blackmail and extortion were starting to worry him deeply.

Intuitively, he knew she was working through her plans while he was at work. With her skill level, there was no way she spent her entire workdays clearing curses in the vaults, but Draco didn’t know how to confront her about it yet.

“*We* are going to Italy,” Hermione responded with a smile.

She was already dressed for the warmer Italian weather, likely from some of her recent purchases. A thin emerald cashmere sweater hugged her frame, tucked into a pair of high-waisted black trousers that flowed over the nude high heels Draco was becoming so fond of.

“I have to work, Hermione; we can’t just go to Italy. The marriage law is tearing families apart, and somehow, the DMLE is the one holding the bag.”

“I’ll have that dealt with soon enough.” She dismissed him with a wave of her hand.

The hair stood on the back of his neck. Her evasiveness on the topic was beginning to make his skin itch. “Hermione. I’ve told you already I don’t want you meddling in the Act. It’s not even remotely safe, and you want to roll in wand blazing to take down every single powerful member of wizarding Britain. It’s asinine.”

Yellow sparks danced between her fingertips. “Is that supposed to be an order?”

Draco paused. He knew their agreement on control was limited to the bedroom, but he only wanted to keep her safe. Torn on how to answer, he shook his head, holding back the overwhelming temptation to step into her and crowd her space. “No. But at least let me help you.”

“Fine. But you can help post Italy. I’ve already arranged it with Harry. He snuck in a vacation request on your behalf for me. Robards gave you two weeks, and I intend to enjoy them with you.” The sparks faded away to nothing, relief settling in Draco’s chest.

He shoved a hand into his trouser pocket, not wanting her to see the tremble that overtook him. “And where in Italy will we be going?” He asked, only half interested in the answer.

“Blaise and Astoria have invited us to stay in the guesthouse at the winery. There will be no one around this time of year, plenty of privacy.” She twirled Pandora’s ring on her finger and sent him a seductive smile, “You might even consider it a delayed honeymoon.... Daddy”

The title snapped Draco entirely out of his concerned state for the retaliation of the Wizengamot. He and Hermione had spent the past three weeks exploring his detailed list, discovering their mutual preference and discussing limits.

The thought of being able to continue their exploration without the distraction of a hectic work schedule forced him to adjust his robes.

“Say less.” He pulled her in by the waist and kissed her soundly. The squeak that escaped her lips made his cock strain angrily.

Hermione pushed him away with both hands pressed against his chest. “The international portkey leaves in thirty minutes.” She gestured to the enamel teacup on the kitchen island. “Go get cleaned up, then we can head out. Blaise and Astoria are expecting us.”

He pulled her in closer, nestling his face into her neck and curls to whisper, “Come shower with me then. We have time.” She smelled like jasmine and parchment, as always, and the scent shot straight down to his trousers.

A light smack on his chest pushed him away again. “We do not. You smell like Knockturn, and I’ve already done my hair. Now go.”

Draco padded off defeatedly to the shower and let the cold water wash over him, rinsing away the dirt and grime from the day. He hoped it would wash away the urgency with which he currently wanted his wife, but it only tempered.

Changed and ready to depart, Draco pulled a hand through his hair to tuck the growing strands behind his ears. He was in an odd middle ground of short and longer hair, still unsure if he wanted to continue growing it, and the fact it kept falling into his face was becoming irritating. “Do you like my hair longer?” He asked his wife curiously while they waited the final two minutes for the portkey to activate.

“I like your hair in all stages.” She reached up to push a strand off his forehead. “As long as I get to run my hands through it.” Her nails scratched along his scalp, sending shivers down his spine.

She took the teacup into the palm of her hand, gesturing for Draco to grasp it as well. “We should go. Don’t want to miss the portkey.”

The familiar tug behind his navel sucked him into the glowing cup and away to Italy.

~

Astoria was beside herself to have visitors, greeting them at the portkey destination outside the estate's main entrance with open arms.

Draco pulled her into a hug, grateful to see his childhood friend looking happy and well. She had endured so much with the Greengrass family trying to betroth her to any available rich pureblood, regardless of their age or temperament. After she eloped with Blaise, Draco was overjoyed to see her make a fresh start in life.

She scolded him as she pulled away and swatted his arm playfully. "You should be visiting more, Draco; we don't get to see any of you that often. Hermione barely had to ask before I insisted you both stay with us."

Blaise strolled up behind his wife, wrapping an arm around her shoulders. "Portkeys do go both ways."

Draco shook his friend's hand, clapping a shoulder onto his back. "It's good to see you mate. Dare I ask how long you two have known about this trip? Considering I just found out about it thirty minutes ago?"

A tiny giggle escaped Astoria. "Oh, since the day we met Hermione here." She kissed Hermione swiftly on the cheek, turning to lead them all into the manor home. "I quite like this one, Draco," Astoria called back over her shoulder, her arm wrapped into Hermione's as they walked away.

Draco ogled his wife's arse, appreciating the leggy view that descended into her high heels, clicking across the cobblestones.

Blaise struck Draco against the chest with the back of his hand, startling him from his blatant leering. "Looks like everything is going well then, mate?"

Draco chuckled, heading off to follow the women inside, "You might say that."

"May we all be so lucky to have wives that look that fit in fifteen years," Blaise responded, trailing behind.

The four meandered through the hallways of the manor, chatting away as Astoria led them through the winding halls. "I've had the elves prepare the guest house for you both on the east side of the estate. It has a lovely view of the vineyard and is quite private, so I'm sure you'll make good use of it."

Hermione turned her head back to stare at Draco while Astoria went on, locking eyes with him as she bit her lip.

A nudge from Blaise sent a wave of possessiveness through Draco's veins, and he raised his eyebrows back at his wife, issuing a silent order to behave herself. Her head whipped back around immediately.

The thought anyone but him, seeing how her bottom lip turned bright pink under her teeth, had his fist clenched at his side.

Two looming walnut doors swung open on their right, and a small elf Draco didn't recognise levitated a portrait-sized package out of a large dining room. He floated it off down the hallway, joining a pile of similarly shaped items.

"Redecorating Tori?" Draco asked with curiosity. "Or just sick of seeing Blaise's seven stepfathers?"

Blaise snorted beside him. "They became a bit too intrusive over our dinners. Astoria wanted to move them to another wing... One which we never step foot in."

"No manners from any of them. You think being a portrait would allow one to understand the appropriate time to leave a room," Astoria added.

Draco raised his eyebrow at the suggestion from Astoria. She and Blaise must have begun holding business within the room.

Blaise's late mother never put much effort into the winery, preferring to make her living off inheritances. But Blaise wanted to build the winery up from being moderately profitable into a booming business. Draco was never sure if every deal his friend made was entirely legal, but would blame jurisdiction if ever asked.

They were in Italy, after all.

Eventually, they reached their destination, a light pastel sitting room, where tea and biscuits waited under stasis. Draco sat beside his wife on the sofa, taking a biscuit and tea while Astoria and Blaise settled in the large wing chairs across them.

"Poppy!" Draco called out, hoping his favourite Zabini elf was present in the manor.

A crack resounded through the sitting room as Poppy appeared, dressed in a simple white smock and a fine woollen purple beret. "Master Draco!" Poppy squeaked in delight, seeing Draco. "Poppy is most happy to have you as a visitor. How can Poppy be of service?"

Draco shifted minutely in his seat, hoping he wasn't putting out Astoria, who thrived on being the perfect host. "Poppy." He nodded in polite greeting at the elf, motioning to Hermione next to him, "This is Hermione Granger, my wife. Could you please fetch her some coffee?"

Hermione settled her teacup on the table and squeezed his thigh in silent thanks before introducing herself to the tiny elf. Within a minute, they were discussing Poppy's wages and whether she was fairly treated at the Zabini estate.

The animated discussion lasted a few moments before Poppy gave a curtsy and popped off in search of coffee. Draco rolled his shoulders back and bit into a second biscuit, feeling satisfied to do a small thing for his wife.

Astoria ignored the exchange, opting to hold hands with Blaise, wrapped up in wordless conversation. She raised an eyebrow, and Blaise gave her a curt nod before the pair turned back to Draco and Hermione.

“We have an exciting announcement!” Blaise exclaimed, squeezing his wife's hand tightly. “And you two will be the first to know.”

“We’re pregnant!” Astoria announced excitedly, moving a hand to her belly.

The tiny witch had no semblance of a bump, and Draco assumed it was extraordinarily early in the pregnancy. His eyes misted briefly before he blinked away the emotion.

He felt such joy for his friends, their happiness exuding into the room. With a swish of his wand, he conjured two of Lucius’ finest cigars from Malfoy Manor; his father certainly didn't need them anymore. “Congratulations to you both.” He leaned from the sofa to shake Blaise’s hand and passed one over.

“We are very excited. I can’t wait to fill this house with little Zabini’s.” Blaise grinned from ear to ear and ushered Draco to the balcony, pulling out his wand to light their cigars as they walked. “She’s going to be such a wonderful mother. Not that she hasn’t been already to all of us, but they’ll be our kids. You know?”

Draco knew how much they both wanted a family. Blaise desperately wanted to be a present father figure for his child, always declaring the things he would never do through his many stepfathers. And Astoria had always been maternal in her nature; it was only fitting that the pair would be the first of the old Slytherin crowd to be pregnant.

He looked back at Hermione, letting himself imagine what she might look like with his child. Draco had never considered it before, not really. He was too caught up in surviving a war and burying his demons.

But after his conversation with Theo, the thought of starting the Malfoy name over with her and working to be the father he wished he had growing up burrowed into his mind. “I know exactly, Blaise.”

He watched her closely from the balcony, conversing with Astoria. Draco couldn’t place the expression she gave to Astoria as they talked. Her face radiated with joy, but in her lap, he could see her knuckles turn white as she wrenched her hands in place.

Draco’s mind raced with Hermione’s list of rules for the future. “Blaise, you’ll take care of Astoria? Tell us if you need anything at all?”

“Haven’t I always?” Blaise laughed back, blowing a perfected smoke ring into the warm Italian air.

~

Hermione busied herself unpacking their bags in the small guest house. It was on the opposite side of the vineyard of the large manor, with nothing surrounding it but rows of grapes and

rolling hills in every direction. She was oddly quiet after the long day of socialising with the Zabini's. Astoria kept them busy, stuffing them with food and celebrating their announcement, but Hermione grew more silent as the day went on.

"Would you like to tell me about it?" He prodded, hoping she would put aside her rules for him.

"I can't, Draco." Tears welled in her eyes as she hung the last of her clothes into the closet. She didn't move to face him, only shifting away further to continue unpacking her toiletries in the large bathroom.

He followed her in, leaning against the doorway. "I'm surprised at you, Hermione. Of all people, you think rules are made to be broken. If something is wrong in the future, you can tell me."

"Draco." She spun in place and stomped her heeled foot against the tile floor. "I said I can't. Now leave it alone." Tears streamed down her face, and he was at a loss how to comfort her, but he knew instinctively it was what she needed.

He raised his palms in surrender as he stepped into the bathroom, closing the space between them. "Alright," he said, gazing down at her with worry. "But can you tell me what to do?"

She wrapped her arms around his shoulders, melting into him and burying her face into his chest. Soft sobs wracked her body, and Draco's oxford became damp against her cheek. "There is nothing either of us can do." She cried out into his chest.

Guilt wracked at him the more she cried, but he let her continue, allowing her to set all her pent-up emotions free, taking as much of them into his body as she would give over.

If she was determined to hold the problems of the future to herself, the least he could do was ferry her through the fallout. Draco reached awkwardly to turn on the tub, not letting her go, in fear of leaving her to cry without his presence.

As gently as he could, keeping her tucked into his body, he undressed them both and climbed into the tub with her, offering his hand for balance as she lifted her leg over the rim. He settled in behind her and nestled her small frame within his, tucking her hair behind her ear and ushering her head to rest against his chest as she wept.

The bathwater nearly ran cold by the time she stopped crying. Her eyes were rimmed with red, and her face blotchy and tear stained. Draco took a cloth and wrung it out, wiping her face clean before they left the tub.

She burrowed into him as they tucked into bed, his chin tucked atop her head. Draco couldn't figure out what the future could possibly have in store for Blaise and Astoria, but based on Hermione's reaction, he knew it wouldn't be good.

Suggested Listening: *Bittersweet Symphony* by London Grammar

Poor Blaise. Honestly, he deserved better than my using him as a plot device, but here we are. Sorry, my love.

March 17, 2019

Chapter Notes

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

March 17, 2019

Hermione held her husband well into the night, unmoving from their place at the door, both lost in grief over Astoria.

They moved through the following days on autopilot, barely speaking to one another, too wrapped up in their thoughts on the tragedy of a life gone too soon.

On the second night, she moved into the big bedroom to sleep, unwilling to spend another night alone in her bed. They held each other tightly each night as if their closeness would take away the insurmountable sadness they didn't speak of during the day.

Blaise was too distraught to make arrangements for Astoria's funeral, and Daphne, due to give birth any moment, was no longer allowed to travel by portkey. So, Malfoy had volunteered to fill the gap. He busied himself with owls and international portkeys, executing Astoria's well-documented wishes.

At the same time, Hermione continued to work within the vaults, mindlessly clearing curses from Theo's endless supply of dark artefacts, returning home late in the evening to a silent dinner.

She desperately wanted to help. To travel with her husband and arrange everything. To console Daphne. To carve out a piece of responsibility from someone else's heavy load. But they had all shut her out, even her husband.

She was alone in her grief.

Heartbroken that she would have to carry the weight of knowing this awful secret for the next fifteen years, Hermione cried for Astoria's short life. She cried for Blaise's loss of his childhood love and their teenage son she didn't even know the name of, who would now go through the remainder of his life without a mother.

On the sixth day after Astoria's death, Hermione could no longer take the silence, relegated to a ghost in her own home, and the funeral service was two days away.

"You need to speak to me eventually," she spoke lowly over their breakfast.

He looked up at her from his toast, expression oscillating between sadness and rage. "This is the shittiest fucking secret you have ever kept from me. You knew she was going to die while you were here. You fucking knew Hermione, and you didn't tell me."

Hermione's realisation dawned as she choked back the sob that bubbled up her throat, startled into existence by his outburst. He was angry at the Hermione stuck in the past for yet another one of her secrets.

“Do you think you said goodbye to her before you left? Or was this the real reason for our honeymoon?”

Hermione had no idea what honeymoon he was talking about but didn't want to dwell on the new clue. She didn't want to know anything else about the future, not if it meant she had to live with it alone for so long. “I can't respond to that, Draco. That wasn't me. It was her.”

“Well, she's not here to yell at, is she?” He snapped, throwing his spoon down into an empty bowl.

“No. She's not.” Hermione rose from the table, meeting his fury with her own, slamming her fists against the wood and rattling the dishes. “You've got me instead, Malfoy. And I'm sorry for that. But you are not the only person who is grieving right now.”

His expression fell in an instant, and he reached out his arm to grab her wrist, pulling her into his lap and rested his forehead on hers. “Gods, Hermione, I'm so sorry. I've been so angry with you,” he murmured lowly. “I don't know how you could possibly keep this secret for fifteen years. You never told me. Not a single word.”

Hermione leaned her forehead into his and rubbed her chest with the heel of her palm, trying to relieve the ache that had built in her heart. She struggled to take a full breath as the loss of Astoria weighed down atop the loss of her parents.

She failed them all.

But unlike her parents, Hermione would have to face Astoria again. It wasn't a problem she could run from.

Hermione couldn't fathom how she would be able to keep such an enormous secret for the next fifteen years, waiting for the shoe to drop. Tears freely rolled down her cheeks as she sobbed, “I can't save her, Draco. I can't save her, and I can't tell her.”

With soft strokes, he pushed the hair back from her cheeks, stuck in the moisture of her crying and tucked it behind her ears as he kissed each tear that rolled across her face—muttering apology after apology for not being there for her.

~

The funeral was held on a sunny Wednesday afternoon, uncharacteristically warm for March.

Hermione spent the time alone under a warming charm on the balcony of their flat, attempting to be closer to her friends who were graveside at Zabini's British estate. She knew going to the service would only make her situation worse. All the children would be there, and Hermione could no longer bear to hold another secret in her heart.

Malfoy reluctantly agreed, leaving her early in the morning to help Blaise prepare, with a promise to be home before dinner.

Wrapped in her familiar quilt, she sipped a cold glass of wine and forced herself to remember all the times she had enjoyed Astoria's company. While the witch was a perfectly groomed pureblood, she was also kind, had a sense of humour that would sneak up on you, and operated as a master strategist.

She and Ron often pulled out a chessboard when all the friends were together, and Hermione couldn't recall a single instance where Ron had beaten her.

"Mom? Are you home?"

Hermione abruptly snapped out of her memories upon hearing a stranger's voice call out from within the flat.

Frozen in place on the balcony, Hermione watched as her future daughter searched the flat for her mother.

She panicked. Virgo was here, and Draco was off at the funeral service. Burdened with the knowledge of Astoria's death, Hermione was more determined than ever not to break any more rules.

Hermione's letter was explicit that she was not allowed to meet her daughter and that it would be too much for the child. A quick dissolution weaved Hermione and the quilt draped around her shoulders into the afternoon air.

The girl was dressed in fine black robes suitable for mourning. Hermione hoped that Malfoy would be home soon after her if the service was over, but she became more curious and pressed closer to the glass door to get a better look.

Virgo paced quickly from room to room, clearly frustrated to find her own bedroom locked.

The Black family magic worked to protect their secret, Hermione thought with relief.

Her hair was tied half back, long curls cascading down her back. It was as if Hermione was looking in a pensive at her childhood; the girl looked so much like her. Except for her eyes. They were the most penetrating shade of silver.

Just like her father's.

Hermione began to assess her more closely as she continued to pace the flat. She was tall for her age, likely inherited from Malfoy's side of the family. Narcissa's influence was present as well; Virgo was refined as she moved, radiating maturity beyond her age and casting an intimidating presence, even alone.

A small brown leather satchel clutched under her arm gave away Hermione's influence as the girl reached into it up to her shoulder and shuffled the contents around.

Undetectable extension charm. Clever girl.

But it was the book the girl removed from the bag that startled Hermione most. Satisfied that her mother was not in the flat, Virgo pulled out a school textbook and sat in the chair just inside the balcony door, beginning to read. *The Essential Defence Against the Dark Arts*.

It was the exact textbook Hermione had in her third year, the very book she used to figure out Professor Lupin was a werewolf. While Hermione assumed that the girl might read textbooks ahead of her year, dark arts was different. Those books were prohibited for younger students.

She's not twelve. Hermione thought in horror, backing away into the balcony railing.

Malfoy had lied to her.

The girl was a third year, not a first year. Hermione's head spun with numbers, considering the September 1 age cutoff for Hogwarts admission, making adjustments for a nine-month pregnancy.

It gave her just until the end of November before she would be pregnant. And that was *if* Virgo was the youngest girl in her year.

She stood frozen, watching the girl read and scratch away notes with her quill and parchment for what felt like hours. Long enough for Hermione's warming charm to fade away and need to be recast twice over and Virgo to finish an entire sugar quill.

Hermione couldn't understand why Malfoy lied about the girl's age. She trusted him with everything. The mere idea that he would lie about anything sent her mind spinning with questions, wondering what else he might have lied about.

It wasn't until Blaise came through the floo did Hermione break her gaze from Virgo studying. Panic washed his tired face as he saw Virgo; his eyes darted around the flat rapidly while he tried to maintain his eroding composure.

Hermione couldn't tell what they were saying behind the glass, too low to hear, but the conversation ended quickly, with Blaise ushering Virgo back through the floo before searching the flat himself. She didn't understand why he was here; she wasn't expecting Malfoy home for at least another hour.

Blaise paced back into the living room and poured himself a large firewhiskey from the bar cart before setting down on the sofa, hanging his head in his hands, shoulders shaking.

His hands trembled as he drank. If he had taken the time to add ice to his tall drink, Hermione was sure it would have rattled within his grasp. She allowed him two large gulps before she cast a *finite*, ending her dissolution and re-entering the flat from outside.

If he knew she was there, he didn't show it. It wasn't until she sat down next to him did he lift his head and turn to look at her. There was nothing to his eyes but loss and unshed tears, a far cry from the Blaise she was used to in her own time.

The man that sat next to her was broken, consumed by his grief.

“Blaise. I’m so sorry.” She rested her hand on his shoulder. “I wish I could have been there today for you.”

He nodded back, his eyes red-rimmed. His face was swollen from grief, and his throat caught as he took a large swig of firewhiskey, emptying the glass. “She didn’t want you to know,” he muttered into the empty crystal, not meeting her eyes.

“I know. Malfoy told me.”

He rolled the glass between his hands, and it shook across his fingertips. “You don’t understand, Hermione.”

She paused, removing her hand from his shoulder, waiting for him to continue.

“The last fifteen years, you never said one word about this. Not to me, not to Astoria. I’ve been wracking my brain for days trying to figure out why you wouldn’t have warned us. Or at least tried to save her.”

“I can’t save her Blaise, time doesn’t work that way.”

“I know. Malfoy... This week. Having him around has been helpful, I get it now.” Blaise moved to stand, pacing about the flat frantically, tugging at his hair.

Hermione followed him, jumping back as he drew his wand, the tip hovering in front of her chin.

“Blaise –”

“No, Hermione. I know what I have to do.” The wand shook violently in his hand as tears spilled onto his cheeks. He dragged a shirtsleeve across his face in a poor attempt to dry his eyes, faltering in his stance. “I can’t let you go back and tell us. I won’t risk it, Hermione.”

“Blaise. Please don’t do this.” Hermione eyed her wand through the balcony door, still resting atop her quilt. There was no way she would be able to get it in time, and any sudden movement would only risk Blaise casting sooner. “I promise. I won’t say a word.”

“It’s not enough,” he choked out. “I need to obliviate you.”

Her knees shook. “Blaise. You can’t. You’re not in your right mind, there’s no chance you will cast it properly.”

“I have to Hermione. Don’t you understand? Astoria and I had fourteen good years before we knew she was sick. They were perfect. I’m not going to risk you going back and telling us. It will ruin everything.”

Hermione raised her palms into the air, moving slowly into Blaise’s space, trying to hold his attention. “There are other ways Blaise. Put your wand down and let’s talk about this.”

“No. You’ll take it all away.” The wand pointed sharply towards her as he lunged. “I’ve been over this a thousand times. I have to do this for Astoria.”

Hermione lowered her palms from her shoulders and held out her right hand in offering. “Let me make an unbreakable vow then.”

Blaise’s eyes shot wide in surprise, staring down at her outstretched hand. “You could get yourself killed. I won’t.”

“I would sooner risk death than be obliviated, Blaise. You know about my parents.”

Blaise nodded curtly, lowering his wand and reaching out to grasp Hermione’s outstretched hand.

Hermione racked her brain as fast as she could for the correct wording. She knew a single loophole would put her in more danger than necessary, but didn’t want to risk Blaise changing his mind at the last minute.

His hand trembled within her own. Hermione wasn’t even sure how the man was still upright, he was so wrought with grief.

She firmed up her socked feet against the floor as best she could, standing tall before she began, “I, Hermione Jean Granger, do hereby vow to never speak of Astoria’s illness, until such a time she is diagnosed. Furthermore, I vow never to speak of Astoria’s death until after she has died.”

Their hands pulled together sharply, magic coursing through her veins, firing from her chest and down her arm. A bright golden glow formed into a ribbon, weaving around their hands as the vow took its hold, solidifying her terms.

Blaise’s shoulders sagged with relief as the gold ribbon began to fade away into nothingness.

Hermione didn’t see her husband enter the flat until Blaise dropped like a stone in front of her, taken out from Malfoy’s fist colliding into his jaw.

Her hand hung empty in the air, pulsating with magic.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Youth* by Daughter

I know, I know. An unbreakable vow needs a bonder. It didn’t work for me, so I ignored it. Canon shmanon.

Do you like cliffhangers? Dramatic reveals? I sure do.

March 13, 2004

Chapter Notes

New Tags. Check the end notes for CW/TW.

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

March 13, 2004

“Thank you for last night,” Hermione whispered into Draco’s ear, rousing him from sleep. “I’m sorry that I have to keep secrets from you.”

He stretched, sending his body into wakefulness. He always slept peacefully when she stayed in his bed. “It’s alright.” He pulled her closer, enjoying the heat of her body against his own. “I understand.”

Draco, in fact, did not understand. He wanted to lift all her burdens away and take them on himself. But after last night, he knew she would not give in. The sobs that wracked her body struck a chord deep inside his chest, and he ached for whatever burden she thought she had to carry alone. He kissed the top of her head, and squeezed her in tighter, trying to communicate he would always be there for her.

Hermione wriggled from his grasp to place a quick peck on his cheek. “I’m going to tour the grounds today with Astoria. Can you keep yourself occupied until suppertime?”

“Of course.” He kissed her back soundly, ignoring the erection he woke up with. She clearly needed to spend time with Astoria, and whether or not she chose to tell him about the future didn’t matter; he wouldn’t get in her way. “I’ll find us a reservation in town?”

“That would be lovely.” She pulled away and hopped off to the bathroom, her naked arse mocking him as she paced away.

Draco resigned himself to his fist as he listened to the shower rain down upon his deepest desire on the other side of the wall.

~

Pent up from waking with a naked wife, Draco spent the day hatching a plan for their date. He flipped through her inspirational books for ideas, packed amidst a dozen other texts in her extendable beaded bag.

Draco figured she wouldn’t mind the invasion, considering his intent.

A few hours later, he successfully transfigured a gold paperweight exactly into the item displayed in the illustration in front of him, adding and testing various charms until he was satisfied. It was a fair bit of magical ingenuity, but he was confident that it would be worth the trouble later that evening and tucked the item into his robe pocket.

As he closed the textbooks, Draco summoned Hermione's beaded bag from the chair by the door, opening it wide to make sure he returned the books to the exact spot he had taken them from.

He shelved the last book, sending a small bundle of scrolls toppling into the cramped space. With a check to his wristwatch, Draco only felt passingly guilty as he pulled them out, figuring he had enough time to read a few before Hermione returned for the day.

He only meant to read one or two of the scrolls. But each was worse than the last.

Hermione, who somehow summoned the bollocks of a master extortionist, had written scrolls to nearly all of the Wizengamot members, outlining their deepest secrets, demanding a reversal of the Marriage Act, under threat of publicising their misdeeds.

The only saving grace he found in the pile was that she did not sign her own name, choosing instead to use a pseudonym of *Libra*.

Draco thought it was apt, the name she had chosen for herself, but rage coursed through his veins. Anyone with a brain would be able to put together that Hermione wrote each of these scrolls.

No one else he knew of could possibly write two feet worth of parchment, outlining in specific detail the sordid affair in Kingsley's scroll, complete with dates, locations, and comments on the weather from each day.

She would be hunted within days of sending them in the post.

Briefly, Draco considered lighting the entire pile on fire. But that wouldn't prove fruitful in the long run. If anything, she would only rewrite them. And he didn't put it past her to have copies already made.

So, Draco continued to hatch his plan for the evening and shoved the scrolls back in the bag, exactly where he found them, only minutes before his wife walked back through the front door.

The morning's concern and worry shifted darkly to anger as he saw her. No matter how much time passed, she would always run headfirst into danger, not allowing him to help her. But her hair bounced as she walked, and her olive legs shone in the afternoon sun.

Draco's anger bled into temptation, the line between the two getting increasingly blurred.

"I've made a reservation," he told her with a kiss on the cheek, steeling his emotions. "Can you be ready in thirty minutes?"

She seemed in a good mood, smiling from ear to ear. Draco hoped she enjoyed her time with Astoria and nurtured whatever feelings from last night into a better place. He wanted her full attention this evening.

"Draco, I have been out in the Italian sun all day with Astoria. I'll need forty-five at least." She laughed out, pressing her small hand to his chest, grazing across his muscles while she moved around him. "But I promise it will be worth the wait."

"*Baby.*" He called her out in title as she walked away, stopping her in her tracks. "I have a present for you."

Hermione spun on her heel and pulled her bottom lip into her mouth before walking sensually back towards him. "*Daddy,*" She held out her hand, awaiting her gift. "I always love your presents."

Draco pulled out the package from his pocket, wrapped, as always, in black matte paper and a shining golden ribbon, and placed it into her palm. "Wear this for me tonight?"

"Yes, Daddy," She responded seductively, curling her fingers around the gift before returning to the bedroom to get dressed.

Draco adjusted his trousers as he watched her walk away, imagining her face as she opened it in private. But he wanted to build up the anticipation for them both and steeled himself to wait outside the bedroom.

Already dressed for the evening, Draco settled into an oversized leather chair with a glass of firewhiskey and waited patiently for his wife.

The full hour it took her to get dressed was more than worth it. She returned from the bedroom in a skintight green dress with a plunging neckline and a hem that landed just above her knees.

Her usual red bottom shoes clicked across the wood floor, and Draco's cock twitched at the sight of two matching silver anklets sparkling and shifting as she walked, his mind flashing back to the conjured bar held under his knee only a few nights previous.

"Are you wearing my gift?" He asked, tracing a single finger down the neckline of her dress, skating her faded scar, ending at the base of her sternum. Her breasts were wrapped tightly in the green fabric, not shifting an inch as she walked.

Draco wondered if she used any magic to get herself into it, and how much it would require to get her out of it.

Hermione placed a hand on his chest, looking up at him to kiss him on the cheek. "I could never say no to you, Daddy."

Draco smiled back at the witch as he crowded her space, taking in his favourite scent. "In that case, I'll take your knickers too". He reluctantly pulled his finger from her bare chest and held out a palm in expectation.

His heart beat furiously in his chest as her smile ticked upwards, playing at the corner of her mouth.

Hermione pulled her dress up at each side, shimmying the tight material nearly to her hips, before reaching underneath to pull a tiny scrap of black lace down her thighs. Shifting from foot to foot, the fabric fell from her knees to the floor as she tugged the dress's hemline back down.

She grasped his hand for balance as she bent over to pick up the lace before straightening herself upright and handing over the knickers.

Draco thought for a moment he would simply vanish them. But he would be remiss at not seeing how little the pair would cover, so he stashed them away into his robe pocket, saving them for another time.

In a swirl of black mist, Draco apparated them to a small restaurant in a nearby magical community, suggested by Blaise. His only conditions for a recommendation were good food and privacy, and Blaise jumped at the opportunity to provide a location.

Ushered into a private dining room, wine bottles on all sides surrounded them. Draco silently thanked his friend for coming through on the request, only hoping the food would be just as good as what he had planned for the evening.

"Comfortable?" He asked Hermione as she sat down, helping her to push her chair back into the table. She shifted around in the chair, redness blooming across her face.

"Quite." Her mouth pursed tightly as she sat straight, craning up to look at him. "Just adjusting."

Draco let his knuckles graze her shoulder as he circled the table and sat in his own chair, pulling his wand out surreptitiously beneath the table to rest by his thigh. "Would you like some help with that baby?" He asked, curious if she would admit any vulnerability.

Hermione furrowed her brow, looking unsure of the answer. "Define help." The look in her eyes taunted him, laced with disrespect and frustration.

Draco refused to respond to the question. He flicked his wand sharply underneath the table, setting his golden gift to increase in size. She snapped forward in shock, her hand clutching the edge of the table, pulling the white tablecloth down towards her lap.

She glared up from the table, sending daggers with her eyes. "That wasn't help, *Daddy*."

"Are you telling me you don't like your present?"

"I never said that." She pushed herself back off the table, adjusting to sit upright. The redness from her cheeks began to trail down her chest.

Draco wondered if she wore the dress on purpose, knowing how much he enjoyed watching her skin shift in colour.

“Good,” he replied, chest swelling, pleased she was enjoying his creation, regardless of her tone. “You know how I feel about giving gifts.”

When the waiter returned, Draco ordered both their meals, tipping him generously not to return to the room for the remainder of the meal but to magically send the food and wine through the door.

Exhibition was on neither of their lists.

“How was your day with Astoria?” He asked, wanting to distract them both from the building sexual tension as they ate their appetisers. The salads were light and refreshing, paired with a sharp white wine that Draco refrained from overindulging in.

“I had the most marvellous tour of the winery. The elves have created the most interesting hydroponic system to optimise moisture levels. An astonishing feat of magic.” She took a small sip of wine before exchanging the glass for her water. “And I got to sample their wine, which was delicious. They’ll have a booming business in no time. It’s lovely to see.”

He couldn’t piece together the mystery of Blaise and Astoria. By all accounts, Hermione was overjoyed, talking about the success of their future business. But last night’s anguish told Draco a different story.

They moved on to the main course, continuing their conversation about friends and work. Draco pried, trying to pick up clues as the meal went on, but she was a mastermind of conversation, eluding each penetrative question with a practised answer.

Even her growing arousal at his gift, evidenced by her increased shifting in her chair, failed to derail her secrets.

By the time Draco ordered a dessert to share, Hermione declined any more food.

Her adjustments in her seat, attempting to get comfortable through the meal, escalated to near-continuous hip rolling as she searched for relief. She abandoned her wine early in the dinner, and Draco was curious if she worried it would distract from her focus.

“You seem uncomfortable baby.” He murmured, setting his fork down gracefully as he finished the last of their dessert, taking all the time in the world watching her writhe around while the chocolate souffle melted in his mouth. “Why don’t you come over here and let me help you.”

Hermione’s eyes darted to the closed door of the private room before she struggled to get up from her chair, circling the table to stand next to him. The musk of her arousal, so close to his face, hidden under her tight dress overpowered her usual scent of jasmine and parchment.

She braced her hand on his shoulder to keep herself upright, tall heels wobbling on the floor. The flush on her chest glowed bright red, and Draco wondered how warm it might be if he rested his cheek against it.

He flicked his wand under the table, away from her gaze, increasing the size of the toy and setting it to a low vibration.

Hermione pitched over at the change, failing to steady herself against his shoulder and fell into his arms with a delicious moan.

The moment she fell, Draco apparated them back to the guesthouse walkway, swiftly picking her up by the arse and kicking the door in to gain entry. Her dress bunched up at her hips as she wrapped her legs around him, exposing her naked core to his abdomen.

His shirt soaked with her wetness as she rolled her hips against him, goading him further.

Their tongues met in frantic kisses as he paced into the bedroom. She tasted of crisp white wine and desire, sending Draco into a fever, only wanting to taste every inch of her.

The anticipation that built over the long dinner sent them both into a state of aroused madness.

He threw her down onto the bed and took the plunging neckline of her dress in both hands, ripping it clean down the front, exposing her to the cool night air. Her nipples pebbled as she arched her back off the bed and threw her head back, writhing with the low rumbling vibrations faintly heard in the room.

Her chest gleamed with sweat, and Draco leaned down to lick a long stripe from navel to chin, luxuriating in her saltiness.

“I want to see it.” He growled at her, unable to hold off his anticipation any further. He wanted to see what his hard day’s work resulted in.

Hermione moaned as she rolled over onto all fours, sloughing off the dress that hung uselessly from her shoulders. She leaned down to rest her elbows on the soft mattress as she wiggled her arse back at Draco.

He had a completely unhindered view of her.

Cunt swollen and dripping wet with need, and a slim golden handle nestled between her arse cheeks. He only increased it twice that evening, and wondered how many more sizes she would be able to take before the night was over.

Draco took the handle into his grasp. The gold was slick from her arousal, making it slippery and hard to hold with the low vibrations, but he latched on firmly, emboldened by her desperate moans as he shifted the weight inside her.

He worked her open, pumping the gold in and out of her, watching with fascination as she clenched and relaxed around the toy.

“More, baby?” He asked.

“Yes, Daddy. Please.” She pushed her arse back into him, sending the toy deep into her channel, Draco’s knuckles pressed firmly against her backside.

With his free hand, he pulled his wand from his trousers and flicked sharply, increasing the toy another size. A feral grunt came from Hermione as she lunged forward, absorbing the change in pressure and pulling his hand with her.

Draco's cock threatened to rip his pants apart, but he wasn't even close to being finished with her. He wrapped his arm around her hips, pulling her back up onto all fours and continued to play with her, spinning the toy in place, pushing and pulling as her noises became more unhinged.

He watched with fascination as she began to tremble underneath his hold, hanging her head low, hair pooling against the bed.

Draco filled with pride when he realised she was trying to hold back her orgasm; he didn't even have to ask; she only assumed that she wasn't allowed.

He wondered if this was an expectation always present in their relationship, which only made him harder. "Are you holding back for me, baby?"

She groaned in affirmation, writhing furiously into the mattress and fisting the sheets beneath her.

Irritated by her disrespect for not answering his question, he began barking questions at her as he thrust the toy deeper.

"Whose hole is this?"

"Your's Daddy!" She screamed out.

"And who owns you?"

"You do, Daddy!"

"Who do you come for."

"Only you, Daddy," she cried out for him. "Please."

Clearly, she absorbed his message, but he wasn't done with her. Not until she understood that she was his completely.

"No. You can take a little more."

She only responded with a sob, hanging her head lower, rocking back and forth as she took the toy deeper.

With another flick of his wand, Draco vanished his clothes, moving atop the bed, circling her to kneel by her head, continuing to work the toy into her tight hole. "Get me wet, baby," he ordered.

She scrambled from her elbows, taking his cock deep within her mouth. She was frantic in her sucking and licking as he pushed her forward from behind, encouraging her to take more.

It was only two short strokes before she took him into her throat, garbling at his length, pounding her face against his body, searching for more.

Draco wrapped his knuckles tightly around his wand, anticipating his final surprise, and cast the wordless gemino he had practised all afternoon.

Without warning her, he hovered a second golden toy through the air, aligning it with her cunt and stilling his movements against her arse for only a moment as the second toy slammed into her core, not facing any resistance from her dripping wetness.

The scream she released around his cock took Draco further than he thought possible into her throat, and he lunged forward, bracing himself on the golden handle, working her in tandem with the identical item in her cunt, moving freely on its own.

“You take it so well, baby,” He praised, admiring the sight of her from his new angle. The toys alternating in and out were mesmerising, working her sweat-covered body to a new height. “Show me how much you want to come.”

She widened her knees as much as possible and arched her back, trying to escape into the bed. But Draco held her up on all sides, rolling his hips into her mouth and picking up speed as he thrust into her. Her slick pooled onto the bedspread beneath her as she writhed against him, choking herself on his cock.

Draco pulled himself to full height, kneeling before her and abandoned the golden handle. With a final flick of his wand, both toys moved on their own volition, and he turned on the vibration of the one nestled inside her cunt, setting them both to their maximum setting.

“Come.”

She buckled in front of him, attempting to absorb the impact of both toys while keeping his cock in her mouth.

It was a futile effort; drool streamed down her cheeks as rapidly as her cunt leaked onto the bed. She was a writhing, grunting mess as her entire body shook with the convulsions of her release.

Draco pulled his hard length out of her mouth, circling behind her to watch the toys continue to work as she convulsed. He fisted himself at the sight, delighted in the results of his work. Everything was swollen and wet, completely spent from the exertion and strain of the evening.

He painted her olive skin and the golden toys white, spurting thick ropes of come across her arse and down her core.

Draco gained a hold of himself as quickly as he could before pulling the toy out of her cunt, still vibrating. He left the one in her arse for another minute as he admired the results of the evening, watching her lips pulse like a beating heart as she whimpered into the mattress, banging her fist down in surrender.

As slowly as he could manage, Draco pulled the gold out of her, working it back and forth a few final times as a gift to himself, immensely enjoying the muffled whines for mercy.

He dropped both to the floor, where their vibrations rattled against the wood. Draco took his wand from the bed as he rolled onto his back beside her, waving it idly to cease the rumbling noise.

She turned her head from the mattress, dragging her face along the sheets as she moved to face him, mascara smudging against the white cotton. “I should hex you for that,” she choked out with a laugh, groaning as she dropped her hips to the side, rolling to face him.

Draco pulled her atop his chest, weaving his fingers up and down her back, dipping into the stickiness still covering her arse and idly dragging it up her spine. She melted into him, finally his, and he knew this would be his only chance to get the truth.

He locked his arms around her, rolling them both until she was caged beneath him and stared as threateningly as he could down upon her before whispering into her ear.

“Not if I don't hex you first... Libra.”

Chapter End Notes

TW/CW: Double & Triple Penetration, Orgasm Denial

Suggested Listening: *Beggin for Thread* by BANKS

Let's circle back to Baby Draco being a naive 23-year-old boy. Because Daddy WOULD NEVER. That being said, I hope you enjoyed my filthy mind.

Later sluts.

March 29, 2019

Chapter Notes

TW/CW: Check the End Notes

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

March 29, 2019

“Malfoy!”

She wasn’t even sure he heard her.

His chest heaved with rage, fists clenched at his side as he stared down at an unconscious Blaise on the floor. He picked up his limp form by the shirt collar and tossed him unceremoniously onto the sofa, barely straining from the weight.

Malfoy spun back on his heel to face her, and Hermione stepped back instinctively, providing him more space for the rage to roll off his broad form. She had never seen him so angry. The whites of his eyes shone brightly as he stared down at her, nostrils flaring as he breathed, unsuccessfully trying to regain his composure.

“This whole fucking time, it’s been him!” he roared out, pointing back at Blaise’s slack form. “I knew, Hermione. I knew you kept secrets. I’ve been angry with you all this time, and I should have been angry at him.”

Hermione didn’t know what he meant or how long he had been truly angry with her. If this was yet another instance where she was bearing the unfair burden of the older Hermione. Her mind spun with the day’s events, the trust between them crumbling rapidly.

“I’ve never once lied to you,” she yelled in self-defence, halving the space between them. Magic built up in her chest, snaking down the veins in her arms where it cracked loudly between her fingers.

He yelled back, escalating their joint anger, “Not yet. But you will.”

A sour taste built up at the back of her mouth. It was the other Hermione he was so furious with. But this choice was purely her doing. She had sentenced them all to years of lies and secrets in a split-second decision without thinking of the impact it might have on their relationship.

The lines blurred between past and future as reality came crashing down upon her. “He was going to obliviate me, Malfoy. What did you expect me to do?” she choked out, tears pricking

at the corner of her eyes.

“I was right behind him, Hermione.” He pulled a hand down his face, lowering his voice. “I saw him sneak off after the service ended and followed him to the floo. I heard him call out our flat and went through behind him as fast as I could. I couldn’t have been more than two minutes. But that was all it took you to rush into this, like you always do, without considering what it might do to anyone else.”

He loosened his tie and ripped it off, throwing it to the floor. His hair had escaped its knot, platinum strands askew atop his shoulders. He grasped at his hips and bent forward before setting himself upright to close the gap between them, clutching her shoulders tightly as tears built in his eyes.

“I can’t protect you from this.” His voice cracked with emotion.

Hermione banged her fists into his chest, letting the sobs that begged to escape for years wrack free. All the emotion that built since she arrived poured out of her like a dam breaking.

Since she lost her parents.

Astoria.

Everything was happening so fast, and she was quickly sinking underwater, with no one to pull her to the surface. “When will you learn that I don’t need your protection.” She dropped her forehead to rest against his chest. “I need to trust you.”

“What have I ever done to make you not trust me, Hermione?” he whispered into the top of her curls, holding her close to his chest. “Have I not tried to be there for you at every single turn?”

Hermione stuttered, choking on a sob. Her heart raced in her chest, and fury began to spark at her fingertips, snapping red fireworks against his suit jacket. She wrenched herself free from his arms, not caring in the slightest over his look of confusion. “You’re a shite liar, Malfoy. Next time you try it, have the bollocks to look me in the eye.”

“What on earth are you talking about.” He backed away, narrowing his eyes at her crackling hands.

“How old is Virgo?”

A groan from the sofa interrupted their argument as Blaise rolled to the side, cradling his face. Malfoy shot a hand out behind himself, casting a nonverbal stupefy; blasting a beam of magic from his palm, he lit the room in an ominous red glow. Blaise slumped back over, silent in the room's tension.

Malfoy’s eyes darted to the mantle before he answered the question, avoiding her gaze, “I told you, she’s twelve.”

Hermione stalked over to him and stuck a pointed finger into his chest, pushing him backwards, “More lies!” She could barely believe he was digging deeper into his secrecy.

His eyes opened wide as he grabbed at her finger and threw it to the side forcefully. “Tell me you did not talk to her. You had no right –”

“*She's fourteen!*”

The glass of the balcony door shattered with Hermione’s scream, the first bout of accidental magic since she was ten years old and blew the engine of her father's car. Stomping away, she snatched up her vine wood and pointed it back at his neck, a hairs breath away from his juglar. “Give me one good reason I shouldn’t fucking hex you right now Malfoy.”

He winced at the wand, but didn’t move to avoid her threat. “Because I knew it would overwhelm you.” He lifted his palms to the air in mock surrender, stepping forward to close the space between them, forcing her wand into his throat. “You weren’t ready to hear it.”

“I trusted you.” The wand shook in her hand, dropping to graze the collar of his oxford. Tears burned at her eyes, and the sobs she pushed back down threatened to escape.

He moved a hand slowly to wrap around her wand, easing it from her grasp. “I was only trying to protect you,” he murmured down to her, tossing the wand to the floor where it clattered away towards an unconscious Blaise. “All these secrets between us, Hermione. And for what?”

“Don’t you dare tell me about the mystery of life right now.”

“Hermione. The fact that she is fourteen is not the reason I lied to you,” he whispered, reaching out to her.

She backed away from his outstretched hand, lifting her palms in the air in avoidance, unwilling to touch him during such overwhelming deception. “What could possibly be worse,” she snapped back.

“When you returned to me years ago... You were already pregnant. Hermione, you and I conceived Virgo. Not you and *him*.”

~

Gravel crunched loudly underfoot as Hermione stomped up the path to Pansy and Neville’s cottage. She left Malfoy in a crack of apparition, straight from their living room the instant she grabbed her wand off the floor, not bothering to see the look on his face as she left.

Panic shook through her at the thought of being pregnant in the next two months. Barely an adult herself, only just thrust into a marriage with a man she thought she might be in love with.

Maybe.

Probably.

There was nothing more he could say after the awful truth came out. Hermione needed space away from her husband to process the information, moving the puzzle pieces around in her

head.

Her hands skated against the bushes as she climbed the hill, grateful for the distraction of the thorny leaves against her palm. The sharp scratches pulled her focus inward, allowing her to organise her growing list of problems before she unloaded it all on an unsuspecting Pansy.

Hermione almost felt bad as she stormed through the door without knocking, finding Pansy perched atop the counter with Neville standing between her legs, lazily snogging while a pot bubbled away next to them. Her hands tousled his hair as she wrapped her legs around his broad frame, sending a pang of jealousy to Hermione's heart.

Everything seemed so easy for them without the added complexity of time and secrets.

A surprised squeak came out of Pansy as she pushed her husband away by the chest before hopping off the counter and straightening her blouse. "Ever hear of knocking Granger?"

"Sorry." Hermione threw her wand down on the table and sat without invitation. Pansy would just have to understand. "I needed you."

"Hermione," Neville said in greeting with a curt nod, adjusting his belt, before kissing Pansy on the cheek and murmuring in her ear, "I'll take the kids over to Ron and Luna's. Save me some dinner?"

Pansy nodded back at Neville as he climbed up the stairwell, sending his wife a wink before disappearing to the cottage's second floor.

"Alright, Granger. Out with it." Pansy huffed as she sat at the table, swishing her wand aimlessly to summon wine and two glasses from a lower cupboard, hovering through the air to pour and serve itself. "I don't know if you noticed, but you've interrupted here."

She didn't have the state of mind to build up to her main problem and figured it was best to just dive right in. "I found out about Virgo today. When she was conceived."

Pansy choked on her wine abruptly but tried to recover as fast as she could, setting the glass back on the table and pressing a single manicured finger to her lips.

"I saw her after the service. Not that I spoke to her; she never saw me." Hermione began to ramble, her confession tumbling from her mouth freely, "I watched her from the window, and gods, she was so beautiful and perfect. But he lied to me, Pansy. He told me she was twelve."

"So what?"

"Excuse me?"

"You heard what I said, Granger. *So What?*"

"Pansy. I thought I would have more time."

"And what exactly were you planning on doing with this more time you speak of?" Pansy responded, arching a brow.

Hermione huffed; she didn't have a straightforward answer to the question. "I don't know, build my career? Figure out what my marriage might be like with the man I supposedly am in love with?"

"Do you love him?" Pansy asked as if she were asking what Hermione might want for a snack.

"It's not—"

"No." She waved her hand dismissively, "Don't overthink it. Do you love Draco?"

Hermione began to let her mind wander, lost in thoughts of Malfoy, past and present, as Pansy snapped two fingers in front of her face.

"Yes." She answered without thinking any further, startled by her truth.

"And when you saw Virgo today, who, by the way, is an amazing young woman, what did you feel?"

"I was angry Pansy! Didn't you hear me? He lied!"

"No." Pansy shook her head, "What did you feel about Virgo."

Hermione thought back to the afternoon, trying to recollect how she truly felt, her gut reaction to Draco's lie so overwhelming it buried the other emotions out of reach. But she knew that time slowed down in the space when she watched intently, as if she could manipulate it to have enough to observe everything about her. Curiously, she wanted to know about the girl's life.

What was her first bit of magic?

Would she be taunted at school as a know it all like her mother?

How much did she act and talk like her father?

"I wanted to know her."

"Good." Pansy stood from her chair and walked off through the cottage, not looking back to see if Hermione followed. She strolled barefoot through the hallway gracefully, leading them to what appeared to be the main bedroom. Leafy plants scaled one wall, creating a makeshift headboard atop a large bed in soft cream linens.

She moved to the side of the bed, picking up an aged wooden frame with a small piece of parchment pressed underneath the glass and handed it to Hermione. Her hands shook the smallest amount before she clasped them together, waiting.

Hermione turned the frame right-side up to read the faded inscription on the parchment.

Have faith. They will come.

She didn't understand the message. "What is this, Pansy?"

"This is my scroll." Pansy took the frame back, carefully setting it beside the bed, exactly in the place it came from, before ushering Hermione to sit on the edge of the bed with her.

If they weren't surrounded by Neville's plants, Hermione would have sworn they were in the mind healers waiting room from eighth year, waiting for their name to be called next. To spill their secrets and attempt a new future.

"I had four babies that didn't make it to this world." Pansy muttered, staring straight ahead, her hands clenched tightly in her lap.

Hermione's heart shattered. Another secret that would carry its weight into her future. There were no words she could offer her friend, knowing too well the heaviness of grief that lived forever in one's soul.

"The first one was shortly after you returned from this trip, and she took forever to take." Pansy took her hand, shifting her teary gaze to Hermione. "We started trying before we were even married. No one knows outside of Neville and me, not that we are ashamed, mind you; it's just a conversation we don't need to have with people outside of our relationship." She wiped a fallen tear from her cheek, pulling herself together faster than Hermione thought possible.

Hermione's eyes burned with tears. "Pansy, I'm so sorry." She cried, squeezing her hand tightly.

"Really, Granger. It's okay. They weren't meant to be, not that I don't mourn them."

"Then why would you tell me this?"

"What I'm trying to tell you is you can make all the plans you want, but babies have a way of appearing on their own timelines." Pansy pulled a photo out of her trouser pocket, sparkling with a charm to withstand being folded and refolded. It still looked perfectly new.

Three small children, all looking to be under the age of five, climbed atop Neville, pausing for only a moment to smile at the camera, each unsynchronized with the others. "Time and fate are giving you a chance to get to know Virgo. Who do you think you are to say no?"

Hermione stared into each of Pansy and Neville's children's eyes in the photo one by one, thinking back to the silver irises of her daughter. "They're beautiful," she whispered.

"I tend to agree, Granger. We usually feel that way about our own children."

Hermione had come so far in accepting fate's plans for her, more so than ever after Astoria's death and the unbreakable vow she shackled herself with. With all the secrets she accumulated in this time, perhaps not all of them would weigh her down.

Knowing Pansy's secret didn't mean she couldn't help, in her own way.

She handed the photo back to Pansy, nodding in thanks. It was as if no time had passed since their shared experience in the Healer Stroud's waiting room. Thousands of words communicated through a hand, held in silence.

Without another word, Hermione left Pansy in her leafy bedroom, and left the cottage to return to her husband.

Chapter End Notes

TW/CW: Miscarriage/Pregnancy Loss

Suggested Listening: *Chemtrails Over the Country Club* by Lana Del Rey

This fic is a bit of a love story to Pansy and Neville. And a little bit to myself.

March 13, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

March 13, 2004

Glass shattered across the floor as artwork fell from the walls, thrown by the impact of his back crunching into the plaster. Draco barely felt Hermione's body tense underneath him before she forcibly threw him from the bed and through the air. Her wandless magic proving itself yet again.

"Red."

He heard the safeword from his place crumpled on the floor, not seeing her expression. Draco pulled himself up, ignoring the sharp pain of glass shards in his palms. It could not be any worse than the fallout he was about to withstand.

Red magic crackled around her outstretched palms, still vibrating from the stunning spell that launched him from atop her body. She sat up atop the bed looking down upon him with righteous fury, arms outstretched as if a sword and scales would land in her hands at any moment.

"How dare you," she seethed, her naked chest heaving with each breath. Curls stuck to her forehead against a sheen of sweat.

Draco's mind spun back in time to the moment she punched him, shattering his heart and nose in one vicious second.

Foul.

Evil.

She was right, as always. He called her *Libra* in her most vulnerable moment, something he was sure would get her to expose her secrets, lost in his need to control her. "Baby. I'm sorry," he murmured, palms in the air as he shuffled along the floor on his knees, pulling fragments of broken glass with his skin.

"You do not get to call me that right now, Malfoy. You've lost the privilege," she snapped, scrambling to wrap the blankets around her body, covering her nakedness.

Draco winced at the sound of his surname; she never called him that. "Hermione then," he said, avoiding sending a *Granger* back at her, knowing that would only dig his grave deeper. He reached the side of the bed, settling his elbows atop the edge as if pleading for forgiveness might work.

She snorted in offence, leaving the bed with blankets in tow and grabbed her beaded bag from the floor, rifling through it quickly in assessment. “You went through my things. Invaded my privacy. For what, Draco?”

“You’ve been keeping secrets from me.”

“I’ve told you before. You shouldn’t know about the future. It’s not healthy.” An arm dove elbow-deep into her bag, pulling out her wand. In a hurried flick, the glass scattered across the floor assembled itself back together, the frames flying back to the hooks on the wall.

Draco hissed at the pinch of shards vacating his palms and knees, only grateful he didn’t have prior warning to anticipate the pain. She circled the bed, abruptly gesturing from her blanket for him to sit atop the mattress with a sneer.

He obeyed the command and watched her closely as she healed the scrapes and cleaned the blood. He hadn’t seen the familiar wand in ages. “You’re using your wand,” he observed as she weaved the final cut closed with a whisper. The vinewood moved quickly from knees to hands.

Methodical in her work. Uncaring.

“I don’t like to do healing magic wandless. It’s not worth the risk,” she bit back, moving to thrust her wand back into the beaded bag in the corner of the room.

He inspected his palms, healed from her skilled magic, without a hint of scarring. Warmth radiated from her lingering spells, and he rubbed them together to feel her, setting his hands down on his lap, focusing his gaze on his gleaming signet ring. “Just because you won’t tell me about Blaise and Astoria, doesn’t mean I can’t help you with the Wizengamot,” he muttered.

The soft sound of her padding through the room, blanket dragging behind her, warned Draco before she stood between his knees.

The bedding dropped to the floor behind her, pooling around her feet. Her face and chest blotched with redness; her makeup smudged around her eyes.

But she was beautiful, returning to him.

Her hands took his, moving them to the side so she could climb atop his lap, pressing her forehead against his.

“Don’t you ever try to manipulate me after a scene,” she whispered angrily, tugging sharply against the hair on the nape of his neck.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered back, wrapping his arms around her to pull her small body closer, revelling in the warmth of her skin. He tried to keep his voice low and calming, attempting to bring them both back to the present. “Please let me help you. Keep you safe.”

She pushed back against his chest, her amber eyes fierce with determination. “I am more than capable of taking care of myself, Malfoy.”

"I know that."

Her anger faltered as steel eyes met amber, and she took a deep breath, shoulders rising in time with his slowing heart rate. Delicate fingers weaved through his hair, curling around the length he was still unaccustomed to.

She tucked the loose strands behind his ears, her knuckles ghosting his jawline. "I need to do this alone, Draco. You can't help me," she whispered, "I'm sorry."

"No." He wouldn't accept it, not being able to protect her from herself. "I need one good reason."

"You won't understand."

"Help me understand then. Please."

Her eyes welled with tears. She brushed them away quickly with the heel of her palm, smudging her makeup further across her face in a futile attempt to pull herself together.

Draco could barely keep up with her rollercoaster of emotions, and knowing he caused such turbulence when he should have been caring for her gnawed at his heart.

"You're not him."

The ache in his chest shattered, ricocheting off of ribs as her words cut through to the bone.

He wasn't enough for her.

She came from the future, with years of a relationship under her belt, and tried to do the best she could with an inferior version of her husband. One who couldn't take care of her, one she couldn't fully trust.

"One day you will be." She pulled his jaw into her hands, the day-old stubble pulled under her fingernails as she gave him a soft scratch. "You'll become the man you are supposed to be."

"But I'm not that man yet," he whispered, forcing his emotions down deep into his belly, away from where she might see his vulnerability.

"I'm sorry. No."

"And when you came back, what did I tell you? How do you know this will work?"

"You were so proud of me. You told me all about how I singlehandedly took down the marriage act. It was all you could talk about for weeks. You convinced me to build that whole book, and get information on everyone."

Draco stared into her gaze, looking for a tell to expose her lie, but as much as he searched, there were none.

He couldn't understand how it was possible he would simply stand by while she took the law down herself. It was the furthest thing from his instincts, screaming at him to keep her safe. His only motivation, through everything, was to protect her. Their marriage contract was proof enough of that.

The marriage contract. His original lie.

He pulled her back into his arms and rested his chin on her shoulder, locking his eyes on the meaningless pictures reconstructed on the wall, void of any evidence of his spilt blood. "I believe you," he whispered into her ear, pushing her hair back with a caring hand. "But I need one thing. Promise me you don't send out the scrolls until the end of April. Give me a month not to worry about you."

She pulled back from the hug, looking slightly perplexed. Determined to get her to agree, he pressed his lips against her own, tasting her saltiness, pouring every ounce of love he could muster through the kiss. "Please, Hermione," he murmured against her open mouth.

A simple nod. All he needed.

He was going to make it through this fight with his wife alive if it was the last thing he did.

~

A sharp pop of apparition sounded as Draco stepped out of the floo at Malfoy Manor. "Master Draco," Mipsy cried in greeting, "We weren't expecting you this evening."

He dusted the floo ash from his knit sweater and handed over the shoebox under his arm. "Apologies, Mipsy. I know you like to be prepared. Would a new pair of Chuck Taylors earn my forgiveness?"

The little elf's ears shot straight up as she snatched the cardboard box out of his hands. She lifted the top of the lid only a fraction before a high squeak peeled out, and she bounced from foot to foot excitedly. "Limited edition! Master Draco is most generous indeed. How can Mipsy be of service"

"Is my mother home?"

Mipsy nodded back from her seat on the floor, already pulling off her trainers to try on her gift. Draco stifled a laugh, wondering if a future version of himself would ever share with Blaise the secret to Mipsy's forgiveness. "The war room," she responded, not looking back up from her laces.

Draco stalked off down the stark hallways to find his mother sitting at her desk with her morning tea, shuffling through her papers. Reading glasses perched at the tip of her nose as she scanned the parchments and scrolls for something of use.

"My Dragon!" She exclaimed, pulling off her glasses to let them hang from the gold chain around her neck. "What a delightful surprise. Is everything alright?"

He sat in the chair opposite her desk. Never before had he felt equal to his mother in this room, always as if he were intruding on her work. But a new sensation settled within his veins, and his conversations with Theo ruminated loudly in his mind.

“Everything is fine Mother. I’ve simply come to the realisation that it is time to move forward with my life. I cannot rely on you to run House Malfoy forever.”

“Oh?” She lifted an eyebrow, sitting back in her chair. “Is it time then?”

Draco nodded curtly.

“Very well.” A small gold key pulled from the pocket of her robes unlocked the top drawer of her desk. “You’ll need Percy Weasley to schedule a session.” She took a worn scroll from the drawer and opened it to add her embellished signature with a flourish of her peacock feather quill. A flick of her wand sent the scroll back together into a tight roll, a green ribbon snapping in place bearing the Malfoy crest.

She handed the scroll across the table, pausing as both their hands held the parchment.

“You’re sure?”

“Yes,” Draco confirmed confidently; never more sure of a decision in his life.

She released the scroll with a nod, and he held it tightly in his grasp.

“Will you convince Theo it’s time as well?”

“I can try.” She shifted in her seat, setting the key back into her robe pocket. “You know what he thinks about it. Too much of his father wrapped up in the decision.”

“Something tells me he will be ready to move on. Tell him it needs to happen on May 1.”

“Consider it done. Can I help you with anything else?”

Draco eyed the clock on the mantle; he was going to be late for work. “There are rumours swirling around that the Wizengamot is being threatened. Something about a character named Libra. If you hear anything of the sort, would you let me know?”

“I haven’t heard a word about someone of the name Libra. Where are you getting these rumours from?”

“Confidential. DMLE business,” he lied, hoping she wouldn’t notice. “Just promise me you will alert me if you hear anything.”

A single nod of her head and a move to put her glasses back on told Draco their negotiation had concluded successfully.

“Thank you, Mother.” He rapped his knuckles against the chair; signet ring knocking against the old wood. “And thank you for keeping the seat warm until I was ready. I know how much work it has been for you.”

“Anything for my sons. You know that.” A sly smile broke onto her face. “I will always be here for help if you need me.”

~

Draco was only ten minutes late to work after the rushed conversation with his mother. He didn't want to linger or give her any additional time to pry. There was too much at stake.

The more time he was in her presence, the more she would try to dive deeper into his rationale and actions. He paced over to the auror cubicles, searching for the familiar ginger hair looming above the desk walls.

He found Ron Weasley socializing with Katie Bell and Cormac McLaggen by the water cooler, none of them working on anything productive. “Weasley.” Draco tilted his head sharply to the side, trying to communicate a need for privacy, ignoring the other two aurors completely.

Draco led them into an empty meeting room, closing the door behind them and casting a privacy charm.

“Blimey Malfoy. Catch a murderer while you were on vacation? What's with the skull and dagger?”

“I can't tell you why, but I need to talk to Percy.” He shoved his hands into his robe pockets, reassuring himself with the old scroll in his grip.

“You know Percy's in hiding, the shite rat.” A crinkle of disgust appeared on Ron's nose, pinching his freckles together before he schooled his face to seriousness. “Won't face up to the public outcry over the Marriage Act. Hasn't replied to a single owl from mum.”

“So you know where he is then.”

“Only one person would take him in.” Ron shifted from foot to foot, “Why do you need to see him?”

“I told you Weasley. I can't tell you why.” He moved the scroll's ribbon between his fingers, imprinting the Malfoy crest under the pad of his thumb.

“Listen Malfoy. You're putting me between a rock and a hard place here. I trust you, but he's my brother. Just give me something.”

Draco paused. He knew that if he didn't confess something, his shot of sitting down with Percy went up in smoke. “If I don't go talk to Percy, Hermione is going to get herself killed.”

Ron nodded sharply. “Come over to the house on Friday after work. I'll have a portkey ready to go.”

~

The smell of smoke and charred flesh filled the air of the dragon sanctuary. Draco's stomach turned the moment their portkey released them into the mountainous range. It smelled of Malfoy Manor, seventh year, the same putrid stench required to burn the corpses Nagini tossed aside.

"Let's get this over with." Ron muttered, "This place always gives me the creeps."

Ron led the way down a meandering path to a series of small identical cabins, tucked neatly in a row, only feet from the green pulsating magical shield keeping the dragons contained. He railed out three resounding knocks on the door of the second cabin on the left, before yelling into the closed door. *"This is the DMLE. Come out with your hands up."*

Draco eyed Ron warily. They weren't even close to DMLE jurisdiction, nor were they wearing their official robes.

The door swung open, held by Percy Weasley scrambling to pull his tie on. One look at Ron, already chuckling to himself and Percy deflated immediately, throwing the half-knotted tie to the floor in. "Not funny Ronald."

"Ahh Perce. Have to get my kicks somewhere. You're always good for a joke." Ron stopped laughing abruptly, staring his brother down. Draco didn't know what went on between the Weasley siblings, but he knew enough that Percy was barely accepted at family dinners.

Percy rolled his shoulders back and stood himself straight, still at least a foot shorter than the two looming aurors shadowing his door. "What are you doing here? And why on earth did you bring Draco Malfoy?"

"The pleasure is all mine, I assure you." Draco sneered back, pulling his best facial expression reserved from fifth year. "I'll just be a minute Weasley." He tapped Ron on the shoulder and entered the small cottage, closing the door and casting a silencing charm.

The cottage was barely larger than Hagrid's hut. Only enough room for a small bed and kitchenette. Certainly not a place anyone could spend any length of time in.

Draco strode into the small cottage as if he owned the entire sanctuary, sitting down at the barren wooden table without waiting for an invitation. "The Ancient and Most Noble House of Malfoy requests a session with the Wizengamot."

Percy snorted, "You can't call a session. Your mother holds the Malfoy seat; only she can make such a request on behalf of your house." He didn't move from his place at the door, keeping one hand on the doorknob, as if his brother would save him.

He pulled the aged scroll from his pocket, tossing it across the room. "My mother has abdicated her seat to me. I simply need a session to make it official."

Percy opened the scroll impatiently, only to close it with a snap when he found the signature he searched for, handing it back reservedly. "I can't just call a session Malfoy."

"Of course you can. It's basically your only responsibility."

“What’s in it for me?”

Draco rose from his seat, irritated that he was now somehow in a negotiation with the lowest Weasel. He moved closer into the redhead’s space, crowding him into the corner of the small cottage, blocking the exit “You can keep your job once my seat is confirmed.”

“My job reports to the Chief Warlock and the Minister of Magic. Ever heard of him? Kingsley Shacklebolt?” Percy flinched, trying unsuccessfully not to cower under Draco’s large form. “Even if you are confirmed, you can’t touch me.” The tremor in his voice was palpable.

“Ahh. I think you should read the room, Weasley. I am going to be confirmed into this seat whether you help me or not. My only, extraordinarily simple request, is that you make it happen on May 1.” Draco moved away from the small wizard, turning the doorknob with his hand.

“Why May 1?”

“Consider it spring cleaning.” Draco pulled open the door, cancelling the silencing charm as he exited the cottage.

Ron peered into the cottage, a small smile breaking onto his face at seeing his brother in obvious distress but unharmed. “Later, Perce,” he called with a wave before pulling their return portkey out from his robes and sending them both back to Britain.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Je te laisserai des mots* by Patrick Watson

Normally I love to see a reformed Percy, plus a hot Dragon tamer Charlie, but it didn’t work for the story. Maybe next time I will board the Hot Charlie Agenda instead of my blatant obsession with Neville and Daddy Draco.

What do you think of Draco, could he maybe be growing up? Daddy, is that you?

March 29, 2019

Chapter Notes

New TW/CW, see the end notes.

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

March 29, 2019

Hermione didn't apparate directly back to the flat after speaking with Pansy.

She needed to breathe the cool night air and allow it to settle her decisions. She walked along Diagon Alley, peering into the shops and windows already closed for the evening, the street completely deserted. Nothing looked much different from her own time; there were only slight differences here and there. Some new paint in places, others showing signs of age and neglect.

Time moved on for everyone, it seemed, ticking slowly, marching towards a future they were all destined to live.

By the time Hermione reached the entrance to their flat, she felt a calm acceptance that Virgo was her future, albeit terrified of her impending arrival.

In the darkened flat, an empty couch no longer held an unconscious Blaise, unsurprising given the late hour. The unbreakable vow she made earlier still radiated within her magical core, reminding her of her duty to uphold Astoria's awful secret. The whole day weighed heavy on her bones, and she trudged into the bedroom to find Malfoy sitting on the edge of their bed, head hanging in his hands.

He lifted his head as he heard her enter the bedroom. His red-rimmed eyes and slouched body betrayed his exhaustion from the day's events.

"Blaise?" she murmured in question as she sat beside him on the bed, reaching out to entwine her fingers in his.

He gave her a single squeeze as he pulled her hand into his lap. "I took him home. He and I will speak more on it another day, when he's back in his right mind."

Hermione nodded and inched closer to rest her cheek atop his shoulder. They both understood the irrationality one felt when absorbed in their own grief.

"And Virgo?" she whispered, staring down at their joined hands.

His shoulders sagged as he sighed, and her head lolled with the motion. "I'm so sorry, Hermione."

"You should have been honest with me from the beginning. I don't know how to trust you."

His thumb stroked the back of her hand, rubbing idle circles into her warming skin. "We have always held secrets between us. It felt normal for a while, but then... I don't know... I only wanted to protect you."

"I know," she breathed, barely audible above her nervous heartbeat.

"What can I do to help you trust me?"

Hermione considered the question only briefly before responding, desperate to trust him again and return to their version of normal. "Tell me something true."

He knelt at the foot of the bed, pulling her hands into his firm grasp. Hermione yearned to touch his face, to feel his stubble under her nails, but she held out, waiting for his proof of trust.

"Our daughter's full name is Virgo Astoria Malfoy." His eyes shone up at her with conviction. "While she looks exactly like her mother, every last one of her expressions is mine. Gods help us... She has a vicious streak of self-preservation and is at the top of her class in marks. She is one of the youngest seekers ever selected to play for her house." He squeezed her hands once more, warming her cold fingers. "You love her more than anyone else in this world, and she has turned you into an extraordinary mother."

She wasn't sure she could hear about herself as a mother; it was still too soon. "Malfoy, stop—"

He shook his head, continuing in his confession of their future. "She came early. A Christmas baby. I wanted to name her Noelle, but you won the argument, citing the great rebuilding of the Malfoy name." A smile played at the corner of his mouth. "She weighed eight pounds when she was born, and Mipsy joked she was the size of a turkey."

Hermione couldn't help but release a laugh at the comparison. She could only imagine Mipsy's excitement over a new baby to fawn over, insisting they would have matching trainers.

His eyes widened at her shifting mood. "Sometimes, when we are fighting, I call you Libra." His hands left hers as he shifted to palm her thighs, moving in hard strokes up and down against her denims. "My goddess of justice. You get so passionate about fairness and truth for everyone that it blinds you."

Hermione's core warmed as his hands reached the apex of her thighs, thumbs indenting into the muscle.

"When I'm away from you both, I only have to look to the stars. My Virgo and Libra, shining brightly next to one another. The rest of the sky may as well be blackened out; I refuse to see

anything but my family.”

Steel eyes met amber, and her chest hitched, skipping a breath. She wanted to fall into his arms, allow herself to be comforted in the way she knew only he could give. Her brain rushed with emotions, all becoming overwhelming, and she only wanted to make it all stop.

His hands moved incrementally to her hips, eyes dipping down to take in her body. “Do you have any idea how beautiful you were pregnant?”

Hermione shook her head softly, letting herself sink into his firm grasp. His eyes on her hips and belly darkened, devout and wanting.

“Please trust me, Hermione. Give me Virgo.”

The pictures of their daughter sitting atop the mantle raced through her mind; how happy the three of them looked waiting at the platform of the Hogwarts Express. All she wanted was to make her husband happy.

Maybe this really was the answer to everything.

Hermione nodded minutely, allowing fate to take over. “Yes,” she murmured as if nothing else mattered.

He pulled her hips forward so she sat on the edge of the bed, nestling himself between her legs. Deft hands undid the button at the top of her denims and parted the shirttails of her oxford to expose only a hint of flesh. “I adored every inch of your changing body.” The feeling of his lips pressing a single chaste kiss against the exposed skin below her navel sent a shiver up Hermione’s spine.

His reserved kisses continued upwards as he dutifully unbuttoned each inch of her shirt. “The memories of you on top of me, raw with power, growing our child. There isn’t a day that goes by I don’t think about it.”

The last button flicked free, and he kissed just above the centre of her bra. “And your breasts.” He sighed, resting his forehead against her chest.

“I could have spent days between them. Weeks. I would have committed war crimes for them.”

Hermione arched her back, nudging his face deeper into her chest, and a low growl ruminated from his throat.

“I was so jealous of myself. The fact that you came back already pregnant, that I wasn’t the one to fill you. I’ve been waiting for this for so long.” He took the tiny black bow from her bra between his teeth, tugging back as he looked up at her with pupils blown. “Tell me you want this. Please.”

She stuttered, trying to articulate the confusion that roiled within the tightness of her chest. Her brain fought every other instinct her body told her, like always, working overtime to her detriment. She gave in, wanting it all to go quiet; in the way she knew only he could provide.

“I’m yours, Daddy.”

A sly smile broke out on his face and he kissed her soundly. Tongues and teeth clashed as he consumed her, pushing her back onto the bed and caging her with his large frame. Hermione leaned up into the kiss, trying to take control from her limited position, but his weight was too powerful. One by one, he pulled her arms above her head and held them together at the wrist, tight enough that she knew bruises would form in the morning.

He bit and nipped at her neck and chest, moving back to her mouth only occasionally to snake his tongue against hers for the briefest taste. His free hand dove into her knickers, damp with want and held tightly against her core by her denims.

“Gods, Baby. You’re already wet for me,” he muttered into her mouth.

She wasn’t even slightly embarrassed by the slick that coated his fingers on the first invasive swipe. She only wanted more, rolling her hips up to meet his skilled fingers, inviting more of his hand inside.

Teeth pulled at her bottom lip, biting down hard. “Be still, Baby,” he commanded while pushing two fingers as deep as they would reach, his knuckles pressing against her. Hermione felt the pressure build in her belly, sent higher as he crooked his fingers, pulling at her pleasure.

Hermione struggled to stay still. His fist was so tight around her wrists, the bones pressed together started to ache, and her hips were nearly moving of their own volition, responding to his expert touch.

“Do you feel that, *Baby*? How deep I am inside you? That's where I’m going to put my come. At the very end of your cunt. Right where it belongs.” Each statement was punctuated with a sharp pull of his digits inside her core.

The pressure of his fingers sent her body rolling to meet his rhythm. “*Daddy*,” she panted, “Please give it to me.”

Her whole body squeezed and the soft bedding from beneath her back disappeared, replaced by the coarse rug in front of their living room fireplace. “Malfoy!” she cried out. “You can’t just apparate someone like that! You could have splinched us!”

“I told you to be still. You should have listened.” His long fingers left her aching as he removed them from her soaked knickers and he laughed deviously as he vanished all her clothes wandlessly, leaving himself irritatingly fully dressed. “Now I have to fuck you into this rug, baby.”

The tight hold on her wrists above her head finally released, but she was too terrified to move them. Hermione froze as he quickly unbuttoned his trousers and aligned himself with her entrance, notching his swollen tip inside her. “Daddy, wait,” she cried out, her wetness betraying her fear.

“No.” He barked, thrusting into her in one quick stroke, burying himself to the hilt. Her back dragged against the rug, burning into her skin. Hermione couldn’t think straight, the fullness of his thick cock stretching her into delirium while the singeing heat against her back pulled her focus.

He pounded into her with slow methodical thrusts, forcing her back against the coarse wool, and his hand returned to hold her wrists, keeping her in place beneath him. “Going to fill you,” he muttered, his eyes locked on their joined bodies.

She could barely focus on the pleasure, absorbed in watching her husband take control, feral as he slammed his hips against the underside of her thighs. Hermione let her mind empty, submitting every ounce of worry and control into space.

It was only the two of them, rutting furiously in front of the heat of the lit fire.

Without warning, his hips stuttered, and he buried himself into her, roaring as he finished. Slow rolls of his hips worked his cock further inside, and her arse lifted from the ground to meet his depth.

Hermione stilled underneath him as he came down, not wanting to move her back another inch, lest the stinging burn reach a new height. Her shoulder blades and lower back were the most painful, but everywhere else ached with pleasure, desperate to find her own building release.

His chest heaved from their exertion, and he waited for what seemed like an eternity before pulling his softening cock out of her. A wet drip trailed down her opened thigh, and hooded eyes followed its descent.

Tender fingers weaved through the spend, dragging it back up her thigh before pushing it back inside her body. The two long digits were nothing compared to the fullness of his cock, but she would take any relief he was willing to provide. His palm massaged her swollen clit as he worked his fingers inside her, keeping every last drop where he wanted it.

Pressure built higher in her belly as she watched his reverence over her.

It was a version of her husband she had never seen before, in any time.

Without breaking his gaze from her core, he placed his pinky finger into his mouth, pulling his signet ring off with clenched teeth. He spit the ring back into his hand and tucked it under his palm, still pressed against her clit. The metal was cool against her flesh, perfectly circling her swollen nub, creating pressure where she needed it most.

“*Tremo*,” he whispered.

Hermione’s back arched, painfully dragging across the rug as the ring’s vibrations radiated through her. The slow-building climax she chased escalated at a fever pitch, and her body bowed as she hurtled over the cliff.

He pressed his palm tighter against her, sending vibrations rolling through her body.

She couldn't tell if her orgasm persisted under his hand or if one rolled directly into another, but she couldn't catch her breath, strung out on pleasure.

Finally, the ring ceased its vibrations, and his fingers slid out of her. He kept his hand flat against her swollen centre, making sure no more of his spend would leak out. Deftly, he tucked his softened length back into his trousers and fixed his shirt and hair.

The wild husband, present only a moment ago, transformed back into his usual calm and controlled demeanour. Hermione paused, torn between which version she found more attractive.

She was as limp as a ragdoll as he scooped her up into his arms, head lolling forward onto his shoulder, searching for a resting place. Her eyes closed as she tried to find sleep, but the pain that burned across her back wouldn't allow her body to calm down.

"Hold tight, baby; I'm going to heal you," he whispered into her ear, as caring and nurturing as ever. Her body squeezed atop his lap, and they reappeared with a pop in the bathroom, where he gently set her down on the vanity's edge.

Without reading the labels, he pulled two vials from the wicker basket, pouring them into his palms. He watched over her shoulder in the mirror as he rubbed the potions into her wounds with care, and the burning sensation that dulled her brain was replaced by cool numbness.

The spearment scent hung around her in heavy waves. She leaned further into her husband's arms, letting his familiar smell of freshly mown grass, leather, and parchment paper mingle into her consciousness.

Hermione could only whisper her realisation as she dozed off against his shoulder.

Amortentia.

~

Hermione wasn't sure how many hours passed before she woke; the room still darkened with night. Her body ached as she rolled to her back, staring at the ceiling in deep contemplation, wondering how she got to this place in her life.

She peered closely at her husband, checking he was soundly asleep.

Satisfied by his soft snores, she slipped out of the bed and padded over to the bathroom, grabbing her beaded bag. The door closed behind her with a silent click as she tried to make as little noise as possible.

Her vinewood wand, pulled from the depths of her bag, was cool to the touch. She rolled the engraved handle in her palm, carefully considering her decision, trying to summon her maternal instincts.

With a swish of her wrist and a quiet whisper, the cool sensation of a contraceptive charm settled in her belly.

Fate was not going to control her any longer.

Chapter End Notes

TW/CW: Mildly Dubious Consent, Inappropriate use of the Malfoy Signet Ring, Breeding Kink

Suggested Listening: *Mount Everest* by Labrinth

This chapter is brought to you by post-nut clarity. Thank you for coming to my Ted Talk.

April 30, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

April 30, 2004

Draco's rail car sped down the tracks at a breakneck pace, taking the long fourteen-minute journey down to the lowest level of vaults. The elderly goblin held the brake lever with the lightest of touches, barely flinching as the car lifted onto two wheels on the sharper turns. He gripped the sides of the cart until his knuckles were white, not understanding how the creature stayed upright, even at his shortened stature.

His many trips with Hermione to the Lestrage vault in the smaller car were substantially more enjoyable.

Large golden doors split vault number 846 in two as they opened wide, allowing him entrance to the Malfoy vault. Draco stalked over to the jewellery case in the corner, trying to find an appropriate gift, but nothing felt sufficient to express his feelings for her.

He had considered presenting her with something ostentatious, wanting to flaunt that she was his wife in every sense of the word. But by now, he knew her reserved tastes well and set his sights on pieces that would better suit her.

Emeralds and rubies sparkled amidst sapphires and diamonds. Generations of Malfoy gifts from husbands to wives (and paramours) nested in tidy rows of velvet, waiting to adorn another beautiful woman. He thought about visiting the Black vaults, too, but his Mother already had all the best pieces, including Pandora's ring, which would have to wait.

Eventually, he happily settled on a gleaming gold ear cuff forged in the shape of a snake, its beading emerald eyes reflecting prisms of light. The small creature's tail hooked seductively to fit into a pierced earlobe; its body meant to slither up the shell of an ear.

Draco could almost feel the sensation of the cold metal against the tip of his nose as he imagined pressing his tongue and teeth to that particularly sensitive spot behind her ear.

He pocketed the item and returned to the mine car, finding the old goblin asleep at the lever. He jostled his way to a seat with less grace than he usually would have, but it was the most inconspicuous way to wake his driver.

With a snort, the goblin woke and threw his body weight into the brake, sending them back to the surface of the mines.

~

Hermione was bundling up her piles of scrolls as he returned home, affixing a black wax seal to each offensive parchment, void of any house insignia or identification. Draco steeled

himself as he entered the flat, allowing his thumb to play with the ribbon in his pocket, entwined around his newest gift. “Almost ready to send?” He asked, unsure of the answer he desired.

She nodded, rolling her bottom lip between her teeth. “I’ve waited long enough, Draco. It’s time.”

Draco moved to the table, pulling the wand from his familiar brown leather chest holster to conjure a basket for the mound of scrolls, sending them tidily in place. He would miss the comforting weight of the holster come tomorrow, when his new life would begin.

“There is one missing. We need to see your mother...” Hermione eyed the basket, shifting from foot to foot. “Tonight.”

He knew the moment was coming; the two women would eventually have to meet, but Draco had successfully avoided it for months, keeping his mother and Mipsy in the dark. He held back the sigh that built in his chest. “Let’s go for dinner this evening. I’ll send a patronus to let her know we are coming.”

“I’ll go change.” She nodded in agreement and set off to their bedroom, leaving the basket of scrolls to await their final fate.

With a flick of his wand, Draco summoned his cougar patronus, momentarily ignoring his wife’s giggle from the bedroom and sent a message to his mother.

He paced to the bedroom, finding her only half-dressed. The flowing cream skirt barely grazed her knees, complemented by a sheer bra and high nude heels. Her nipples mocked him, tensing under his gaze and pulling at the thin fabric. “Would you like to tell me what you found so funny?” he asked, leaning against the doorframe to let his eyes move down her exquisite form.

The red-bottomed heels always did something to melt his brain, and she knew it.

A playful smile nudged at her mouth. “Your patronus always makes me laugh. I can’t help it.”

Draco let the ominous feelings over the scrolls and his plans for the next day roll away from his clouded thoughts. The back of his mind had already begun counting down the time remaining with his older wife, and two weeks hardly seemed enough to get his fill.

He wanted to play.

“Seems disrespectful, baby.”

“Oh?” She quirked an eyebrow. “Would you like to correct me, Daddy? I still haven’t taught you how to do that.” Her skirt swung from side to side as she weaved her hips seductively.

His shoulder slipped down the doorframe at the suggestion. Everything they did to this point was navigating preferences, limits, the ways they inherently pleased one another, and the depths of which Draco was permitted to take control.

He never betrayed her again after learning she was Libra.

Taking care of her consumed him completely. But the thought of correcting her behaviour sent the blood rushing from his brain into his cock.

It was the height of ownership.

“Teach me,” he whispered.

~

Draco was still trying to screw his head on straight by the time they left for Malfoy Manor.

Hermione’s cheeks were so flushed by the end of their hour together that she had to set an additional glamour on top of the de-ageing charms that Daphne and Astoria taught her.

He wasn’t sure if he would ever be able to take a quill in his hands again without getting a raging erection and adjusted his trousers before they set off through the floo.

He reached into the pockets of his robe as they landed in the Manor parlour, feeling the familiar ribbon atop the gift he already forgot about, purged from his mind and replaced with vivid images of his upside-down wife. “I brought you something. A gift.” He composed himself, presenting the small box to her.

She snatched it from his hand with a squeal and unwrapped it quickly. Draco hoped she was anxious to see what he selected, revelling in the feeling of her excitement at his gift. “Ohhhh. It’s Julius Malfoy’s snake earring; I’ve been waiting to see it in person!” She bounced around excitedly, stealing his wand from his holster to cast a quick curse diagnostic, seemingly satisfied, before fastening the tail into her earlobe.

“You know about this?” Draco wasn’t surprised; the witch knew everything. He was only a little bit jealous that he didn’t know the history of the piece himself.

“Of course. The Manor Library has a catalogue of all the Malfoy jewellery pieces. This particular item was gifted to Julius by his lover in the 1800s during his travels in North America. She was a member of the magical Hopi tribe, unfortunately never named in the records.” Her nose wrinkled adorably in disgust. “You know how patriarchal your family could be.”

Draco nodded along, admiring the snake subtly slithering up her ear, exposing its tiny golden fangs.

It was a split second; he had no time to react, and its teeth sank into the top of her ear, sending a sharp hiss from her mouth. Her hand darted to the small wound, tenderly assessing the earring’s unexpected vicious placement.

“*Fuck*, Hermione! Did it just bite you?” A trickle of blood escaped the fangs of the snake. Draco reached out and wiped the drop away with his thumb as gently as possible. He couldn’t believe his error, not assessing the jewellery more closely before he gave it to her. “I’m so sorry, Hermione; I had no idea it would do that.”

“Me either. It wasn’t a curse, at least, just settling itself into place. A little warning would have been nice.” She pulled his hand from her ear, entwining her fingers into his. “Come on. Let’s go face your mother.”

Mipsy and Narcissa waited in the small dining room with a full feast set out on the table, far more food than the three humans could eat in one sitting. The tiny elf beamed from the corner of the room, clearly pleased with herself on the presentation.

“Mipsy. Mother.” Draco bowed his head slightly before pulling out a chair for his wife and sitting at the opposite end of the table from Narcissa. She painted her face emotionless, assessing Hermione with narrowed eyes.

Hermione only nodded politely, with a demure “Mrs. Malfoy”, before setting into her dinner.

He knew them both better.

Everyone was plotting.

They only made it halfway through the appetisers with polite conversation before his mother made her first move, setting her fork down and dabbing her mouth with her ivory napkin. “My dear, why do you have so many glamours on?”

Hermione simply waved her hand, removing all the charms concealing her true age. Her hair shortened to her shoulders, curls tightening like springs, and her eyes shone brightly, ready for battle. “Because I’m from 2019. I’ve returned for a bit of a visit; needed to set a few things straight in this time before I go back.”

Narcissa’s eyes widened in shock, her mouth parting with a nearly inaudible gasp before she snapped it back shut, composing herself.

“Shall we put all our cards on the table then, *Mother?*” Hermione’s confidence came crashing through; gone was the imitation of a younger version of herself, unwilling to spar with Narcissa.

“I’m not sure I understand what you are referring to.”

“You know precisely what I’m referring to. You are one of the most powerful witches of our time, holding the seat of both the Malfoy and Black House on the Wizengamot. And you can spew anything you like about why you cast both of your votes in favour of the marriage act, but I know the real reason. It was all your idea anyway, was it not?”

Draco wanted to interject, but he knew better. He wouldn’t be able to stand against either witch, much less survive being caught between the two of them. His chair scraped as he pushed himself back, distancing himself from the impending fallout.

“Precisely how many secrets do we have from one another, Miss Granger?”

“Not one.” Hermione tucked a lock of curls behind her ear, exposing the golden snake firmly lodged in place. “Unfortunately, I can’t say that about today.”

Draco couldn't piece together the interaction. They both stared at each other wordlessly, waiting for the next chess piece to be played, unwilling to give up their advantage on the board. His wife's hair began to lift at the ends, crackling with magic. His mother uncharacteristically rolled her butterknife in her hand, abandoning her table manners entirely.

"Mother, what is she talking about."

Narcissa shifted her stare to Draco, mouth firmly closed.

Hermione interjected. "You tell him. Or I will."

She shifted in her seat, running through her last available moves, finding none to be acceptable. Her face transformed to the most maternal expression she could muster; Draco recognised it from any time he became injured as a child.

"You must understand I only did this for you and Theo. You were both so lovesick over Miss Granger and Miss Weasley, unwilling to do anything. I simply gave you both a little push." Narcissa folded her napkin, avoiding everyone's gaze.

"A push?" He asked, keeping his tone as calm as possible.

"Yes. A push," she snapped back, throwing her napkin down. "I drafted Kingsley's marriage act for him. The man can barely string two sentences of legislation together." Her voice dropped, softening as she went deeper into her confession. "Plus a few small bribes to ensure you and Theo matched to the witches you so deeply desired."

"You did what?!" Draco yelled out, standing from his place at the table. The dishes rattled as his hands fisted against the hard mahogany.

She waved him away, irritatingly unbothered by his outburst. "Once I knew you boys were happy and settled, I would have overturned it."

He turned to face his wife. "You knew this whole time she did this? It's because of her we are together?"

Hermione nodded back at him. "I've forgiven her long ago for her actions." A smile hinted at her face and the anger left her hair as amber eyes shone back at him. "While the means were less than savoury, we ended up together. I'm sorry I couldn't tell you until today my love."

"You see? It was the right thing to do, my Dragon."

"No. It was most certainly not the right thing to do," Hermione retorted angrily, turning to face Narcissa, rage building again like it never left. "You have too much power. It's time you hang it up."

The butter knife tightened in her hand. "And how do you suggest I do that."

"Give up your Wizengamot votes. The Malfoy seat to Draco and the Black seat to Harry. It's time for fresh blood on the council."

Draco steeled himself. Hermione had no idea he already started course to take the Malfoy seat, only needing a final vote in the morning to confirm his place. But she knew the results. She was simply putting her own machinations in place to secure events that she knew would happen.

He paused, unsure of whether to make his own confession.

"Done." His mother beat him to the decision, with a sly smile breaking onto her face as she gazed knowingly at Draco. "I will sign them over now and send an owl off to Mr. Potter this evening."

She locked his secret in, there was no going back on his plan now. Hermione still had no idea a vote needed to take place, the processes that occurred behind closed doors were cloaked in secrecy.

He could still pull it all off.

~

Draco stared at the basket full of scrolls early in the morning, checking his wristwatch on the time.

Hermione was fresh out of the shower, towelling her hair absentmindedly as she accepted her coffee.

"I'm going to call Mipsy to send these to the owlery on Diagon. I don't want to risk anyone identifying you by using our own owls." He stared down at the swirling coffee, avoiding her gaze.

"Perfect." She sipped on her coffee. "Afterwards, come meet me in the bedroom to celebrate?"

"Of course, baby." He kissed her on the cheek, watching fondly as she swayed away in her white fluffy towel.

Draco called off to Mipsy, who appeared with a sharp pop into the kitchen. "Good morning Master Draco. How can Mipsy be of service? A breakfast tray?"

"I don't have enough time for breakfast this morning, sorry Mipsy." He listened closely for the sounds of his wife, hearing nothing but the soft noises of her padding around their bedroom. "I need you to take these scrolls to the owlery on Diagon, and have them sent out. They need to go *exactly* at 9AM."

The elf's ears turned backwards, and she eyed the bedroom door down the hall, dropping her voice to a whisper. "9AM. Certainly Master Draco. Mipsy will not let you down." She grabbed the basket and disappeared with a wink and a sharp pop.

Draco ran the maths for the hundredth time, accounting for the speed of the owls. Forty-five minutes was all the time he could spare before he needed to be in the Wizengamot chambers.

With a flourish of his wand he conjoured four large black silk ribbons and paced to the bedroom, finding his wife waiting, naked atop their bed.

He wound the silks between his fingers, flaunting his intentions. “Would you like to be patient baby?” He asked, lowering his voice to the commanding tone he was now confident in.

A soft whimper fell from her mouth and she rolled to her stomach, extending her hands and feet towards the four posters of the bedframe. “Yes, Daddy,” she mewled, resting her cheek against a thin pillow.

He only slightly regretted leaving her tied to the bed unsatisfied and waiting as he floo’d to the Ministry. But it would all be for her, in the end.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Boss Bitch* by Doja Cat

Gosh Draco. I sure hope you don’t fuck this up.

April 15, 2019

Chapter Summary

New TW/CW, check the end notes

Chapter Notes

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

April 15, 2019

It only took Hermione three attempts to manage her non-verbal, wandless contraceptive spell. Satisfied by the telltale sensation of cooling deep within her belly, she confidently cast it over herself after each time she and Malfoy had sex in the past two weeks.

He was none the wiser to her plans, only becoming more rabid to be with her each day, obsessed with the need to give her a child.

Remorse over the small lie tickled the back of her brain, but she shoved it deep into her subconscious, unwilling to face the truth of how large a web she found herself in.

If she were honest with herself, she profoundly enjoyed the attention from her husband, exploring many of the scenes outlined in her new favourite books. She couldn't string a single coherent thought together when he put his mind to her.

Until after, when her emotions came crashing back down.

He stared at her intently more than once after he finished with her, his steel eyes attempting to read her thoughts and uncover her secrets. Surely, he would figure out her eventually.

If he didn't know already.

She turned on the water in the shower, setting the temperature to scalding to warm herself up on the unusually chilly spring morning. Just like the days before, she woke before her alarm, her mind spinning with the implications of her choice—what it might mean for Virgo. If she would even exist.

Hermione shook her head underneath the water as if to cast away the invasive thoughts and began to let her body sink into the heat.

The steam fogged up the glass so heavily she didn't see Malfoy enter the bathroom until the glass door opened to the shower, and he stepped into it with her, taking his time to let his eyes rake over her body. "Good Morning, baby," he murmured in appreciation as he closed the glass door behind him.

“Good Morning, Daddy,” she replied, admiring his taut muscles gather wetness from the rainhead.

His eyes roved down her body, desire shifting to concern as he gazed lower. “You’re bleeding,” he whispered, moving closer forward to hold her hips.

Hermione looked down. She hadn’t realised her period had started until the evidence of it stared back up at her from her thigh, a thin line of blood diluted from the water.

In all her concerns about not getting pregnant, she forgot all about what she would do when her period unexpectedly showed up. Her brain scrambled for a response, not wanting to admit her lie.

She stepped into him, wrapping her arms around his waist and pressed her cheek into his chest. “It must not have worked,” she murmured, avoiding the truth.

He scooped her by the arse and lifted her into his arms, turning them around to kneel against the tile and setting her down on the cold bench. “It’s alright, baby,” he whispered as his hands stroked her wet hips methodically, pressing his thumbs into her in a calming massage. “We still have time.”

His lips were cool against her warm skin as he tenderly kissed her stomach, moving slowly down her body with reverent touches. He pulled her hips forward until she teetered on the lip of the bench, water streaming down both their bodies, glass fogging up around them.

“May I?” he asked, steel eyes hooded in his gaze up at her, glancing back to her exposed core.

She wanted to confess everything, but the look he gave her was too much. Her belly ached with need for him, along with her sore muscles, and she craved the release he always gave her body and mind.

A simple nod was all she could manage.

Any more words would just be another lie.

He trailed kisses up her wet thigh, pushing her knees apart gently with his shoulders as he settled in between her legs. Hermione leaned her head against the shower wall with a sigh, revelling in how her husband could make her feel with a simple touch and a few words.

She wanted to give him everything. Her body. Her soul. A child.

Eventually.

His tongue snaked up the crease between her centre and her thigh, setting free a low moan from her throat. He knew precisely where to touch her and how to make her mind stop churning.

Hermione let herself go into the sensations as he licked and nipped at her expertly, pulling the desire out of her with his mouth, ignoring any hint of blood.

She permitted herself to forget her mountainous lie, if only for a time, and sank deep into bliss.

~

Hermione shifted in her seat later that morning as her husband finished plating their breakfast before they set off for work. The guilt and deception roiled heavily inside her, sitting in her belly, waiting to be exposed.

A plate of bacon and eggs landed before her, but she had no appetite. Instead, she picked up her fork to push the meal around her plate, lost in thought.

“Eat, Hermione,” he instructed softly.

She fidgeted again, her mouth going dry as ash. “Malfoy, I -”

The fork in his hand clinked against the plate as he set it down and he clenched his hand tightly around his wrist. “You can tell me, Hermione.” His warm silver eyes bored into hers; she didn’t know how he couldn’t just see the truth from his stare. “Whatever it is that’s bothering you.”

She knew that he knew. Everything simply a matter of time between the two of them before another secret was exposed. Hermione began to answer, only to be interrupted by the chime of the floo.

She snapped her mouth shut.

Harry stepped out of the fireplace and dusted the soot off the dark black robes that matched his messy hair, smiling sheepishly as he paced over to their meal.

“Sorry for interrupting, Mione.” He sat down at the table with them, oblivious to the room's tension. “Needed to drop off some files for Malfoy.”

Hermione stared at her husband curiously, who only returned her gaze, seemingly oblivious to their guest. “I thought you weren’t an auror anymore. Do you two still work together?”

“No.” Harry cut off her questioning before her husband could answer. “Black family business, that’s all. Just dealing with some items for the goblins.”

She narrowed her eyes at Harry, knowing he was lying through his teeth. The avoidant chuckle and move to clean his glasses telltale signs he apparently never learned to mask over the last fifteen years.

“Thanks, Potter.” Malfoy took the scrolls and unfurled the edge of one, peeking inside at the contents.

Hermione craned her neck as inconspicuously as she could but couldn’t get a good enough look to see.

“I’m sorry, Hermione. I need to go deal with this.” He pushed his plate back and left the table, grabbing his robe before kissing her on the cheek goodbye. “We can talk more this evening?” He asked as he picked up a handful of floo powder.

Hermione nodded, unsure if she were thankful for the additional time in her lie or upset she would need to live in the reality of it for longer.

His eyes softened as he nodded back to her, and he turned to exit through the floo, leaving her and Harry at the breakfast table, plates still full of food.

Harry’s eyes sparkled mischievously, and Hermione’s mind was instantly transported to third year, laughing with her best friend on the train.

He clapped his hands together a single time in excitement. “Excellent. Now that I’ve gotten rid of him, what do you say to a little field trip?”

She couldn’t help but laugh at her old friend as he pulled his invisibility cloak out from under his robes. All the years that went by, and he never changed.

“Lead the way, Harry.”

~

They shuffled awkwardly through the halls of Hogwarts, both tucked under the familiar invisibility cloak. It was a much tighter squeeze than she remembered, likely due to the fact they were both grown adults, and many years had passed since the last time she shared the garment with him.

Climbing the grand staircase, they took a hard left, jumping onto another moving staircase, carefully avoiding the first and second years, who were still figuring out how to navigate the castle.

Hermione remembered the route well; there were only two destinations they could be headed. And she didn’t think they were going to the hospital wing.

“Harry, why are we going into the defence against the dark arts classroom?”

Harry opened the door with a wave of his wand as they arrived, closing it behind them with a loud click before sweeping the cloak off their bodies. “Because I’m the professor. Obviously.”

“Harry James Potter!” She swatted her hand against his shoulder, embodying her best Molly Weasley, “I’m so proud of you! But you are not supposed to break the rules!”

He tapped the side of his nose with his finger. “Ahh. But I have special permission from the head rulebreaker herself.” A scroll appeared in his fingers with a snap. “It wasn’t just the girls that got scrolls. I got one, too, just before you left. And mine was *extremely important*.” He threw up his fingers in air quotes.

She snatched it from his hand, unfurling it to read her own familiar handwriting.

April 15, 2019. Break a rule, Hermione. Or Two.

“I’ll have you know I received explicit instructions with this scroll. Likely because you knew the entire course of the day and couldn’t leave a single variable up to my expert knowledge, but I’m not *that* offended. You’ve always been the brains between the two of us.” He tossed the cloak back at her, hitting her squarely in the chest. “Now. Put this on and sit quietly in the corner. Not a peep while I teach the third years.”

Hermione’s stomach leapt into her throat. She scrambled to put the cloak back on and tucked herself onto a stool in the corner of the room. The thick fabric just dusted the floor, covering up her trainers as the third years poured into the classroom, a mix of Slytherins and Gryffindors. She spotted Virgo the moment she stepped through the doorway, the mass of curls and ringlets falling over her freshly pressed robes and green tie giving her away.

She’s a Slytherin. Hermione held back a snort of laughter. She could only imagine her husband's joy when he found out that news.

The students clamoured to their seats quickly, Harry scanning the room for stragglers and those not in attendance. Seemingly satisfied, he began his lesson as all eyes were rapt with attention.

“Class. As promised, today is a very special day.”

Hermione shifted uncomfortably in her seat, forcing herself to remember she was invisible. There was no way he was talking about her.

The class murmured in anticipation, in on the expectation that today’s lesson would not be like the others.

“This lesson was my favourite from third year, taught by an extraordinary professor. Today, we will be facing...” Harry swished his wand through the air to dramatically pull a large blanket off a rattling wooden cupboard. “*Boggarts.*”

The grin plastered to his cheeks looked as if it would split his face in two. Hermione could barely believe she was watching the same friend she had known for years, endlessly stressed by work and responsibilities, exuding such joy.

But she could barely focus on Harry or any other child in the room.

Virgo sat at the front of the class, watching the shaking cupboard intently as she pulled out her textbook from her bag. She flipped the text open, her fingers running down the margins, her lips moving while she read the text, reminding herself of the contents Hermione was sure she already knew by heart.

Her arm snapped up into the air. “Professor Potter. May I go first?”

“Ten points to Slytherin for demonstrating such uncharacteristic Gryffindor bravery,” Harry called out with a sly smile. “Go ahead, Miss Malfoy.”

The Gryffindor side of the classroom groaned while Virgo's mouth broke into a sly smirk, pleased with herself. She rolled her shoulders back and moved from her seat to approach the cupboard, rattling furiously against the wooden floor.

Hermione was mesmerised by the way she held her wand, how she planted her feet firmly on the ground before casting, and how her silver eyes shone with the sunlight coming through the window.

Malfoy was right. The child may have looked exactly like her, but the way she carried herself was entirely her husband.

Harry snapped his fingers, and the doors of the cupboard opened.

Hermione recoiled as a bruised and bloody Mipsy limped out, stumbling onto the floor. Her usually impeccable white trainers were stained in blood, leaking out from a wound in her belly.

The tiniest hiss of breath escaped Virgo as she watched the hurt elf reach her arms out, searching for comfort. But her hesitation only lasted a split second. She was smarter than that.

"Riddikulous!"

Her wand movements were perfect.

Mipsy swirled around in a puff of smoke, the blood disappearing from her body. A large top hat and oversized sunglasses appeared on her head, blatantly at odds with her fashionable white trainers.

Virgo burst out laughing at the outfit, and the fake Mipsy keeled over with laughter as well, shaking her feet in the air.

Hermione stifled her laugh. The joy that radiated her daughter's face was never one she saw on herself reflected in the mirror—years of fighting tooth and nail alongside Harry seemed to have stolen that potential from her. It was odd to see what was essentially her younger face, looking so happy.

She thought back to the pictures on the mantle in their flat, remembering their family picture on Platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$. All three of them looked ecstatic, waiting for the train to arrive.

Hermione wondered briefly what would happen to the people in the picture if she continued in her lie.

Would the joy be stolen from their faces, along with Virgo's existence?

Harry's voice distracted her from her swirling thoughts. "Excellent work Miss Malfoy. Would you like to explain boggarts to the class?"

"A boggart is a non-being. Closer to a ghost than a creature, Professor Potter. No one knows what a boggart actually looks like, as it presents itself as your greatest fear."

“And your fear is a wounded house elf Miss Malfoy?”

Virgo shook her head, curls swaying as she moved. “I don’t have a lot of fears, Professor Potter, but I worry about my house elf Mipsy at home while I’m here.” She paused, rolling her shoulders back before continuing her answer, “the appropriate defense against a boggart is a *riddikulous*. It will turn a boggart into something funny, so you don’t have to be scared anymore.”

“And an elf in a top hat is funny to you?”

“Yes. We used to play dress-up when I was younger, it was always my favourite game. Mipsy hated it when her hat didn’t go with her shoes.” Virgo looked back to the facsimile of Mipsy with the slightest smile, just like her father’s.

“Very good Miss Malfoy.” Harry beamed down at Virgo. “Now, everyone line up. Let us all face our fears!”

Hermione didn’t watch a single other child face their boggart. She fixed her eyes on Virgo. Helping other students with their wand motions, sending out encouraging words and cheering for her classmates when they succeeded, holding her head high with pride, yet being completely approachable.

Her heart ached with decision as she watched, wondering what would happen to her if she continued casting her contraceptive charm.

Is it possible she would simply disappear from existence, never having occurred?

Or could another reality exist, where Hermione would be forced to remember Virgo defeating her boggart, never to meet her in her own timeline?

Her lip trembled at the thought of never meeting her daughter, the grief of it stacked atop her parents and Astoria. Tears welled in Hermione’s eyes as she choked back a sob as silently as she could, hidden under the invisibility cloak.

She cried silently for the duration of the class, watching her daughter, feeling the familiar weight of responsibility she was burdened with since taking her parents’ memories.

Pansy’s words repeated in her mind on a loop. *Who do you think you are to say no?*

Hermione had been trying to say no for weeks, determined to live her own life, even when she wasn’t sure what that even meant anymore, ignoring the joyous faces on the mantle, showing her the potential of her future.

Harry clapped his hands as the last student defeated their boggart, startling Hermione out of her sadness. “Excellent work class. For your homework this week, I want you to share your fears with a classmate. And remember! Fear of a name only increases fear of the thing itself!” He eyed the stool where he knew she sat invisible, eyes gleaming. She had never seen him so settled in his life, and joy ran through her veins for her friend.

Could she be that happy as well?

She waited an extra minute after the last student left the classroom, watching Harry lock the door behind them and stare back at her stool before she pulled off the cloak. Tear tracks surely lined her face, but she didn't care, he had seen her much worse off before.

"She's something, isn't she?" he asked, ignoring her crying.

Hermione nodded, sniffing back her emotions. "Were we ever that happy as kids Harry?"

"Ahh. We tried our best." He sat on the floor next to her, leaning back against the wall. "But we had other priorities at the time. These kids have no idea, nor should they."

"I'm never going to be ready, Harry. I won't be *enough*."

"Hermione. The reason she is so happy has everything to do with you being a truly wonderful mother." He pulled himself from the floor, offering his hand out to help her up.

She snorted, taking his hand without question, letting the cloak hang over her arm.

"You are enough for Virgo, Hermione. And for Malfoy. You three were all meant for each other, don't ask me how. Disgustingly happy."

He took the cloak from her arm, weaving it around them both as they exited the classroom, dropping his voice to a whisper in their closed space. "You told me to tell you to have faith. That fate had nothing to do with it and Virgo was the best decision you ever made."

~

Hermione paced her bedroom that evening, waiting for her husband to return from work.

She considered all her available options, thinking through the possibilities of what he knew, versus the secrets she would keep from him for the next fifteen years. The picture of the three of them clutched tightly against her chest.

The floo chimed out as she tucked the photo into her beaded bag. She was at peace with her decision. And her husband would never know the difference.

Chapter End Notes

CW/TW: Period Sex

Suggested Listening: *Ceilings* by Lizzy McAlpine

May 1, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

May 1, 2004

Draco checked his wristwatch when he arrived at the Ministry, only eighteen minutes until the owls would show up; just enough time if nothing went wrong. He paced over to the lifts, selecting level nine with a sharp jab of his thumb, and rolled his jaw as the doors grinded closed.

A hand snapped between the doors, pushing them back open. Draco huffed in impatience for only a moment before Potter pulled himself through the narrow opening, politely nodding and waiting for the doors to close before speaking. “Bit of a surprise owl I got last night, Malfoy,” he muttered. “Do you have anything to do with your Mother giving up her seat to me?”

“That would be my wife’s doing.”

“Ah. I’ll be sure to thank her then. Nothing like a brand new job and the pressures of being a highly visible member of the Wizengamot to stress out a soon-to-be father.”

Draco paused. “A what?”

“Daphne’s pregnant.” Harry laughed nervously. “Also, your wife’s fault, as it were.”

“How could that possibly be Hermione’s fault— You know what? I actually don’t want to know. Congratulations, Potter.” He reached out to shake his partner’s hand, feeling a pang of jealousy mixed with his happiness for his friend.

Hermione refused to say anything regarding children in the future, and he yearned for the withheld information. To see her full with his child, showing the world who she belonged to.

“Thanks, Malfoy. We’re very happy about it. Send a basket or something to Daphne, would you? She’s only six weeks in and already cursing my existence. Sick every minute.”

The lift chimed loudly as the doors opened to level nine, where darkened hallways lined with black-shining tiles gleamed in the lamplight. Their conversation cut off with the mood of the floor; Draco knew Harry hated this level as much as he did. Always filled with snakes, in the worst sense of the word. And here they were, slinking into the pit voluntarily.

“Ready?” He asked, staring at the open doors without moving. “Last chance to turn back.”

Harry paced into the hallway and steeled his expression, looking as formidable as the day he took down the dark lord in the courtyard.

Draco occasionally forgot the underlying nature of his friend, reserved only for moments when it mattered most.

He held the lift door open for Draco, outstretched in the easy partnership they had worked so hard to develop. "I've never turned back before, and today won't be the day I start. Let's clean house, Malfoy."

~

The giant oak doors to the ministry chambers opened five minutes before the session began, allowing all the wizards and witches to shuffle into their assigned seats.

Draco and Harry avoided each of the members' gazes, opting to wait instead on a visitor's bench until Percy called them in. The ginger wizard shuffled awkwardly, holding the door open, brown-nosing with each member as they entered.

"I'll call you to join in five minutes." He nodded back to them as the doors closed, a loud thud echoing in the empty space.

Harry sat stock still in his seat, his green eyes gleaming with purpose. If it wasn't for his absolute mess of hair, he might have looked terrifying.

Draco considered filling him in on the entire plan and opened his mouth to begin, only to be cut off by the sound of Theo sprinting down the hall, his dragon hide boots clicking against the tile.

"I'm not late, am I?" Theo asked, panting, leaning forward to rest his hands against his knees.

"Right on time, brother." Draco smiled, feeling relief wash over his tense muscles to see Theo show up in support. "Glad our Mother could convince you."

Harry bounced his gaze between the two wizards, trying to piece together the unspoken conversation. "Malfoy. Bring me up to speed, please."

"All you need to know is that whatever happens after we go through those doors, understand that it is to keep Hermione safe. Nothing else matters."

Harry nodded his acknowledgement; their trust came easy after years of working together.

Draco stared unmoving at the doors, waiting for them to open, glancing back at his wristwatch for the fifth time since they sat down.

Only seven minutes until the owls showed up.

"And what is so important about the time?" Harry asked lowly.

"We need to start the session. It can't be late." He stood anxiously, ignoring the question and moved towards the doors. To hell with Percy inviting them in.

Theo paced over to the door ahead of Draco and pulled it open with a psychotic grin. "Let's get on with it, then."

Draco followed him into the chambers, rolling his shoulders back and ignoring Percy's scowl from behind his desk. The members of the wizengamot were still socialising, wasting time as they took their seats, a loud din of conversation filling up the chambers.

"What is the meaning of this?" Kingsley boomed from the first level as he fashioned the buttons of his robes, distinguished with a crooked purple sash to separate himself from the other members. "This is a closed session."

The chambers went silent as all the members stared down upon the three wizards hovering in the doorway.

Percy chimed out from behind them, squeaking by with an armful of scrolls, sending them flying through the air to each seat. "Apologies Minister. Today's agenda is relatively short, only the confirmation of three new Wizengamot members, as entitled by their houses. Narcissa Black-Malfoy has elected to retire and transfer her seats to Draco Lucius Malfoy and Harry James Potter. Theodore Nott is also present, electing to fill the vacant Nott House seat."

Kingsley eyed Draco and Theo warily, only allowing his face to soften as Harry stepped forward, shielding their small coalition with his reputation. "Where do I sign Kings?" he called out.

Thankful for his partner taking the lead, Draco took a moment to scan the room and gauge the audience of his upcoming performance.

Nervous laughter erupted in the room, the members seemingly relieved to settle into a purely administrative session.

"Excellent news, my boy! You'll be joining an esteemed group." Kingsley ignored Draco and Theo. "All in favour of our newest members?" He called out to the members seated in the stands above him. Everyone raised their hands.

Draco knew this would be the easy part; it would be career suicide to deny an ancestral seat to any member of the Sacred 28.

Kingsley nodded blankly as he assessed the raised hands, satisfied with their good governance. "Percy, bring the paperwork."

Percy scuttled back to his desk and pulled together another set of scrolls, sending them flying through the air to Kingsley's outstretched hand.

Harry moved first to Kingsley's ornate desk and signed the registry.

Theo followed right behind, signing with a ridiculous flourish of a golden ostrich quill he pulled out of his robes before handing it to Draco, who signed as fast as he could with a scrawl.

The timing was too close for comfort.

It wasn't a moment too soon as Draco passed the quill back to Theo, and dozens of owls came diving down from the ceiling windows. Each delivered a scroll with an ominous black wax seal, void of any insignia to the members of the Wizengamot, and the owls flew off in a flurry.

The room fell silent, except for the sounds of scrolls unfurling.

Small gasps mixed with the sounds of parchment crumpling in fists. Each member looked side to side in suspicion, trying to ascertain if they were the only member to receive a threat.

"What is the meaning of this?!" Amelia Bones cried out from her seat, breaking the tension.

Draco rolled his shoulders, steeling himself. He spun on his heel and paced to the podium in the centre of the room, facing the rows of irate and confused Wizengamot members.

He pushed thoughts of his father as far out of his mind as he could. He would be nothing like him.

This was only to protect Hermione. It was nothing more than that.

He closed his eyes, summoning all the strength he could muster from deep within his core.

Everything from here on was for her.

"One additional item for the agenda. On behalf of House Malfoy, I, Draco Lucius *Libra* Malfoy, hereby announce my candidacy for Chief Warlock." He locked his eyes onto Kingsley Shacklebolt, still reading his scroll, too stupid to realise the rug was being pulled out from under him.

Chaos rolled through the room. Kingsley looked back and forth in confusion from Draco to the scroll within his hand until fury set in on his face. "*Quiet!*" He boomed into the room, holding his wand against his neck to increase his volume. "You are but a boy, Malfoy. What makes you think you are remotely qualified for my position?"

"Kingsley, you've more than proven incapable of the job. It's time for fresh blood." Draco's heart pounded, but his voice remained level, commanding the room without the need to increase with volume like his competition. "In fact. I do believe if we put it to a vote right now, I would win in a landslide."

Theo, ignoring the room's commotion, had already found himself in the seat reserved for House Nott on the third tier of the stands, his feet resting atop his desk. He didn't give Kingsley the chance to respond. "I move to vote for Chief Warlock."

"Seconded," Harry called out, sitting in the House Black seat.

Kingsley bristled as Harry announced his intentions, abandoning any favours left between them. "All those in favour of a vote for Chief Warlock."

Sheepish faces everywhere raised their hands, tucking their scrolls deep into their pockets. Percy moved forward from his desk, sending a charmed piece of parchment to each of the members. "Please cast your vote for house member Shackbolt or Malfoy. Results will be automatically tabulated and effective immediately."

The pages snapped away from existence as each member wrote a name down. *Pop, pop, pop* echoed in the room as they disappeared, sounding off like popcorn leaving the kettle. The noises ceased as everyone completed their votes, but nothing happened.

Percy scanned the room, looking for the error in his charm work.

"Apologies Weasley," Theo rang out, flourishing his ridiculous quill once more, "I only wanted to savour the ascension of my brother." A final pop sounded off as Theo lifted his quill from the parchment.

Kingsley's sash unfurled from his robes, folding itself neatly into a perfect triangle, returning to Percy's waiting hand. The purple colours of House Shackbolt bled away into the deep midnight black of House Malfoy.

Percy turned on his heel, handing the sash to Draco. "Chief Warlock Malfoy. I am at your service."

"Excellent," Draco addressed the stands from his podium, accepting the sash. "As a first order of business, let us begin with the marriage law."

~

By the time Draco returned home, he had only left his naked wife tied up for an hour and a half. While nothing she wasn't used to, the rush of power from the votes in the Wizengamot had Draco surging with energy.

She was safe.

She was his.

Everything would be fine.

Her head snapped to the door the moment he opened it. Her cheeks flushed the perfect shade of pink, and her mouth parted open, panting with want.

Draco stilled himself, admiring her round arse as she rolled her hips into the bedding, searching for friction against her clit.

He pulled the sash from the pocket of his robes, fisting it between his hands, and moved to the bed to take in his waiting wife.

Her eyes locked onto the dark black material, matching the ribbons already holding her limbs in place.

"It's done?" She asked with a whisper, staring at the silk. "You've been elected?"

“It’s done. And you’ll be safe now.”

Her amber eyes went wide in understanding as she craned her neck to look up at him. “You told them it was you. Didn’t you? You’ve been Libra this whole time.”

“We’re both Libra my love.” He murmured as he climbed atop the bed and straddled her waiting body, pulling the sash taut between his hands. “Now, close your eyes. I’ve found you a new blindfold.”

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Gangsta* by Kehlani

There is character progression. And then there is daddy-fication.

Hi Daddy.

May 3, 2019

Chapter Notes

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

May 3, 2019

Hermione had moved faster than she initially thought through the Nott vault, clearing curse after curse on Theo's ancestral tchotchkes. She didn't want to consider the types of personalities Theo was related to that would delight in such vile and obscure curses placed on the most random objects meant for children.

A set of matryoshka dolls that would trap any muggle that tried to open them into the smallest doll. A dreidel that would cause the user permanent imbalance, removing their centre of gravity. Toy soldiers that would enlarge to twice the size of a human form and act as sentries against any Nott ancestral space with lethal force.

The Notts were maniacal.

Her bracelet shimmered in the lamplight of the vault, reflecting off to cast a rainbow of colours against the pile of galleons in the corner. She had been practising magic with a level of care above and beyond her norm, not wanting to worry her husband, but even then, the bracelet had protected her a handful of times.

More than she cared to admit, but enough times that she no longer needed to be reminded to wear it. The bracelet never left her body, and she swelled with pride every time she caught Malfoy's eyes locked on it, sparkling just as brightly as the gems surrounding her wrist.

Early in the mornings, before the sun came pouring through the window, he would trace a line where the bracelet met her wrist, murmuring sweet sentiments about keeping her safe and protecting her from the world. He would tell her how it was his purpose in life, that their family was worth everything.

She gave over to him each time, allowing him to take what he needed from her body. Providing him solace through the submission of her soul.

That morning was no different, Hermione thought back, fingering the bracelet around her wrist.

~

His tongue pulled a long line up her forearm, holding her wrist firmly in place above her head, thumb wound snugly into her bracelet. He had caged her in, kissing and nipping every inch of her body, pinning her open with his long limbs.

She rolled her hips up into him, searching for his cock to provide some friction on her aching core, but she had little room to move. His hip rested atop one of her thighs, pressing her into

the soft mattress, and he held her other knee firmly in his grasp, keeping her completely exposed and open to him.

The throb that began the moment she woke up next to him only thudded louder with the denial of contact.

A disappointed scoff left his throat as she attempted to roll her hips a second time, and his mouth left her shoulder. He hovered above her, steel eyes boring into her own, darkening with want.

“Stop fucking moving, baby,” he ordered sharply, digging his fingers into her knee. “If I wanted you to move, I would have told you so.”

“Yes, Daddy,” she whispered, rolling her hips a third time.

He growled loudly and rolled them upon the bed, pulling her body atop his own. In one motion, he picked her up by the hips and impaled her on his waiting cock, her wetness making easy work of sheathing him to the hilt. She cried out at the intrusion, overwhelmed by his size, not at all ready for the stretch he provided.

“Is this what you wanted, you fucking brat? My cock inside of you?” He barked up at her, silver irises gone behind blown pupils.

She couldn’t respond; only a whimper escaped her as she tried to roll her hips around, adjusting to his size. But his fingers dug in painfully to her hips, holding her in place, the crescent moons of his fingernails pinching into her skin.

Hermione leaned her head back and closed her eyes to try and accommodate the fullness and the sharp pain at her hips. Her curls dusted against her back as she relaxed her walls around him and sank down further, taking him as deep as she could.

His cock shifted as he sat up and took a fistful of her loose hair, winding it around his wrist and tugging sharply, forcing her gaze upwards. Open-mouth kisses trailed her exposed throat as he kept her head tilted up. “You wanted to take control. Ride me,” he breathed angrily into her neck.

She crossed her ankles behind him as she ground down, losing herself in the friction against her clit and the deepest spot he reached within her. His hand piled her curls within his palm so that the tug of her hair was at her scalp, the dull pain of his hold distracting her just enough from the pressure building in her belly to find a steady pace.

Hermione’s back tightened between her shoulder blades as the feverish want for her husband consumed her.

An ache began to form in her neck from the awkward position, limited to staring directly above her at the stark white linen canopy of the four-poster bed.

She wanted to see him.

See the expression on his face and how his cock looked thrusting into her.

It was maddening.

“Daddy,” she cried out, hoping he would understand.

He began to thrust up into her, matching the pace of her rolling hips. “You’re cunt looks so beautiful wrapped around me, baby. Do you want to see it?”

Heat blossomed across her chest; he knew exactly what she needed. “Please, Daddy. Show me.”

“No.”

“Daddy,” she whimpered, hoping to appeal her case, “I want to see you. Please, Daddy.”

He thrust harder. “I said no, baby. And don’t fucking ask me again,” his response a feral growl. “Keep riding my cock. Show me what a good girl you can be for me.”

The instructions that tumbled from his mouth pooled in her belly. She wanted to be a good girl—to be his good girl. She rolled her hips with more force. The repetitive motion made her muscles ache with fatigue, and her back began to sweat.

She was so close.

His free hand moved to the small of her back, pulling her onto him with every roll of her hips. He reached an impossible depth inside her, filling her completely with his cock.

Hermione was desperate to see it.

If his thick length looked just as impressive as it felt sliding inside, and if it glistened with the slick that had built between them.

Kisses trailed down from her neck to her chest, and he began to circle a taut nipple with his tongue. Without warning, he took the nipple between his teeth and tugged hard, pulling it away from her body.

It was all Hermione needed to implode around him.

The roll of her hips became erratic before he took over the motion from her, forcing her to keep fucking him through her orgasm. Teeth released her nipple as he took it into his mouth, sucking hard while she rode out the aftershocks.

“You look so beautiful when you come on my cock,” he muttered as he released her nipple, scratching the underside of her breast with his stubbled chin.

Hermione’s scalp tingled as his hand unwove itself from her hair, shifting her mass of curls to fall down her chest and partially cover her nakedness. Heat wove through her chest and ribcage, suffocated under her heavy hair, as he brought his now free hand to her hip, joining the other to keep her moving atop him.

Hermione could only feel grateful as she became spellbound by his face, completely lost in their pleasure together. His eyes were locked on their joined bodies, cheeks flushed with want, mouth parted and panting. He was enraptured with her, and it was intoxicating.

“Fuck, Hermione.” He groaned into her mouth as she kissed him soundly.

Heat filled her cunt as he pulled at her hips, burying himself as he finished. Everything slowed, stopping time, foreheads resting together while they caught their breath in tandem.

His mouth skated against the shell of her ear to whisper, nearly inaudible. *“Give me a baby, please. Please.”*

They stayed joined together, unmoving, while Hermione continued kissing him softly, pouring all her adoration upon him, and his thumb tucked back into the emeralds of her bracelet.

~

Hermione rolled the bracelet against her wrist once more as she closed the doors to the Nott vault, finished her work for the day with her mind filled with thoughts of her morning.

In the last week, she had begun to nervously count down the days until she would return to her own time. With each day that passed, she became more nervous that the husband she would leave in this time would be nothing like the Malfoy she would find in 2004.

She pulled her wand to cast a quick tempus. There was still enough time to check in on the cabinet in the Malfoy vaults; it had been on her mind constantly, anticipating climbing back inside in just nine days, hoping for the best.

The car ride down through the mines took only a few minutes to reach her vault, the giant golden doors looming above her.

Hermione only wanted to check the cabinet for changes; her research into the silver lock didn't turn up anything of value. There were no references in any of the texts she referenced on vanishing cabinets becoming locked of their own volition.

The lock shone brightly, as if it were just polished, gleaming from the cabinet's door handles. Hermione cast a shield charm around herself before taking it into her hand and pulling at it, first to see if it would open and then to inspect the engraving more closely on the back.

Unos Erit Duo.

It had not changed.

One becomes two.

She theorised that knowing the date of her return was critical to the inscription. Arguably, on May 12, just over a week from now, she would be back in this very spot in front of the cabinet, and her older self would be in the cabinet in the past. It was the only explanation that made any sense.

Hermione rattled the lock a final time in frustration. Nine days was all she had left with her husband before she returned to her own time, to a version of her husband she wasn't sure if she knew or even wanted.

She clamoured back into the rail car, tossing her beaded bag over her shoulder, feeling the edges of the fabric to confirm the picture of the train platform was still securely stowed away.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Mystery of Love* by Sufjan Stevens

May 11, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

May 11, 2004

The decorations within Nott Manor were everywhere. Glittering streamers and floating trays of champagne littered the ballroom, a far cry from the darkness that once consumed the space in their childhood years.

Draco beamed with pride over his friend, hosting the nearly 200 guests with Ginny tucked into his side, looking radiant in an olive formal dress.

It was a momentous occasion deserving of celebration. Theo argued three appointments to the Wizengamot to be more than enough for a grand party, but a new Chief Warlock and overturning the marriage law? He was determined to throw the event of the year.

Happily drunk on free champagne late into the evening, partygoers danced the night away to flashing lights and upbeat music. Draco caught Theo's eye, tilting his head toward the balcony in invitation. A subtle nod from Theo in confirmation, and he pulled Ginny along across the ballroom, quickly socialising with guests along the way, exuding their mother's strong influence

Draco eyed the rest of their group, wordlessly communicating with the men to follow. They all acknowledged: Ron, pulling Luna along, Neville ducking his head to kiss Pansy's cheek before guiding her around the edge of the room, Blaise twirling Astoria off the dance floor, and Harry intertwining his hand into Daphne's as they moved towards the balcony doors.

"Come on, baby. Let's go say goodbye to everyone," he murmured down into his wife's ear. They were both feeling nostalgic, trying to savour every moment together before the events of tomorrow needed to be faced. But he knew how important it was to her to say goodbye properly to their friends.

As usual, his gorgeous wife was the best-looking woman in the room. The only glamour she bothered with anymore was to lengthen her hair; no one noticed her age as long as her trademark curls were present. The ringlets rolled softly down her back, swaying against her perfect olive skin exposed by the open black velvet gown she wore.

All her scars were proudly on display, without care what anyone thought of her.

The emerald bracelet matched the snake in her ear and Pandora's ring on her finger.

Draco was entirely enamoured with her. Every marred, perfect inch of her skin, every piece of her soul.

She was his completely.

But more importantly, he was hers.

She weaved her fingertips into his as he guided them outside to the balcony. He wondered if the other Hermione's hand would feel the same when she returned. If she would love him as fiercely as the wife he had become used to.

Draco's throat constricted as he swallowed. He wasn't ready to give his wife up, not for the uncertainty that awaited him.

Hermione assured him repeatedly it would all be fine, and he trusted her, but his father's voice crept up in his ear again and again. Reminding him he would never be enough. Hair fell from his tie as he shook the thoughts away. He had come this far; he would never be his father, nor would he entertain the past any longer.

Draco vowed to himself a fresh start with his wife, come tomorrow, and a wish that their evening together would never end.

With everyone gathered on the balcony, Harry passed out Black family cigars from his robe pockets.

"What are we celebrating?" Blaise asked as Astoria lit the cigar in his mouth with her wand, smiling affectionately up at her husband.

"Everything. Nothing. A new chapter," Harry replied with a grin. His last day as an auror was the day previous, and the stress of the work already had left his usual fatigued expression.

Daphne snorted. "A new chapter... honestly, Harry. We're pregnant!"

Whoops and cheers rang out from the balcony as everyone absorbed the news. Even Hermione, who Draco no longer assumed was in the dark about anything, cheered at the surprise news, hugging Harry and Daphne tightly in congratulations. "You will be excellent parents. I promise." She assured them easily, hands clutching their shoulders tightly.

Neville cleared his throat, refilling the champagne glasses of the group. "On that note. I would like to propose a toast." Pansy's eyes widened for only a moment before she tucked into her husband's arm. "To Hermione. Who came to us from the future with gifts and promises that we surely will not waste."

"To Hermione." The group agreed. Draco looked down at his wife in reverence, taking in the reserved smile she sent back to Neville in gratitude, only to lock eyes with Luna knowingly.

He never asked what was on the scrolls each woman received, but knowing enough about Luna's sight and Hermione's expression told him to leave it alone.

Some secrets were better off unknown.

"We will miss you dearly, Hermione." Astoria smiled affectionately, raising her glass of cider.

Tears brimmed in Hermione's eyes. "And I, you," she whispered back, barely audible.

Draco pulled her in closer and leaned into her ear, ensuring no one else would hear him. The gold head of the snake grazed against his lower lip, and the scent of jasmine from her hair invaded his senses. "I'm sorry you need to have so many secrets, my love. I would bear the weight of every one of them for you if I could."

She craned her neck up to gaze back at him lovingly, resting her soft hand against his jawline where he had begun to grow a beard. "Thank you, Draco."

"Would you like to return home?" He asked quietly, her amber eyes pulling him in deeper. Everyone else faded into nothingness in the background. It was only Hermione.

Her eyes rimmed red as she nodded silently, fighting back the tears with a small sniff. Draco didn't need any additional confirmation. He pulled her in closely and called out to the group. "Alright, mates. As the newly elected Chief Warlock, it is my deepest wish that you all get absolutely pissed this evening, love your wives, and value your friends. I'm taking my wife home." And with a singular nod to Theo in thanks for the party, he disappeared them home with a pop, not wanting to waste another minute.

~

He let Hermione walk away by herself into their shared bedroom, her footsteps sounding through the flat as she made it to the ensuite bath.

Draco knew, in the deepest part of his soul, that she felt overcome by the future; the worry and grief radiating from her face ate at his inability to bear her burdens.

Maybe the time she got to spend in her past was a gift, or perhaps it was a curse. Draco thought he would never know the truth of it, or maybe one day she would tell him everything. But he was on the other side of her trip now, and the list of secrets he would need to keep from Hermione for the next fifteen years was unthinkable.

He would have to convince her she was Libra.

Send her off to research every last member of the Wizengamot.

Hermione would come home tomorrow to find out she was married to the Chief Warlock, and he would have to keep her in the dark about how it happened.

Draco couldn't stand it.

He paced into the bathroom, finding his wife in the tub, bubbles piled high up to her neck, and her hair pulled lazily into a knot atop her head.

His heart raced at the sight of her, along with the overwhelming need to tell her everything. "Hermione. We need to promise each other something."

"Anything, Draco."

"When you return tomorrow. After that day. Promise me we will never have another secret between us. Ever."

Hermione sighed, sinking deeper into the bath. "This is the end of my secrets. Though I'm afraid yours are only beginning. And I am sorry for that." Her arm outstretched in an invitation, offering solace in their collective sadness.

Draco stripped off his clothes, allowing them to pool on the tile floor and climbed in behind her. Water splashed over the tub's edge as it overflowed, soaking their dress robes. But it didn't matter.

Nothing else but her mattered on their last night together.

She rested her head against his chest and sunk into the water. Deep enough that her curls, with glamours removed from the evening, shortened to the shoulder length she preferred, dragged up his chest with wetness. He reached under the surface of the water to grab her hips, rolling them tighter into his body and wrapped his legs around her. Draco wanted to be as close to her as physically possible. To take in every last inch of her body and every fragment of her soul before she left him the next day.

"I don't want to keep secrets from you, Hermione."

"And you won't, not from me," she sighed, "But you must keep them from her. It's the only way we will all survive this."

"You and I can survive anything together."

"And we will. I promise, Draco. But you've made your decisions. You will always prioritise keeping your family safe and loved, and that means continuing on the path that you've chosen. You are the Chief Warlock and the head of your house. A husband. A friend. A son. All these things that you are at your core, the roles you play, drive you."

"Hermione, there must be a way we can change the future so that we don't have to bear these secrets from one another."

"No, Draco. There is no future that I am willing to change. Because, one day, you will also be a father. And that will be your truest calling, one you will not risk anything for. Our paths are set, and so is the path of our child."

"I will have a son?"

"You will be a father, Draco."

Draco's father flashed through his mind, memory after awful memory reminding him of the legacy he was trying to put in the past. The moment he was held down by Lucius in the very same room Bellatrix carved into Hermione, receiving his dark mark from The Snake. It rattled in his mind and burned against his forearm.

His fist clenched involuntarily at the visceral memory, only to be pried apart by her small fingers, interlacing herself into his hand beneath the surface of the water.

The terrible images washed away from his mind like the tide, replaced with his love for her. She would give him a chance to right every last one of his father's wrongs. He would give

her a child, and she would give him a family.

A purpose in life.

To reset the Malfoy name for generations to come, and turn it into something positive.

He could see it all, rushing to meet the train with his son, full of blond curls, as whip-smart as his mother. Draco's mind fogged over into a dreamy state, imagining the curve of his wife as she grew their heir. How full of life she would become. His love for her overwhelmed him with the need to express every last emotion before she left him for her own time.

"Hermione. I haven't told you how much I –"

Her hand pulled out of the water, pressing a finger to his lips in suggestion of silence. "I know, Draco. But you cannot say that to me. It's unfair."

She shifted her body to turn around in the tub, splashing more water onto the floor as she sat atop his lap. Amber eyes met silver as she cupped his face in her soft hands. "Tomorrow, your Hermione will return, and I will go home to my Draco. The people we were meant to be with. Three months is a blip in time compared to the life we built together, as much as I loved every minute here with you." Her head shook softly, damp curls swaying with the motion. "You cannot tell me these things. It has to be her."

"But I love –"

"No. You feel that way for both of us. Not just me."

Draco nodded into her hands, trying to have faith in her words. He wanted desperately to tell her everything, but he knew better than to go against her wishes.

As much as he wanted to take the lead, she would always be the one in control.

But just because he couldn't tell her, didn't mean he couldn't show her.

He leaned into her mouth, asking silent permission as he traced his tongue against the seam of her lips.

There would be no give-and-take this evening. Only worship, the way that fateful night on Halloween should have been. When he was merely in love with the idea of her instead of the real person who gave him everything he needed in life.

The person who filled his soul.

Hermione returned the kiss in kind, rolling her hips underneath the water to slot his hardening erection against her warm centre.

Draco vanished the water with a wave of his hand, leaving them sitting in the empty tub, and wrapped her legs around his waist. "Hold on, baby." He murmured into her mouth as he stood, taking her with him into the bedroom, refusing to let his mouth leave her.

She tasted like sin, and home, and life, all wrapped up into the perfect woman that was his wife.

They fell onto the bed together, while he made sure to cradle her head, bracing for the fall. Draco wasted no time in entering her as they kissed languidly, twisting in the bedsheets as one.

Tongues weaved together, and hips rolled in tandem as they made love to one another, savouring every inch of each other without scene and without expectations.

“I will give you everything if you let me,” Hermione whispered up into his ear, arching her back and pressing her chest into him.

It was all Draco needed to finish, hearing his own adorations from their first night together repeated back to him. And not from a place of distant worship, but from love.

He sank into her, burying himself deeply as she met his orgasm with her own.

Draco rolled them over, allowing Hermione to drape across his chest as they both caught their breath. She curled into him as he wrapped his arms around her, and skated his hand up her spine while she fell asleep in his arms.

He waited for what felt like an hour, wordlessly loving his wife until the soft sounds of her slowed breathing told Draco she was asleep, and he whispered into her ear.

“Hermione Granger, I love you. And I will never have enough time on this earth with you.”

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Waiting Game* by BANKS

Draco, my sweet boy. Did you finally figure out how to apparate without an evil cloud around you?

Interlude

Witch Weekly Special Edition

The Marriage Law Takedown - Two Weeks Later

In the aftermath of the unravelling of the marriage law, anonymous sources reveal the shocking truth behind the short-lived Department of Love, responsible for matches and registrations.

Records indicate that of the 387 matches issued in the fall, 325 have already filed for separation, with nearly half also filing lawsuits against their soon-to-be exes, claiming some form of spousal abuse. Kingsley Shacklebolt, last seen in southern Italy, has refused repeated owls for commentary on the matter, along with all members of the Wizengamot. In contrast, only a dozen marriages formed by wizards and witches' choosing, avoiding being matched by the ministry, have filed for separation.

No paperwork or sources has been found on how any of the matches were selected by the ill-named Department of Love, and new Chief Warlock Draco Malfoy is eager to close this dark chapter of Ministry history:

“Any and all requests for separation and divorce under the Marriage Act will be granted immediately and without question. The Wizengamot is deeply sorry for any negative impacts caused by this callous act and is working tirelessly to remedy its ill effects. For those claiming spousal abuse, a special legal and auror task force has been created to investigate and prosecute any offenders with the utmost speed while issuing temporary protective orders if necessary. Trials will be held behind closed doors and bound by wizarding oaths for the protection and privacy of those involved unless the victim specifically requests otherwise. Furthermore, with Minister Shackelbolt absconding from his duties, open elections for a new Minister of Magic will begin in two weeks' time. I encourage all those eligible to cast their vote to do so.”

When pressed for details on who would be held accountable for the egregious act, Mr Malfoy's commitments remained broad:

"You have my word as Chief Warlock that we will make this right.”

The Chief Warlock's mother, Narcissa Malfoy, has also thrown her broom into the redemption efforts, forming a foundation for abuse victims seeking additional legal and emotional support. Further information and contact details can be found on page six.

No comment from the most popular member of the House of Malfoy, Hermione Granger, who some say acted as the driving force behind the law being overturned. With closed-door sessions and sealed voting records cutting off all reputable sources of information, this editor cannot confirm nor deny such gossip without adequate sources.

Pansy Parkinson,

Editor in Chief

May 12, 2019

Chapter Notes

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

May 12, 2019

The uncharacteristic heat of the spring was all-consuming. Hermione already changed her clothes three times in search of something comfortable, forgoing the usual knits that kept her warm through the day in favour of the older Hermione's wardrobe of sundresses. But it still wasn't enough; she suffocated in the heat, and her neck dripped uncomfortably with sweat.

Her reflection stared back from the mirror knowingly.

She skipped the cooling charms. They had lost their effectiveness in the last week, instead reaching for the scissors in the top drawer of the ensuite vanity.

Curls fell into the sink as she cut them haphazardly, nearly a foot of length, gone from her trademark image.

Pansy once told her, years ago now, that hair held onto memories. Hermione wondered if cutting it would allow her to put some of her worst memories away and move on with her life. If she could weave the fallen strands together to place a bandage over the hole that persistently ached in her heart.

Hermione felt a deep relief as she took in the shoulder-length hair in the mirror.

She looked like the version of herself from the train platform picture, still tucked safely within her beaded bag. Suddenly much less like the image of her daughter, with flowing curls down to her waist. She vanished the discarded hair wandlessly with a wave of her hand, content that her practice had finally started to pay off.

Would she still be the brightest witch of her age? In her new life?

Her husband said nothing from his relaxed position in the bed, sipping his morning tea with his usual refinement; he only raised a single eyebrow knowingly at her new look and hinted at a smile.

Of course, he knew she would cut her hair before returning to her own time, he knew everything that happened before she did.

"Are you almost ready, my love?" He asked, setting the fine china cup onto its saucer on his bedside table.

Hermione sighed. Somehow, their time together sped by in a flash, and yet also seemed to move in slow motion. Tears welled in her eyes, blurring her vision, and her throat caught on

the words she was dying to confess out loud, “I will never be ready to leave you, Draco Malfoy.”

It wasn't the confession she intended, but it was no less true.

He moved from the bed swiftly, pacing the floor to take her into his steady grasp. His broad arms encompassed her, and Hermione breathed in his familiar scent, allowing herself to melt into him.

“You are not leaving me, Hermione. I will be waiting for you on the other side.”

“You know that's not what I mean.” She whispered mournfully into his chest, afraid of stating her fears out loud. “He's not you.”

“Hermione. Time hasn't stood still in 2004. You are not going to be returning to the same version of me that you left,” he murmured into the top of her head, tucking her hair behind her ear.

She could just faintly feel his intake of breath as he took in the scent from her shortened curls.

Hermione wondered if it was familiar to him by now, or if she smelled different from the version of herself he would get back later in the day, and perhaps this would be the last time for him.

The thought struck her that he smelled exactly the same, thinking back to the moment in the vault months ago, or years, depending on perspective, when she found herself underneath her future husband for the first time.

Malfoy pressed her out of the embrace by her shoulders, taking her hands within his as he stared down lovingly into her eyes. The gaze that once scared her, but she now found herself only wanting to sink into it, like the deepest part of the ocean, where everything below the surface hid, unseeable.

“You had a lot to do with my forced maturity during that time, but I would be lying if I didn't tell you it was overdue. I was so afraid of loving you before. The thought that I would screw it all up, and you would leave me, or I would lose my chance with you. It was paralyzing.”

His shoulders sagged with a deep exhale of breath, so unlike the persona he put on for everyone else but her. “There are still days where I am convinced I am not good enough for you, but it shifted during your visit. It stopped being a part of my fear and instead became my motivation.”

Tears stung her eyes at the confession, and she inched up on her tiptoes to place a chaste kiss against the corner of his mouth. “You are more than good enough for me,” she whispered against his cheek before sinking back to her heels, basking in his warm gaze. “I just don't know what I am going to do for the next fifteen years without you.”

“I will be standing right next to you the entire time, my love. Supporting you. Loving you.” His head dipped low, pulling her chin up with his thumb to kiss her. The same kiss she gave him, softly against the corner of her mouth. “Hermione, I swear, every day for the rest of my life, in your time and in mine, I will make it my mission to be good enough for you. And Virgo. The man that you both deserve. I *will* keep my family safe.”

Every ounce of tension left Hermione’s worried limbs at the sound of her daughter’s name. The thought of their family safe together. “And I will do my best to let you.”

~

Hermione rolled the strap of her beaded bag atop her shoulder, thankful that the older Hermione had the foresight to make her another for her time in the future. It was one of the few sensations of normalcy that the future offered her in her time here, already stocked by a version of herself, just as prepared for anything as another version of Hermione would have done, the one in the tent, all those years ago.

The large looming doors of the Malfoy vault were ominous above her and her husband, awkwardly staring up at the golden number 846 as if it would float off and away.

The car ride down to the vault, fourteen minutes in complete silence, was nearly identical to the trips before they were married and researching the cabinet, still unaware of its significance in their life. No words were spoken, and hands grazed on legs in search of comfort, their eyes straight ahead.

She choked back her tears for the ride, not protesting when Malfoy pressed his thigh firmly against her own, anchoring her emotions into reality.

Hermione wasn’t sure if she should tell him before she left. Or if there was a point.

The edge of the picture frame within her bag pressed into her ribs as she clutched the bag tighter.

Numbers 846 mocking her.

Tick tock, they said. It’s time to go.

She turned to face him, readying herself, though she wasn’t sure for what, “Malfoy, I –”

Blond hair escaped his neat tie, falling into his face as he shook his head. “I know, Hermione.”

“I should leave this here,” she murmured, thrusting the bag into his chest, regretful to no longer have it to occupy her nervous hands.

His mouth twitched into a smile as he took the bag, opening it to pull out the picture. The smile broadened as he traced his finger against the edge of the ornate golden frame, eyes tracking over their happy family. “You almost took this with you, didn’t you?”

“I thought about it,” Hermione admitted sheepishly. “But it didn’t feel right.”

“I will keep it safe for you then. Until you tell Harry to take it, anyway. And you have your own copy.” He turned the frame over in his hands, nudging at the latch on the back until the hard cardboard sprang free. With the utmost care over the picture, he pulled it out of its casing and handed it back to Hermione. The three happy faces she had become so fond of were even brighter without the glass pane restraining their joy.

“Flip it over, my love.”

The rushed scrawl of Hermione’s handwriting covered the back of the photo.

Hermione,

You’ve made it to the end of your visit. And you have grown more in three months than you have in many of the years before this. Yes, even that awful year in the tent.

I wish I could tell you that it will be easier from here, but I cannot. You will have to keep secrets, lie to the people you love, and protect those around you. But know that they are worth it. It will all be worth it.

What I can tell you, instead, is that you are returning to a husband who loves you. Adores you even. And he is more like the man that stands in front of you now than the one you left. I promise.

Don’t let grief consume you, Hermione. Let it go and trust in fate and love instead. Trust in your husband.

All my love, be strong,

Hermione

Ps. Congratulations on your pregnancy. You’re going to be a great mom.

The words blurred as tears dropped onto the cursive handwriting. Hermione rushed to wipe off the wetness from the photograph and save the message before being stopped by her husband.

He took the picture gently from her hands, as if in slow motion, and returned it to the frame, not pausing to read the words himself.

“You’re not going to read it?”

He shook his head with a smile. “I helped you write it a few months ago, before you left. And she is right. You’re going to be a great mom. It will be my life’s greatest honour to watch you raise our daughter.”

“This is where I leave you, Hermione.” A wave of his hand opened the doors to the vault, the warm lamplight casting a glow over their collective wealth. “If I go into that vault with you, I’m liable to climb into the cabinet with you. And if it’s alright, I’d like a moment to prepare myself before seeing my own wife again.” The smile broke into a soft chuckle. “There is a small chance she will be more than a little cross with me.”

Hermione couldn't help but release a small laugh at the thought, happy at the idea that she would continue to challenge him for the rest of their marriage.

He stepped into her space, closing the gap between them and lifted her chin with his thumb.

Parchment and leather invaded her senses as he kissed her soundly, and Hermione felt a thousand words spoken through his affection. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders, returning the kiss in kind, reaching up on tiptoes to further herself into the embrace of her husband. His hands encased her face as he broke off the kiss, silver eyes boring into hers, exposing his soul.

They moved together on the platform, eyes never leaving each other, Hermione guided by his comforting hands on her face.

"Goodbye, my love." He whispered, backing away from their dance, eyes welling with tears. "I will see you soon." A single stuttered wave of hand through the air closed the vault doors in front of him and warm air rushed towards Hermione as they clicked shut, leaving her inside. Alone.

Her husband was gone.

Another was waiting.

She gave herself thirty long seconds to stare at the vault doors, organising her feelings and deciding if she could have faith in fate and love. Every instinct that told her to open the doors back up and return to Malfoy she buried.

He wasn't her husband, yet.

A hand to her cheek wiped away the last of her tears and she spun on her heel, ready for the reality of what she needed to do. The cabinet loomed above her. Blue magic weaved through the veining of the wood, creating an enveloping shimmering aura, swirling in patterns that pulsed rapidly. Hermione was sure she could hear the sound of hoofbeats growing louder, echoing off the walls of the vault, and she pressed her palm against her lower abdomen, repeating the older Hermione's words to herself.

You're going to be a great mom.

The silver lock holding the handles of the cabinet closed vanished with a pop as Hermione traced her finger along the edge. She imagined her older self on the other side, a similar lock disappearing from view. A deep inhale of breath steadied her nerves and her emerald bracelet gleamed in the lamplight as she pulled open the doors, called by the magic of the cabinet to return home.

One foot and another she climbed inside, and everything went black.

Suggested Listening: *Fuel to Fire* by Agnes Obel

I never planned on having older Hermione write to younger Hermione in this chapter when I outlined it. Instead, it was going to be a big pregnancy test charm reveal with Hermione/Draco. But then, this just felt right. And I kept thinking about my own experience before having a child, and what would I tell myself if I had the power of hindsight and knowing. And I think, not only hearing yourself say that you're going to be a great mom but actually believing in those words as you write/read them would be so enormously powerful.

Having a child, whether you are ready or not, is a terrifying experience, and has the ability to take away your entire sense of self, replacing it with a version of you that you've never met before. Who is to say if you will even like that person?

This was a ramble. But it is all to say, that writing the letter in this chapter healed me.

Thank you for reading.

P.S. The sound of hoofbeats of the cabinet were always Virgo's heartbeat.

May 12, 2004

Chapter Notes

Normally, I do end-credit music. But reunions call for dramatic violin music. I am begging you to listen to *Luminary* by Joel Sunny on repeat for this whole god damn chapter.

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

May 12, 2004

Paper crumpled within Draco's fist as he awoke, a far cry from the soft skin of his wife that he had become accustomed to each morning over the last three months. He searched his hands through the sheets, living in the space between dream and awake, needing to pull her close into his body before starting their last day together, but found nothing.

He sat up with a start, jolting awake.

"*Hermione*," he called out in panic, blood turning to ice in his veins. The early morning sun shone through the windows, light dancing into the silence of the room. There was no response, no sound of the shower, nor a kettle whistling from the kitchen. Draco launched out of bed, pacing the flat at speed, searching the rooms for his wife.

She was gone.

The paper in his hand pulled him back to reality as he struggled to read and catch his breath.

Draco, my love,

If I had stayed to say goodbye, I would have risked never leaving. But this is not my time and nor should it be. We are meant for each other, just different versions of ourselves.

Your wife is returning home today, and I'm sorry you will have to keep secrets from her, but for the good of our family, you must. I will see you again in fifteen years, and you can tell me everything.

She will come back changed, Draco. While she will be more like me than the woman who left three months ago, you both still have work to do. Live your lives together. Learn how to love each other the way you each need to be loved.

Talk to her.

You are a good man, Draco Malfoy—one who is as far from their father as a son can be. And one day, sometime soon, you will make an excellent father yourself.

It is my favourite version of you.

Until the end, all my love,

Hermione

xo

Draco staggered backwards; she left without even a hint of goodbye. He rushed to wave his hand through the air, now confident in a wide array of wandless magic, and cleaned and dressed himself in presentable robes in a matter of seconds.

His wand lay on the table by the door, resting in its familiar holster from his auror days. It warmed in his hand as he unsheathed it, vibrating with the anxious magic that threatened to escape his body. He barely needed it anymore, but took it instinctually.

There was no time to think; he needed to say goodbye to his wife.

With a sharp pop, Draco apparated to the front steps of Gringotts.

~

She stood in the alley, down the steps from Gringotts, lifting her head and closing her eyes towards the morning sun, dressed in an olive sundress and his favourite nude heels. Draco recognised the expression, always when she needed a moment to pause her life and form the thoughts in her brain into something coherent before she acted. An expression of the older Hermione; since the younger version never paused or gave her impulsiveness a second thought, always acting too rash and without considering all the consequences.

He wasn't too late.

"Hermione!" he yelled down from the steps, zig-zagging through the crowd of people out shopping. Heads turned from all directions to watch them, backing up to give them space. Since he became Chief Warlock, married to *The Hermione Granger*, it was only deference towards them when they were out in public.

Draco didn't care how they all treated him as long as his wife remained safe.

Her head whipped around as she turned back to face him, curls shining brightly, dusting the tops of her shoulders, her amber eyes sparkling in the sun, gleaming with unshed tears. Draco froze as their eyes locked, and his chest heaved from the anticipation of almost missing her, matching the pace of her breath.

"Hi," she whispered up to him.

"Hi," he whispered back.

Her deft fingers tucked a long strand of hair behind his ear. He was still getting used to the longer hair, constantly escaping his tie. She scraped her fingertips along his jawline, pulling against his bearded chin.

“You look like him, Malfoy. Are you him?”

Malfoy.

He was too late.

He searched her face, looking for his wife, not finding any differences from the woman who abandoned him through the night. She bore the same warm smile and soft eyes that looked at him with love and adoration. The hands upon his face the exact softness he remembered, her small frame standing in front of him just as attractive as she had always been.

Every difference Draco built up in his mind between the two versions of his wife all fell away as he pulled her into his arms and kissed her soundly. She even tasted the same; he thought in relief when her tongue snaked its way into his waiting mouth.

It wouldn't have mattered if all of Wizarding London watched them reunite; he would show them who she belonged to. Draco lifted her easily by the arse he had become so fond of carrying around and pulled her tighter into their kiss. “Do you want me to be him, Hermione?” He murmured into her open mouth, lowering his voice to the pitch he knew she liked.

She rested her forehead on his, breathing a deep sigh, clutching his face within her hands. The scent of jasmine from her curls enveloped him, taking away every sensation that wasn't her away from his mind.

Diagon Alley might as well have been deserted.

“Please. Please be him,” she whispered, raking her fingers down his jawline, her tears spilling over her cheeks, tracking wet lines down her face.

Draco didn't respond; his only instinct screaming at him to take care of her. He squeezed her tightly into his body as he cracked in apparition, away from what would surely be the front page of tomorrow's Daily Prophet.

~

“Seamus!” Draco yelled as he landed in the bar of the Leaky Cauldron, his wife still in his arms, held up by her glorious arse. “That room Hermione and I were in on Halloween. Get me the key right now.”

The small Irish bartender's eyes shot open at the intrusion into his space. “Now, Malfoy. I don't think ye –”

He didn't have time for this. “*Right fucking now, Finnegan!*”

“Here, love,” Hannah passed a key into Hermione's outstretched hand with a smile, waving Seamus away back to the bar. “This one is on the house. Don't worry about Sea.”

Hermione smiled in return, not moving from Draco's arms, nor was he willing to put her down.

“Thank you, Abbott!” Draco called back behind him as his wife stifled a giggle into his shoulder, and he took the steps two by two, rushing to their room.

Draco counted off the door numbers in his head, searching for their room, as if the location wasn't burned in his memory forever. He cast a non-verbal *alohamora* the moment he saw it, overpowering the spell and sending all the doors in the hallway flying open. The screams of surprise up and down the hallway didn't even register in his brain as he carried Hermione into their room and slammed the door closed with the heel of his foot.

He dove into her neck, kissing and biting along her throat, yanking her shirt down over her shoulder to access more of her perfect skin, exposing his favourite cluster of freckles. The moans reverberating from her chest goaded him further, and he spun them in the room, crashing her back into the closest wall.

“I'm fixing our memory of this room, baby. Will you let me do that for you?” Draco groaned into her ear as he thrust his hips up against her, pinning her to the wall.

“Please, Malfoy,” she cried, rolling her hips back into him in response.

The surname stung at him; it would be the last time she ever said it. He pulled his face away from hers and darkened his gaze intentionally. “No. Never Malfoy. Only Draco. Please.”

“Draco,” she whispered, amber irises blown to a sliver, nodding softly.

“It makes me feel safe with you, Hermione.”

“Draco,” she leaned into his neck, her warm breath skating his ear as she whispered, “Please. Make me yours.”

He lifted her higher, pulling her closer into his body and slammed her back against the wall with more force. Lights flickered about the room as their magic sparked across arms and fingers, kisses exchanged at a furious pace as if she would be gone again before they could finish.

He would never be without his witch again.

With a wave of his hand, every scrap of clothing they wore vanished, along with the bedspread and the curtains. Another overexertion of his wandless magic.

Draco blamed it on heightened emotions and refused to give the damages another thought. He would pay a thousand galleons with a smile on his face for what they were about to do to the room. Possessively, Draco wondered what price Seamus might quote to never rent this room out again to another soul.

Hermione froze in her nakedness, pulling herself away from his embrace. Draco's throat constricted at the loss of contact against his chest, mourning the feeling of her lips against his. In an effort to defer to the newness of their relationship, he set her down, barefoot on the wood floor, keeping his eyes locked on hers, attempting to communicate his reverence and respect for her in silence.

She held his gaze as she dropped one knee to the floor, and then another. He assumed she would have wanted to take in his naked form, and assess every inch of his skin. The same way he wanted to explore hers.

But she didn't.

Neither of them broke their unyielding gaze.

Not until she clasped her hands behind her back, opened her mouth and stuck out her tongue.

Which was the exact point Draco knew he died; choking on the heart muscle that entered his mouth while his eyes rolled back into his head.

His cock wept with need at the sight of her, hard since Diagon Alley. It turned painful, aching for release and bobbed in the air as he flexed in front of her, aligning himself with her waiting mouth. Draco didn't want to use his hands on himself, he only wanted to touch her.

Control her.

Her shoulder-length curls brushed against his fingers like silk ribbons as he tucked the strands behind her ears and admired his wife from above.

But hesitation struck with the last amount of blood flow available to his brain. What if this version of his wife didn't know about his favourite fantasy? The books flashed before his mind. His experienced wife wasn't the one on her knees tonight; he would be responsible for communicating and setting expectations.

"Show me your sparks, baby," he ordered down to her.

A hint of teeth showed off a secret smile around the tip of his cock, resting in her open mouth and she moved her clasped hands from behind her back to above her head, releasing a cascade of yellow fireworks from all fingers, followed by red.

Draco groaned at the obedience, grasping at the wrists available to him, pressing them against the wall behind her, pinning her in place easily. "Have I ever told you about my potions lab fantasy? Is that what you are looking for?"

She pulled her head back a fraction, enough to look up at him seductively and nod without his length in her mouth. "Please," she cooed softly, challenging every ounce of willpower Draco had left.

"There's my good girl," he praised her lowly, savouring the gleam in her eyes before he outlined his expectations, making sure she knew what he wanted from her. "First, you're going to swallow my cock, and then I'm going to bend you over and fuck you so hard you'll forget your name."

An array of green sparks lept from her fingers set the room awash in the neon light. Her amber eyes ignited in the glow, irises reflecting the green of the room, matching the emerald bracelet held firmly above her head. Draco wound his thumb into it, savouring the confirmation that she was his.

His free hand wound into the mass of curls behind her head, pulling tightly at her scalp. With the limited range of motion that remained available to her, Hermione nodded up at him in agreement, closing her lips around his throbbing length.

A single thrust had Draco buried deep in her throat, lost in the warmth and tightness she gave over willingly. He held her still by the head and wrists, not wanting to cede any of his power, and lingered in place in her mouth. Tears welled in her eyes and her throat vibrated around him as she let out a garbled cry at the intrusion, wiggling on her knees to adjust.

His chest puffed out at the sight of her and it was all he could do not to release the soft laugh that formed there, bubbling up to break free. The relief overwhelmed him that she was the same person, just as wanting as the wife he knew so well.

He rolled his hips to slide himself in and out of her mouth and throat repeatedly, gathering moisture with each precise movement, allowing her just enough time to breath between strokes. Her eyes shone up at him, wordlessly asking for more, daring him to finish; as if she learned legilimency in the future, along with how to give an outrageously good blow job.

But Draco wasn't even close to finished with her.

He hauled himself out of her mouth reluctantly and dragged her up to standing by her wrists, not wanting to give her a moment of reprieve.

She gasped for air in the time he manoeuvred her around the room, searching for an acceptable surface. Locked on his destination, he pushed against the space between her shoulder blades to bend her over in front of him, hands pressed against the desk meant for business travellers and their useless paperwork.

Draco sank himself straight to the hilt into her waiting core, soaking wet with want, and he revelled in the strangled scream that came from his wife. With the pressure and tightness snaking up his abdomen and into his brain, ceasing all cognizant thought, he couldn't figure out if he wanted everyone to hear her, or keep her all to himself.

Mine. Mine, mine, mine. His thoughts rang out with each sharp snap of his hips.

"Yours, Daddy," Hermione cried out, answering what must have been his thoughts spoken out loud. It didn't matter. She knew his real name, the one only reserved for her, and it incensed him with possessive need.

His hawthorn wand flew through the air and into his hand with a wordless accio. No one would hear his wife's cries of pleasure. "Open up, baby," he demanded from behind her, continuing his relentless pace of fucking her.

She turned her head back at the order, hair swinging with each thrust, and her eyes blew wide at the sight of the wand. A slight nod of her head and opening of her jaw gave Draco all the consent he needed, and he placed the wand in her waiting mouth.

The sight of her being slammed between himself and the desk, breasts and hair swinging, his wand in her mouth looking like a horse's bit nearly made Draco finish prematurely. But that

couldn't happen again, especially not in this room. He closed his eyes and emptied his mind, readying himself to satisfy her every need.

Her round ass mocked him as he opened his eyes. She took the opportunity in his moment of weakness to continue fucking herself onto his cock, pushing back onto him, the olive skin of her arse rolling set off in contrast against his pale abdomen.

He growled out at her in frustration, nearly failing to hold himself back, *"Don't you dare drop my fucking wand, wife."*

Draco dug his fingers into her hips, forcing her into stillness, and spat down onto her hole with need. He pressed his thumb into the wetness, applying enough pressure she would have to drop it, and he could punish her properly.

But she held on, even through her stifled moan, and wiggled her hips back into his hand, green sparks shooting off at her fingertips on the desk.

He sank his length as deep into her as he could and held her still by the hip, giving her no time to settle before burying his thumb into her ass.

Draco was determined to make good on his promise.

"What is your name?" he barked out, each word accentuated by his thumb driving her senseless.

Whines of pleasure were the only thing that came out of her reined mouth as she rested her head against the desk. One by one, she lifted her legs to climb atop the wood while he worked her, settling wide on her knees to open herself to him.

"I asked you a question, baby. What is your fucking name?"

Curls shook back and forth with her head turning in denial of the question. Draco didn't care if she couldn't answer behind the wand, or truly forgot her own name. He delivered on what was owed and spat down onto her again, adding an excessive amount of wetness to his motions, swapping his thumb for two long fingers, driving them into her as deep as his knuckles would allow.

The depth sent her imploding around him, clenching and unclenching both holes like a vice-grip. Draco succumbed to the pressure, releasing pulse after pulse of spend deep into his wife, entranced by the glimmering sweat on her spine and the sight of her continuing to push herself back onto him. As if she could possibly take any more. She writhed on his hand and dick, spewing nonsense behind a wand inexplicably still held in her mouth.

Whoever Draco turned into in the future, he would be writing a thank you note to the man. Full of the most complimentary words he ever learned. And a fruit basket. One hundred fruit baskets, filled with green apples and sugar quills.

He reached forward and wrapped his hand around the base of his wand, gesturing as kindly as he could that she could let it go. Drool dripped down the hawthorn, which on closer

inspection, appeared dented by teeth marks, not that it mattered. Draco threw it to the floor as he slid out of her with remorse.

He wanted to fuck her into next week, never leaving this room.

A tiny whimper rattled him, sounding off faintly in the room as she shivered naked on the desk. Draco eased her up into his arms, remembering his role. "I've got you, baby," he murmured into the top of her curls, "Hold on."

~

It was at least a half hour before she spoke to him. Staring off into space while he held her tightly in his arms. Draco refused to set her down or stop touching her until she was ready.

After apparating into their ensuite bath at the flat with a crack, he filled the tub with all her favourite oils and scents, easing them both in as gently as he could. He knew she would want to come down in a familiar space and he gestured slowly and spoke soft instructions, refusing to start a conversation she wasn't ready for.

She allowed him to wash her hair, her body language speaking volumes when her words could not.

She felt safe with him; he knew it.

"Do you miss her?" she finally whispered, as he rinsed the last of the conditioner into the cooling water.

Draco hesitated, considering the right way to answer truthfully. "Yes... But no. Not really. You're the same person, Hermione."

"I never understood why you called me Hermione until today, Draco. I could never put my finger on why I felt so safe with you in the future. But in Diagon... You said my name." She sank down deeper into the water, her muscles unrolling atop him. "You're just like him."

"Is that who you want me to be?" he asked, fearing the answer, but resigned to face the truth regardless.

Water rolled off the side of the tub as she turned around, adjusting herself to sit atop his lap, settling her hands onto his jaw. Amber eyes glowed in seriousness and affection. "Yes. And I understand now... I think... It is who you always were. But I didn't see it, and I am sorry for that."

Tears pooled in her eyes as she held his face close to her own. "It is who I wanted the father of our child to be."

Draco's brain hitched at the statement. "Hermione—"

"I'm pregnant, Draco."

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Dreams* by Robert Koch, Stephen Henderson

I love closed circles. Adore them. Catch all the callbacks. There are plenty.

May 12, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

May 12, 2004

Hermione searched her husband's face for the jealousy she knew he internally warred with, unable to find it.

Steel eyes bore into her with adoration as he traced a single finger down her shoulder, dipping under the waterline to graze her hip. His broad hand splayed possessively across her abdomen, and his stare dropped below the surface while he lifted his hips slightly, propping her up on his lap.

She couldn't be sure why she chose that moment out of any others to blurt out her confession. Armed with the knowledge of her pregnancy for over a week, never once did she let the words tumble out of her mouth to her husband in the future. But something about the way Draco held her in the bath, washed her hair and held his silence until she was ready felt right.

It's not like she could have held onto the secret for long.

Water rolled like the tide around them, lapping at the underside of Hermione's breasts, and her nipples pebbled in the cool air. "Draco –" she started, not sure of the question she wanted to ask.

"A son," he whispered, eyes locked on her belly. "A fresh start for us."

She shook her head and pulled his chin up with her thumb, comforted by the familiar beard he grew while she was away. "A daughter."

His eyes blew wide at the revelation, "Hermione, that's impossible –"

"I've seen her, Draco. She has your eyes." Memories of Virgo rolled through Hermione's mind, her heart warming as she locked onto the steel eyes inspecting her intently. Truthfully, she couldn't wait to see those eyes again on her daughter and how her husband would grow into the father he was always meant to become.

"And the rest of her is you, isn't it?" A broad smile cracked onto his face, his expression mischievous.

"She is both of us. A wonderful child, from what I'm told. A Slytherin, too."

"But that means..." His brow furrowed in contemplation, blond hairs falling across his forehead into his eyes. Hermione deftly pushed them behind his ear, allowing herself the extra moment to linger her hand on his neck in comfort.

“She’s still yours, technically speaking. You will just have to wait a few years for the conception.” She tried her best to hold back a giggle as she kissed his jawline tenderly. “If it makes a difference, you enjoyed it immensely.”

“That bastard gets everything, doesn’t he?” Draco laughed, his chest shaking as he pulled her in tightly.

Hermione didn’t think she ever heard him laugh like that, joyful and free.

Years of her memories filled with the young boy who only had the capacity to sneer and draw inwards to protect himself from the world. No longer, Hermione thought to herself; she would give herself over and let him love and protect their family, encouraging him to thrive and grow. She sank into his arms and let her head roll onto his wet shoulder, her mouth close enough to whisper into his ear, “Not everything, my love. You get our future.”

May 14, 2004

Pansy and Neville's cottage looked just the same as the future, minus the bushes along the path and Hermione found herself wanting of a snack as she and Draco walked the long pathway up to the main door, hand in hand, in silence.

“Are you hungry, baby?” Draco asked, reading her mind, easily reminding her of his older self. “The books said you would be hungry all the time soon and that small meals might be easier for you.”

Hermione couldn’t help but smile at his consideration, leaning into his side as they finished the walk uphill. He had known she was pregnant for all of 48 hours, and already the stack of literature delivered by owl piled high atop his bedside table, devoured and annotated in the small amount of time they didn’t spend tangled in the sheets rediscovering each other. “Yes, but Pansy will have lots of food, and it’s only another minute to the house.”

Draco opened his mouth to answer, only to be interrupted by a shriek from the cottage. Pansy poured out the front door at speed to greet them with arms wide, looking more like future Pansy than present, her hair tied up messily in a silk kerchief. Hermione wondered how much of an influence her older self had while she was in her time, not just on dismantling the marriage act.

The secret of Pansy’s doomed pregnancy sent a pang to Hermione’s heart, and she clutched at her abdomen in grief for her friend. Pansy never said whether or not Hermione consoled her or kept her secrets, but the thought of taking away even an ounce of hope was impossible. She resolved herself into another vow of secrecy and pulled her friend into a warm hug, letting the familiarity of the embrace warm her soul.

“You look radiant, Pansy!” she complimented effusively, speaking only truth.

“And you! Why, Granger, you look fifteen years younger. You simply must give me the name of your charms witch.” Pansy laughed to herself as she led them both into the unfinished cottage, weaving through the rooms. “Did you take your time up the walk? Everyone is already in the dining room – we’ve all been waiting for you.”

Draco ushered Hermione gently along, keeping a hand on the small of her back, chiding Pansy. “Honestly, Pans, you cannot expect people to walk that far to get here. No floo. No apparation. It’s uncivilised.”

“Yes, yes, I’m aware. But Neville likes our privacy and I like Neville,” she responded with a hidden smile. “So, the path stays. He’s putting plants along the way for next year and you can have berries as you walk, since you have such a delicate constitution, Draco.”

An enormous banner of *Welcome Home Hermione* popped into the dining room doorway, with sparklers of all colours firing off at the edges. Hermione could barely get her bearings before being bombarded by all their friends surrounding her.

A chorus of endearments and questions came from them as she was passed around in various group hugs.

“Hermione, you look beautiful.”

“You must be brimming with secrets.”

“Congratulations, Hermione.”

“Hermione, you must have been beside yourself with how attractive I was as an older man.”

“Well? How was he?”

“Alright, alright, give her some space,” Draco’s voice rang out, interrupting the chaos. “You’ve all conveniently forgotten about the rules already. No knowing about the future.”

He ushered her away from the mob and pulled out a chair at the table, wordlessly instructing her to sit with a sharp nod before sitting next to her, squeezing her thigh possessively under the table. Hermione let herself give over to the pressure of his fingertips on the inside of her thigh, settling her brain from the chaos of the room.

Groans in agreement came from her friends as they sat around the table, beginning to pass the wine and pile their plates high with food.

“Since when have you all listened to Draco?” She asked, a bit baffled at the group’s collective obedience.

Harry snorted in laughter, “Since he dragged Theo and I by the robes to the Ministry, making us claim our Wizengamot seats, and we elected him Chief Warlock.”

Hermione’s hair whipped around as she shot a look to her husband, looking quite pleased with himself. “*Chief Warlock?*” she mouthed in question, only to get a smug smile and a nod in return as confirmation.

“Blimey, Mione, you’ve been home two days and didn’t get all of this out of him already? Must be getting soft in your old age,” Ron added, mouth full of mashed potatoes.

She scanned the room at her friends, all watching her intently, studying her, not unlike her almost intervention before getting married. “Ronald, I have all the time in the world to catch up, I’m not in a rush.”

Luna twirled her fork in the air, darting it towards Hermione’s aura. “It will be much easier to relax now that you are finally free of your nargles, too.”

“I didn’t want to overwhelm Hermione with everything all at once.” Draco added sternly, tucking his thumb into her bracelet under the table as he wrapped his hand around hers. “There is a long list of things that we need to discuss and renegotiate. Me being Chief Warlock barely registers.”

July 27, 2004

Hermione exited the steamy shower late on a Sunday afternoon rejuvenated for her surprise date.

Draco hinted at a special occasion, which she could not for the life of her seem to remember, but blamed her forgetfulness on the pregnancy hormones. Not the only change she experienced, she thought fondly, admiring her growing reflection in the steamy mirror.

Her husband appreciated the effects of the pregnancy more and more everyday, it seemed. He became obsessed with her changing body, worshipping every inch of her skin and escalating his need for control and safety to new heights.

Hermione’s curiosity over his plans for the evening only increased as she towed her hair dry and rifled through her dresser drawers, looking for something he would enjoy taking off her later that night. Slowly, she hoped, fingering the fine lace of a sheer green bra, considering it as an option.

A large box, complete with matte black wrapping paper and a gold ribbon popped into existence as she opened the third drawer, sending Hermione back a step with surprise.

“Draco?” she called into the flat, eyeing the gift suspiciously. “Are you home?”

There was no answer. Hermione pulled the tag at the ribbon to read the scrawling inscription, Draco’s perfect penmanship complimenting the immaculate wrapping.

A gift for our eight-month anniversary. And don’t tell me that’s not a thing, you swot. Put this on and meet me in the bedroom.

Of course she wouldn’t remember an eight month anniversary, and who could blame her; it wasn’t even a real occasion.

Hermione pulled the gold ribbon from the package and carefully unfolded the black wrapping. Tissue paper pulled to the side revealed a white oxford shirt, a short grey woollen skirt, and a Gryffindor tie.

Her exact Hogwarts uniform.

Her heart raced as she pulled the items out of the box, and she moved the tissue around frantically, searching for a bra or knickers, with none to be found. Hermione's throat constricted at what she inherently knew to be coming, already negotiated on a tidy scroll tucked safely in her nightstand. She pulled all the items haphazardly into her arms and paced into her old room.

"Having trouble in there?" he called out from across the flat, waiting. Hermione didn't even know when he arrived home.

"No!" she called back, harsher than she intended, though determined to please him.

Hesitantly, she shrugged on the oxford and buttoned it up, tucking it into her skirt. Her pregnancy hadn't begun to show, but her breasts were a cup size bigger than months previous and burst at the seams of the tight shirt. Hermione struggled to do the top three buttons before eventually giving up and leaving it half open.

Her arse had seemingly doubled in size, too, not that Draco would confirm that fact. But the feeling of his wanting hands on her while she rode him was more than enough confirmation and encouragement.

With a shaking hand, she snaked the tie around her collar, leaving it loose enough at the top to drape over her exposed cleavage. It was as good as the outfit would get without an enlargement charm, and she knew better than to augment a gift from her husband.

He knew what he wanted.

She checked her reflection in the full length mirror, only making one final adjustment to her gift, pulling down his favourite nude heels from the highest shelf in her closet. It wasn't that they were more comfortable; far from it. But the level of confidence they gave her, knowing how her husband reacted when he saw her wearing them, made her feel three feet taller, not just the four inches they provided.

Hermione opened the door and clicked back to their shared bedroom, finding Draco waiting for her in the leather chair at the foot of the bed she had become so fond of.

What she once thought of as her reading chair in her own tiny flat, she could only look at it now and think of her husband watching her with darkened eyes. She sauntered over the room as demurely as she could in the ill-fitting uniform and stood between his knees.

"Fuck." He muttered under his breath, raking her over with his eyes, lingering on her exposed breasts, barely concealed by the tie. Fingers traced up her thigh to the hem of the skirt, reaching underneath and drawing a line across the crease where her thigh met her arse.

A shiver ran down Hermione's spine and into her increasingly wet core, aching with need for more than his fleeting touches.

"Where do you want me, Daddy?" she asked softly, hoping a submissive voice would lessen whatever he had in store for her. The harsh fabric of the oxford dug into her ribcage, and she wiggled in an attempt to adjust herself, only increasing her exposure.

A single eyebrow lifted at her movements. Hermione knew her husband well enough now that he wasn't fooled by her act. "Turn around," he said slyly, spinning his finger in the air in additional instruction, as if she needed extra help after class.

She was fucked.

Hermione complied, turning around to face the bed.

"*Good Girl,*" his voice dropped to a wanting murmur. "Now, bend over and hold your ankles."

She shifted from foot to foot, unsure of what to do. Her cunt ached at the endearment he knew she liked, but hesitation weighed down into her heels, keeping her in place. The outfit he made her put on was the height of embarrassment, and her preferences list noted only one specific scene he was allowed to request such a thing for.

A sharp smack stung at the back of her thigh, where his palm connected with her exposed skin. "What the fuck are you waiting for. I told you to hold your ankles." The severity of his voice sent fear snaking up Hermione's spine, and she snapped down to the floor, terrified by his intent. Blood rushed to her head as her hair pooled across the floor, and the tie dangled across her cheek. Her breasts hung down towards her chin, nipples grazing the edge of the scratchy oxford shirt, threatening to break free.

She could just see the tips of his shining black dragonhide shoes from her upside-down position and sent off vivid green sparks from her fingers, inches away from his feet.

"Do you know how long I have waited for this baby?"

"No, Daddy." She murmured back, attempting to convey a level of respect, hiding her fear.

"Five fucking months Hermione." He barked out. She knew if she could see his face, the vein in his forehead would be bulging. "You climbed in that gods' forsaken cabinet after I repeatedly told you to be careful around it. And then you left me for three months, letting me stew in what I would do to you when I saw you again. But now that you're back, safe with me, and we have re-established our relationship and our boundaries... It's time to atone."

They had discussed this scene at length a month ago while rewriting their scrolls for one another. Hermione didn't think it would happen so quickly, nor that Draco was so keen on enacting it. He conveniently concealed that immediate desire.

It seemed a far-off option for a time in the future not yet on the calendar. But here she was, hanging upside down, obeying every word of her husband's seductive voice, waiting for the next instruction with a pounding heart.

"Do you know what I learned while you were away?" His fingers traced the inside of her legs, moving upwards until he reached her core.

Wetness betrayed her fear as he palmed her soaking cunt, a groan of pleasure rumbling out at his discovery. He held her in place, pulling upwards just enough that she needed to straighten

her legs to accommodate him. “Along with every last one of your preferences and limits, I learned exactly what makes you feel sorry for your actions... She taught me the right way to teach you a lesson, not to mention letting me in on the small secret that I never corrected you in the future.”

He pressed the heel of his palm firmly into her, pitching her forward, teetering on heels, and sending even more blood rushing to her head. “And you know how much I love experiencing a first with you, baby.”

Hermione attempted to roll her hips and grind down into the broad hand pressed against her. The hand she trusted to give her pleasure whenever her husband desired to dole it out. Unless he was in the mood to be withholding, needing to exert an additional level of control.

Like tonight.

“There’s only one way this lesson will sink into that beautiful brain of yours.” His free hand slid between her feet, setting a piece of parchment against the floor topping it with a muggle ballpoint pen. “And that’s if you think of it as detention.”

Hermione let her gaze linger on his gleaming signet ring as it brushed across the hand clutching her ankle, sending a shiver up her thigh.

“I’ve never had detention in my life,” she snorted at the task awaiting her.

“First time for everything, swot.”

His hand left her wanting without a word, and the soft leather sounded underneath him as he got comfortable behind her. A clink of a belt buckle told Hermione everything she needed to know about what he was doing beyond her gaze.

She wiggled her arse the tiniest amount, hoping it would distract him from her punishment.

“Do you think that will work?” A cool rush of air came across her backside as he flipped her skirt up, exposing her nakedness. The wool itched against the small of her back, where the pleats bunched and pooled. “You’ve only now made it worse for yourself. Start writing.”

Hermione rolled her eyes, thankful he couldn’t see her face. “I can’t write while holding my ankles, Draco.”

“Then pretend it’s a fucking sugar quill and put it in your mouth,” He snapped back, “I want at least ten lines of *I will let Daddy keep me safe.*”

In hindsight, Hermione knew she shouldn’t have called him Draco. But it came out without thought in her indignation. The pen might as well have been a shovel the way she continued to dig her grave.

She considered sending off yellow sparks from her fingers for the sheer embarrassment of the situation, but the idea that whatever was in store might be worth it held her off.

Hermione nudged the pen with her nose, moving it across the floor until it was accessible to her mouth. The hard plastic settled between her teeth, and she manoeuvred it with her tongue until she found an ideal writing position. As the pen touched down to paper, thankfully stuck to the floor with a charm, the lightest touch tickled the top of her left arsecheek, she pulled back immediately, releasing a high squeak of shock.

Draco laughed behind her lowly as if the punch line of an inside joke just landed in his ear. “I told you that you made it worse.”

She peered as best she could through her legs, pen still clutched in her mouth, to find him leaning into her eyesight, twirling a fluffy quill.

His face was one of determination as he trailed the feather the long distance from her ankle up to her aching core, and her knee buckled at the sensation. It took every ounce of focus away from her brain, and she gripped her ankles tightly to remain upright.

“Keep writing,” he snapped, playfully swatting her inner thigh with his open palm. It contrasted sharply to the feather that just left her, and heat ran down her spine to chase the fleeting touch. “How many lines will you need to write, I wonder? Before it sinks in.”

Hermione began to write as best she could with the pen in her mouth, each word scratched against the paper sending a soft tickling sensation over her arse. It was as if the quill wrote the same lines, mimicking her own, only with the wrong end of the feather.

I will let Daddy keep me safe.

The soft down of the feather took the entire expanse of her arse to write the line, moving down a little lower with each new sentence, and the words took ten times as long to write with her mouth, completely illegible, stuttering and stopping as she attempted to keep the pen secure.

On the third line, Hermione braced herself against the floor as the feather dusted across her tight hole, clenching in the sensation. Her palm hitting the hardwood, echoing through the room with a smack and the pen clattered to the floor.

“Having trouble focusing, Miss Granger? The first time writing lines can be challenging.”

“You’re distracting me.”

“Like you tried to distract me? Keep writing.” His laugh sounded off like a bark, startling her to scramble, sticking the pen in her mouth quickly before returning her hands to her ankles.

Two more lines, each more illegible than the last, made it onto the paper, the pen trembling between her teeth. Hermione paused her attempts to regain some composure, ignoring the spinning sensation that built in her head.

The feather left her arse when she paused, nearly in defeat and it drifted over and around her hip. As if her husband was contemplating the next line he would write in his daily correspondence.

He sat down on the floor behind her cross legged, warm eyes peering between her legs to inspect her face. "Are you alright, my love? We can stop."

Hermione wanted to continue for him, to please him, but her dizziness became overwhelming with the heat of her pregnancy. She let the pen fall to the floor and nodded. "Yes, please, Draco. It's too much."

A flick of his hand transfigured her uniform into a silk robe as he scooped her up into his arms and broad muscles enveloped her for the short walk to the bed, laying her down gently atop the plush bedding, nestling around her.

"Daddy. I promise I will listen. I'm sorry," she murmured into his neck, not wanting to look into his eyes and deepen her shame. Her body shivered with the memory of the feather, stimulating everything without any real satisfaction or release.

"Shhh, it's alright. I'm so proud of you, baby." He pressed loving kisses into the top of her head as he pulled her in closer to his body. "Thank you for telling me to stop. What can I do for you?"

Hermione's nerve endings were ablaze, begging for completion. The second trimester of her pregnancy made her desire her husband more than she thought possible and heat burned from the centre of her chest outwards, snaking up her neck and into her hairline.

"I'm too warm, Draco, and I need to finish."

"Of course, my love."

Draco rolled atop her, caging her body in, while still leaving space between their bodies so she could breathe freely. He edged down the bed, hurriedly kissing her breasts and stomach on the way, lingering in reverence over their growing child. Settling between her thighs, his tongue wasted no time in enveloping her clit, and two long fingers reached inside, curling up into the place that sent Hermione rolling.

She was so close to the edge from earlier, sweat easily built between her breasts as she pulled her husband's hair loose from its tie, pulling his face in closer to her cunt.

His free hand grazed up her body, roaming over a nipple on the way to her neck before encasing her throat, squeezing with enough pressure that the embossed M of his signet ring branded her as his. She arched her back slightly, recalling the moment in the vault where she first felt his hand around her neck, not understanding her most basic instincts.

She was his.

Cold metal formed under his hand, weaving slowly around her throat, exhibiting the exact same tightness Draco knew to give her. Hermione's head shot off the pillow to find her husband smiling into the meal he made of her, staring up and waiting for her reaction.

"Your real gift, baby," he murmured into her thigh, biting down on her flesh in punctuation.

Hermione let her hand encase the formed collar, allowing her fingers to tell her what her eyes could not see while Draco returned to his work, licking and biting away at her, bringing her closer to a much-needed release with each swipe of his fingers and flick of his tongue.

Instinctually, she knew the metal shone brightly, the finest goblin-wrought gold money could buy, but the feel of it was uneven underneath her fingertips with rigid bumps and grooves carefully engraved along the length of the piece.

Her fingers traced down one end dropping to her chest in a tapered point, finding the other rounded end nestled against her jugular.

Hermione closed her eyes, clutching the broad end of the collar tightly as she revelled in the rolling orgasm Draco unleashed upon her, letting the real world fade to black. Only left with two large gems, icy in her palm, keeping her grounded.

The eyes of a snake.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Do It For Me* by Rosenfeld

December 24, 2004

Chapter Notes

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

December 24, 2004

Draco looked at his wristwatch for the fourth time in minutes. As much as he offered, Hermione insisted on walking home by herself after her final day of working in the vaults. She would be home soon; if she didn't lose track of time on a curse.

He moved from room to room aimlessly, eventually finding himself next to the soon-to-be baby's vinewood cot, in the room repurposed from his wife's original quarters. It felt like years ago when he stocked her favourite books in the closet, now filled with children's books and toys, with more arriving constantly from friends.

A flick of his wand turned off the lights in the room as he left, allowing the stars of the southern sky painted across the ceiling to glow. Libra, his goddess of justice, shone brightly above the cot, tucking in its surrounding constellations.

As if they were *both* under her protection.

The inviting scent of curry entered the flat before she did, wandlessly floating across the room to set atop the kitchen island as she shuffled through the doorway. Draco assumed the food was for both of them; he tried his best to keep track of whether she was ravenous or hated food, never quite achieving the accuracy he wished for.

He paced across the flat quickly, moving behind her to take her cloak and beaded bag, ushering her to the seat by the door so he could help with her winter boots. Even if she could unlace them with magic, he preferred to help her by hand, taking any small moment available into his possession.

A small keen of relief escaped her as he pressed a thumb into her arch and pulled the second snowy boot off.

"Hello, my love," she whispered, "have you been waiting long?" She scratched at his jawline with her nails, sending a shiver down his spine, his body yearning for more of her gentle touch.

"No time at all. I just sat down to read," he lied, glancing at her boots tucked away under the bench, not wanting to admit his worry.

A single, all-knowing eyebrow raised back at him. "Mmmhmm. What are you reading?" She braced herself against his shoulder to stand, looking over to their reading area, likely searching for evidence.

Delicious swot.

Draco let the moment in time freeze in his mind, her prominent belly inches away from his face. He placed a single chaste kiss to his growing child and wondered if he would still get to read with his wife on a daily basis once two became three.

Or, if they would shift to reading together, tucked in under a single blanket by the fire, with titles like *Mansfield Park* long forgotten in favour of *Babbity Rabbity*.

He hoped desperately they would.

Draco stood as soon as he felt the weight of his wife leave his shoulder. He knew just what to tempt her with, slowing her down into a relaxed state, and floated a set of matching books from the shelf above the mantle. "*Jane Eyre*."

Amber eyes lit up in excitement, sparkling with magic in the glow of the fireplace. "Oh! My favourite."

She must have read the book a hundred times by now, Draco thought fondly. He would never be able to catch up, but he knew enough to jump to the right part. "I'm almost finished. He's about to propose again."

"Quite romantic, our Mr. Rochester," she murmured, moving to the couch at a speed Draco finally thought to be appropriate for her term. Right on time, it seemed, with only a month left before the baby's arrival. He still couldn't understand how he won the negotiation of her not returning to work after the Christmas holidays.

Draco ignored her implication of romance and unpacked the curry onto two plates, not bothering to ask if one of the portions was for him; she would decide when she finished hers. He snuck a bite before returning to the sofa with plates in hand, just in case.

"Oh yes, nothing like a bit of romance from a one-handed, blind man with no other prospects, now that his first wife finally kicked it," he teased, settling in next to her.

"*Draco!*"

He laughed without reservation as she swatted his shoulder and took her plate. They found their usual positions together, the familiarity of her feet on his lap a constant from both versions of the wife he loved, not that they were any different from one another.

Pages flipped in sync as they progressed through the final chapters and Draco stuck his thumb into the book, setting it down on the table, prodding his palm into the sole of her foot for attention.

Her head turned towards him before her eyes, still scanning the page for the words he knew were long since memorised, eventually reaching an acceptable place to pause.

"I still dream of that day, you know, in the drawing room. When I should have helped you," he admitted, only ever wanting truth between them—an impossible task.

Her eyes welled with tears, and she set her book aside, inching herself closer to grasp his hand. "I know, my love."

“You whisper to me while I’m sleeping. Don’t you?” He intertwined his fingers into hers, wrapping his thumb into the band of her bracelet, wishing he had given it to her so many years earlier.

“Every time. If I could come into the dream and pull you out myself, I would.”

He used to risk the dream; the only thing worse than its recurrence was not dreaming of her at all, but it lost the weight of terror it once held over him. Her eyes no longer begged him to save her. Her screams no longer echoed in his brain.

She simply lay there, holding out her free arm to him, reminding him it would be over soon.

To wake up and come back to her.

“I can always hear you.” He pulled her closer, up into his lap, where she straddled him snugly, her belly filling the space between them.

“And?” A small smile played at the corner of her mouth. “Does it work?”

He kissed the smirk, letting his cheek rest against hers as he whispered in her ear. “Of course, my love. I will always come back to you. Not even time itself could keep me away.”

She wriggled herself backwards on his lap and pressed his hand into the side of her belly. “Speaking of time. She’ll be here soon.”

“Daphne says we have nearly another month to go.”

“I’ll be sure to let the baby know Daphne said that,” she snorted in response. A mystery limb kicked his hand away as if to agree with her mother.

Draco circled his thumb against the ghost of movement, wishing for more, shifting Hermione slightly on his lap in an attempt to jostle the baby into wakefulness. “I have to run over to the Manor for an hour or so. Are you sure you don’t want to come? Theo and Ginny should be there as well, in case you want an additional buffer for Mother.”

“Actually, Ginny will be here; she’s coming over to help organise some of the gifts everyone sent over.” She climbed off his lap and set the books away on the end of the mantle, silently assessing the wide ledge, focusing on the empty space she still refused to decorate. “And I’m sure, go see your brother.”

The green flames chimed loudly, Ginny barrelling through the fireplace as if summoned into being from her name alone. “Yes, Ferret. See to Theo before he gets himself into any more trouble with your Mother. I’ve warned him twice already today. He needs a keeper, and I am a born chaser.”

Draco took the hint to leave, eyeing his wife cautiously while taking a handful of floo powder. “Patronus me if anything happens?” he asked, hiding his worry.

Her bracelet sparkled in the light of the green flames as she blew a kiss goodbye. “Immediately,” she laughed with a wink.

~

Draco brushed the soot off his trousers, rolling through the direct floo entrance to his Mother's war room. Theo, expecting his presence, already situated himself at the bar cart, pouring two small tumblers of fire whiskey.

"Happy Christmas, brother." He said with a shit-eating grin, handing the second glass over.

"And what are you so happy about?" Draco asked curiously, immensely enjoying Theo's newfound nature. Married life suited him well, it seemed. With the right partner.

Theo chuckled lowly, seating himself in their mother's raised desk chair, setting his feet atop the polished wood surface. "Mipsy likes me more than you. She was just telling me about some jewellery that needed polishing."

Draco couldn't respond to the statement, interrupted by Narcissa's entrance through the room's double doors, looking as regal and threatening as she always did.

"*Theodore*," she chided sharply, eyeing his dragonhide shoes atop her desk.

He snapped upright with a jolt, vacating her seat, narrowly avoiding spilling his drink atop her papers. "Apologies, Cissy." He moved aside with the faintest hint of a bow, allowing her to take the chair for herself. "Draco made me do it."

"Don't squeal, Theo. It's unbecoming," she muttered, assessing her many scrolls to ensure they were still in order, seemingly satisfied.

"Yes, Mother."

Draco laughed lowly into his drink at the scolding, happy to avoid any attention directed his way. Narcissa Malfoy paid no mind to the fact he was the Chief Warlock or that Theo was a seated member of the Wizengamot. She took their status as a reflection of herself, always working to make them better men than their fathers.

"And you." She spun in her chair to even the score. "What kind of Chief Warlock doesn't shave his face? You look like a goat."

"Hermione likes it, Mother."

"Oh?" A small smile broke out on her face before she schooled it away. "Do keep the witch happy, then, Draco."

Theo returned to the bar cart, pouring a third glass and handing it to their mother as if to apologise. "What do you think of his choice of Christmas Gift, Cissy?"

"Seems an appropriate selection from the family jewels, given the recipient." Narcissa took a small sip of her fire whiskey and pulled a ring box from her robes. "Considering Pandora's gift of sight, I thought briefly about giving it to that sweet Lovegood girl after she forgave the family, but the stones didn't suit her complexion."

Draco took the offered box, a tiny case of black velvet, to find his grandmother's familiar emerald ring. The beauty of it pulled him in, sending the conversation around him into nothingness.

--settled on a donation to some sort of wrackspoon foundation."

"Wrackspurts."

"What?"

"Wrackspurts."

"I haven't the faintest--"

He snapped the box shut, absorbing the new information. "You never told me Pandora was a seer, Mother."

"Ahh, well. It's not something you admit out loud. Temptation is a wicked thing, Draco, and knowing your future is much more of a curse than a gift."

"So I've learned." He rolled the small box in his hand before tucking it safely into the pocket of his robes.

"The ring has magic infused in it to strengthen one's memory, but Pandora swore it made her visions clearer as well."

"I'm sure Hermione will love being able to remember the future with the utmost clarity." Theo snorted, plopping himself onto the sofa unceremoniously. "Tell me again how you found yourself, the first Malfoy man in centuries, to be expecting a girl as his firstborn child?"

"Theodore."

Draco clenched his teeth, holding back the darker feelings he held towards his older self. "Both of you know precisely how it happened. And I would be grateful if you kept your mouths shut on the matter."

"That means you too, Mipsy," Narcissa called out to the open doorway.

Tall ears poked out from the door, leading the way before the tiny elf appeared, dressed to perfection in a tuxedo jacket and sequined black sneakers. "Mipsy is excellent at keeping the family secrets... for a price," she said with a grin, lights reflecting the glittering surface of her shoes as she showed them off.

"Mipsy," Theo drawled. "Are those Alexander McQueen?"

"Master Zabini sent Mipsy an early Christmas present," she squeaked in delight, "Mipsy doesn't say he is long since forgiven. Better gifts."

Draco assessed the shoes closely, surely to have cost a fortune, even in toddler size, ignoring Theo's howls of laughter. "And what will this particular secret cost me?"

She waved her hand back at him dismissively. "No gifts required. Master Draco will simply let Mipsy know when the turkey is done."

He couldn't respond before she was off with a crack, not making any sense about a turkey.

His mother took no notice of the confusion, leaning back in her chair with drink in hand. "Have you and Hermione decided on a name yet, my Dragon?"

"Yes, brother. What constellation will be good enough for the heir to the Malfoy name, I wonder? Vulpecula? Or perhaps Horologium?"

"*Theodore.*" Narcissa escalated her voice.

"We still have plenty of time to select a name, but none have been settled upon yet." he retorted with a forced smile. He could have sworn his mother was secretly amused.

Truly, Draco had picked out his first child's constellation inspired name since he was a young boy, forever knowing he would be required to carry on the Malfoy name, never considering the alternative he now found himself in. "I will not be using either of those names, brother. Even if she does come out looking like a little fox."

"A little fox would be much better looking than that cougar you call a patronus."

"*Theodore. Glass Houses.*"

"My patronus is regal, Cissy. Fastest one you've ever seen."

Narcissa scoffed back at the brag, minutely shaking her head into her empty glass.

"Since when have you been able to cast a patronus?" Draco asked, intrigued by his mother's barely concealed enjoyment.

Theo's chest puffed out broadly, and pulled out his wand, widening his feet into an almost respectable position for casting. "Since Ginevra taught me, a few months."

"And?" Draco couldn't believe it. He held back his laughter as best he could while Theo's wand wobbled slightly from the afternoon whiskeys.

"*Expecto Patronum!*" He called out loudly with a swish of his hawthorn, blue mist swirling into a pool on the floor, fighting to form into a corporeal shape.

Draco tilted his head to the side, trying to assess the giant bird from behind, moving around the glowing shape to get a better look.

But there wasn't a good visual from any angle. The ostrich lodged its head firmly under the floorboards, ignoring all instruction from Theo, who in turn ignored the peals of laughter from their mother.

“I’m still working on it.” Theo drawled, nudging at the bird with his shoe.

Another blue patronus burned through the window, galloping at speed across the floor, appearing more than pleased to find the ostrich. The bird’s feathers fluffed and preened, sensing the regal horse circling around it at a trot, but no head emerged.

Ginny’s voice rang out of the horse’s mouth, sounding dangerously close to Molly Weasley in her finest howler.

“Malfoy, come back over here now. You’re about to have a kit.”

Draco didn’t say goodbye, nor did he care that the entire jar of floo powder went into the flames, ceramic pot and all, as he called out his flat’s address, rushing home to his wife.

~

Hours later, in the early dawn of the morning, Draco sat wearily in the worn leather chair at the end of their bed, staring fondly at his wife, their new daughter peacefully sleeping in her arms, Pandora’s ring glittering brightly on her ring finger.

“This is why you agreed to stop working yesterday, isn’t it?” he murmured fondly, wondering how many steps ahead of him she would always be.

“I wanted to surprise you,” she whispered back, careful not to move the surprisingly large baby and rouse her from sleep.

“Our Christmas baby. We should name her Noelle,” he said with warmth in his heart, replacing the childhood angst he long associated with the holiday when he had to return home and face his father. Draco considered momentarily if he would inform Lucius of the newest addition to his line, but put the thought away into the dark where it belonged.

His father no longer deserved any such information.

Her eyes glowed with silent laughter, crinkling slightly at the edges. Theoretically, he knew she looked tired, but he had never seen her so radiant and beautiful.

“Draco. Be serious; the heir to the Malfoy name will not be named Noelle.”

“Oh. And I’m sure you know what her name should be then?” He crawled up the bottom of the bed as covertly as he could and nestled in next to his wife in her mountain of pillows to peer at their daughter, running through every astrological body he knew to search for a fit.

She did look like a little fox.

Hermione rested her head atop his shoulder, releasing a sigh of what Draco only hoped was contentment, and softly whispered his new favourite phrase.

“Virgo Astoria Malfoy.”

August 2007

“MAMA!”

Draco’s eyes shot open in the early hour, looking for his panicked toddler, finding her stomping into the bedroom in a fury, the image of her mother.

“Virgo,” he whispered sharply, “Your mother is still sleeping; come over here.”

The stomps continued across the bedroom floor and around to his side of the four poster, hopefully out of earshot from his sleeping wife. Draco could just see the mane of curls over the edge of the bed, bouncing with his daughter’s frantic gait.

“Uncle Theo says Virgo is a little fox! I am not a fox! NOT FOX!”

Hermione rustled into wakefulness beside him, pulling herself up onto her elbows to peek over his shoulder. Her warm hands encircled his bicep and trailed down to the transfigured golden bracelet he had become so fond of wearing, tucking her thumb into the thick band. “I’m awake,” she whispered sleepily. “Just bring her into the bed, my love.”

Draco rolled over in the bed to pick up his daughter, lifting her high into the air like an aeroplane (he knew what those were), and set her in the centre of the bed. “Is your uncle Theo here already?” he asked curiously, afraid of the answer.

“And Aunt Ginny and Grandma Cissy,” Virgo announced proudly, holding up a pointed finger in lecture.

“Virgo. I promise you, you are not a little fox. And if your uncle Theo calls you that again, you should call him Big Bird.” He held back the laugh to himself, feeling *almost* sorry that three years later, Theo’s patronus had still not shown its face.

“Why don’t you go back out and tell your Aunt Ginny and your Grandmother we’ll be ten more minutes. Then we can all start to get ready,” Hermione gravelled, sleep heavy in her voice, laying her head back down against the pillows. “Just ten more minutes.”

Draco snuck a kiss onto Virgo’s cheek as she scrambled off the bed and listened with fondness as footsteps ran furiously back across the bedroom floor. Time was a thief when it came to children; it was only yesterday, he was sure, when she learned to pull herself up to standing.

“Are you ready for today, baby?” He asked, lowering his voice to the tone he knew his wife liked best, rolling atop her still half-asleep form to cage her in.

She rolled her hips up into him seductively, groaning into wakefulness. “We only have ten minutes. And it’s terrible luck to see the bride before the wedding day. Much less fuck her.”

“First, we’re already married. And second, I can get you off in half that time.”

~

Draco stood at the front of the aisle, summoning all the patience in the world, waiting for his bride to appear. Theo flanked him to the right, along with Blaise and Harry, standing in place

at the wedding that he should have insisted on years ago.

Not that she would have agreed to it.

The time she spent in the future changed her fundamentally, or evolved her, Draco could hardly tell which. As if the sketch he thought he knew of her so well when they were children became a fully formed piece of art. Every brushstroke executed to perfection. The colours blended together in a harmony he didn't know existed until she stood in front of him, offering her heart to his.

He paused to take in the scene, freezing time in his mind, surrounded by friends and the family he chose. Tears pricked at his eyes at the scene of genuine faces in the crowd, nothing like the expressions of his childhood, full of sneers and cold stares.

If it hadn't been for the sharp jab from Professor Flitwick, he might have missed it.

Never one for fuss, and always choosing the sentimental, his wife wore the same off-white sleeveless sundress from their original ceremony in the Department of Love, proudly displaying all of her scars.

Draco knew the placement and taste of each one intimately and the patterns each created with the freckles that interspersed her body. All had faded with time, and not a single fresh scar appeared since she returned to him from the future.

She strode up the aisle at a pace slightly faster than most brides, but Draco didn't care. He wanted to meet her in the middle, pull her into his body and commit his life to hers, promise her the world and more. If she wanted to run to him, he would let her.

"Hi," she whispered, arriving at the top of the aisle, amber eyes sparkling.

"Hi," he whispered back, weaving his fingers into hers.

Draco didn't hear any of the ceremony dictated by the professor, lost in the vision that stood before him until a nudge in the back of his leg from Theo pulled his focus back to the present.

"Hermione," he started, not needing any notes, long since remembering his promises to her word for word, "since the day I first encountered you on the train, I knew that you were a force.

While I have not always shown it in the most appropriate ways, I have admired you for over a decade. You are the most intelligent, caring, beautiful, and stubborn witch I have ever known, and I will be eternally grateful for every day you wish to give me as your husband.

I vow to protect you with my name and my body.

I vow to support you in any endeavours you choose.

I vow to care for you and nurture you, body and soul.

I will be there for you whenever my name is spoken, regardless of the time or place. I ask you to pass through life at my side—to be my second self, and best earthly companion.”

Her eyes brimmed with unshed tears, welling up at the final words of his vows. “You didn’t change them.”

“They’re all still true, Hermione.” He said earnestly, believing every word.

“I changed mine.” She said hesitantly, pulling out a worn scroll from her dress pocket and handing her bouquet of forget-me-nots back to Ginny.

He could no longer hold back the tears that built up during his vows. The sight of her shaking hand around the edge of the parchment called him to her, and he took her hand in his, thumb against her racing pulse as he took in every honest word of her love.

“Draco. I have for the first time found what I can truly love—I have found you. You are my sympathy—my better self—my good angel. I vow to be the same for you, loving you with every once I am capable of, until time no longer has a name. Your guiding light in the darkness, your safe port in the storm, and your partner. In this life and any other.”

A blue ribbon of magic burst forward from their chests, snaking down their arms and into their clasped hands. Draco knew the feel of her magic inherently, of all those times they cast together, working in tandem the way they were always meant to. But this was more. Her magic weaved into his chest, warming the very depth of his core.

He felt her heartbeat in time with his.

The thrum of her power.

The mood of her soul.

The weight of her secrets.

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: I’m Yours by Isabel LaRosa

More wedding vows from Jane Eyre! Plus some parallels of Mr. Rochester and Draco's dreams. Can you tell it's my favourite classic?

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Thank you. From the bottom of my heart to anyone who read this, commented on it, supported me through the writing of it, and everything else in between, online and in real life. This started as a one-shot that quickly spun out of control, and I could not be happier that it did.

Spiderwood was originally an exercise in writing to prove to myself I could do it, which now I know to be true and I can now confidently say that I believe in myself in a way I never did before. But more importantly, it was a much-needed escape in what may have been the “Sad Country Song Era of My Life”, as one real-life friend quite bluntly put it (TYSM).

Writing many of the chapters in this fic healed me in ways I cannot express, and I have mentioned before that I am all of the women in here. I am. And a part of me hopes that some of you reading find yourself in these women too.

But now it has come to an end, and I have entered the “Pop Song Era of My Life”. I honestly don’t know if I will write another fic like this or do something different with my writing. Life has a way of being unknown sometimes. So... TBD.

This epilogue, and perhaps the entire fic, is dedicated to SnakeDeath.

In fanfic, there are Alphas, there are Betas, and there are Cheer Readers. And then... there is an AO3 commenter that leaves thousand-word essays on every chapter you post, running out of characters and needing to make a second post, screaming and quoting your writing back at you and making you feel like some sort of magical writing unicorn. Her comments have been, as one user wrote, the dessert to my main course, which I wholeheartedly agreed with.

SnakeDeath, I would never have finished this without you. You are the possum to my racoon. The peach to my cherries. The (Not Damp) Kermit to my Miss Piggy.

Love, adoration, filthy emojis, and screaming gifs to you for an eternity.

One last breeding kink. Just for you.

<3 Jelly_Roll

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

May 2019

Yellow and red sparked at her fingers violently as she kicked open the cabinet. She hoped the force of her heel would be enough to knock the doors clean off, but they remained rudely intact as they swung open, as if their perfect hinges were just oiled, a final offence from the hideous furniture.

Hermione jumped out of the cabinet onto the floor, finally mastering the violent travel the fourth time around. Her magic's intensity grew, weaving and snaking up her arms in fury, pulling at every false memory from the last fifteen years with her husband.

Years of gathering dirt on Wizengamot members.

Him taking on the mantle of Libra to protect her.

Their final secret, the one that lay in wait.

It was nearly unforgivable.

Almost.

She paced across the vault at speed, sending a bombarda back over her shoulder without looking. Treasures and priceless items throughout the room shook loose from their displays with the explosion of the cabinet, the wretched piece of old-money, useless, dog-shit furniture.

A blazing fire didn't come close to enough for the damage and secrecy it caused in her relationship.

The tall ominous golden doors of her vault towered above her, shimmering in the reflection of the fire and Hermione's arcing magic. She let her rage settle in her sparking palms, readying herself to see her husband after a long three months without him.

Fuck faith. She was going to level him.

~

The sound of an explosion told Draco everything he needed to know about his wife's return home. He knew better than to think she was hurt; they fantasised many times over the years about how the cabinet might be destroyed after her return trip.

He only wished he could have been the one to cast the spell himself.

As the doors opened from within, the vault's amber hue flooded his vision, her dark silhouette framed by the fire and smoke that billowed out behind her. He couldn't have imagined a more perfect backdrop for the returning wife he knew well enough to fear.

His soul bond, painfully untethered for the three long months she was gone ached for her touch. Her fire.

"Draco Lucius Libra Fucking Malfoy," she yelled out, fuming through the open doors. The same tone she once called him out on while they were children, the moment he first fell in

love with her.

Foul.

Evil.

Her righteous magic snapped and crackled, trying to escape her body, hair lifting at the ends in rage, and her eyes matched the intensity of the flaming cabinet.

Draco hastily sent a shield charm around the furniture already turning to ash, if only to protect some of the other items in the vault. He would take it down once the fire ran cold to piss on it's ashes.

If she let him live.

"Fifteen gods-damned years, Draco." She slammed her small palms into his chest, pushing him back out of the doorway and onto the platform, her irate magic increasing the force of her shove, sending him dangerously close to the edge. "You let me believe for fifteen years that I was Libra. And for what?"

The force of her hands against his body sent Draco reeling with emotion, the weight of three long months without his wife finally breaking free. He couldn't respond to her accusation, too absorbed in the need to have her back in his life. To feel her hands again.

Her olive skin flushed brightly against her neck as she rolled her shoulders back, arms shaking. "I ran down every single piece of dirt I could find on those disgusting politicians, and you let me. You encouraged me."

He softened his voice, hoping it would calm her down, "Hermione. Baby." His cock strained in his pants at her rage and the redness of her skin, unaware of the danger Draco's brain knew he was in.

"Don't you baby me, asshole," she snorted harshly. "You know exactly what you did, manipulating me into getting yourself elected Chief Warlock."

"I did no such thing, Hermione. I took that role to protect you from yourself. You were hellbent on destroying everyone, with no consideration for your own safety."

"Every last one of them deserved it, Draco."

"And I have spent the last fifteen years rooting them all out, have I not?" Draco retorted angrily, unwilling to take on all the blame. "Was that not enough for you?"

A crack of magic sounded off like thunder in the mines as she shot out her hand towards the rail tracks, trying to expend her power. "*You. Manipulated. Me.*"

"Oh, please. Like you never manipulated me." He held back his irritation, resisting the urge to recount every instance of their past when she used his position for her machinations. As if he were her dog on a leash. "How much of my legislation did you draft, Hermione? How many of your precious causes did we prop up?"

“Fuck you, Draco. You know damn well that's not the same.”

There would be no calming her with words. Draco eyed her closely, assessing his rate of success if he took control of the situation. If he let her continue, she would only wind herself up further into her fit, to who knows what end.

He took a single step into her space, letting himself loom over her and watched intently as her fists balled into knots at her side, knuckles white from the strain.

Another half step, rolling his shoulders back in quiet power.

Her eyes blew wide, amber irises disappearing behind blown pupils.

She was his.

He wrapped his hand around her throat and slammed her back into the doors of the vault, hard enough to startle her into submission. A faint moan escaped her as he lifted her upwards with a knee between her legs, closer to eye level where he could instruct her better, but still beneath him.

Encased by him.

A snap of his fingers ended the disillusionment charm on his golden bracelet, hidden away from sight for months, and transfigured it back into its true form.

The cold, golden snake slithered out from his shirt sleeve, twice around his wrist and circled her neck possessively, setting atop his hand. Its emerald eyes blinked back at him, and Draco squeezed her neck tightly, trusting the charmwork on the snake to mimic the pressure he knew would get her to submit.

Finally, Draco saw the collar and her earring worn together, and he licked a long stripe up her neck, biting her earlobe roughly, letting the snake's tail clink at his teeth. “And what of your secrets?” he whispered aggressively into her ear as she rolled her hips into him. Draco eyed the fingers at his chest, her sparks slowly shifting from yellow to green, oscillating in their furious colour.

“Draco, I was under a vow. I couldn't tell you.”

“I'm not talking about Astoria, baby. I'm talking about our son.”

~

Even in her rage, Hermione trusted her husband implicitly with her safety. There was no situation where he would physically harm her, regardless of what their scene may look like to an outsider. But the question stung at her, and she had no space to move from beneath his control.

She would have to confess.

“When did you know?” She asked, delaying her sentencing.

“The day you came home. The moment you told me Virgo would be a girl. Malfoy’s have had firstborn boys for as long as our house has existed.” He let his gaze drift slowly down to her abdomen. “And then my mother confronted me when I told her we were expecting a girl—”

“Narcissa... Of course, she did.” Years of machinations from her mother-in-law slid into order in Hermione’s memory. “There was a reason she was so intent on educating me on the Malfoy heirlooms, Draco. Or have you not pieced together the magic of the earring yet, after all this time.”

His eyes widened in surprise. “What are you talking about?”

“The snake is a fertility earring. And your mother spotted it from across the room that evening I confronted her at dinner. She’s known the whole time.”

Hermione waved her hand in front of her abdomen, moving to cast the charm they both already knew the results of. A soft blue light sparked between them, not so different from the aura of the cabinet, all those years ago.

A firm grip caught her hand, sending the charm flickering out of existence before it could tell them the truth of the matter.

“Don’t, Hermione. Please.”

“Unos Erit Duo,” she murmured to her husband, who she hoped could still hear her over the feral look that grew in his eyes.

“One becomes two.” He responded lowly, drifting his hand to her hip.

“The locks transcription wasn’t referring to the two versions of myself. In the end, that was purely coincidence, or maybe fate, I don’t even know anymore. The magic of the cabinet demanded whoever passed through could only return if they were with child. I figured it out a few years ago when Virgo brought home her Latin homework.”

“Of course, the crib wood demanded a child.”

"I had to do it, or I wouldn't have been able to come back, Draco. I'm sorry."

Steel eyes met amber as they locked onto one another, both blinking away their tears. The wetness streaming down Hermione’s face felt cathartic, the last of the lies leaving their marriage.

She knew, without doubt, her husband felt the same. Neither truly mad at the other, only the unfair situation that time and magic subjected them to for over a decade.

His lips crashed into hers, and his tongue demanded entrance without need for permission. The pressure of his hand left her neck as he searched frantically for the hemline of her dress. Her collar kept the pressure she desired so deeply, not enough to stop her breath or pulse, yet more than enough to remind her of who she belonged to.

Always his.

The rip of her underwear under his fingers barely registered as Hermione returned his demands in kind. She grabbed and clawed at his robes furiously, needing as much contact as she could find, and she scrambled to unclasp his belt, freeing his already hard cock from his trousers.

Three months with her younger husband had done nothing but make her want the man she grew into a life with. The version of him that knew her implicitly.

A bunch of her dress and a single thrust was all it took for them to begin fucking in earnest on the platform of the vault. Hermione didn't care if any of the goblins saw; it wasn't like she worked here anymore, and there were unspoken privileges with having one of the largest vaults; this would have to be one of them.

He rutted into her wildly, hair coming free from the black velvet tie, his broad hands holding her firmly by the hips as her back crashed against the golden doors. "You think I can't tell myself that I fucked this baby into you too?" He growled out, snapping his hips into her angrily. "I refuse to believe you came back pregnant. This one is mine, just like the last one."

"Mine."

"Mine."

"Mine."

A sharp thrust punctuated each demand of her body and her back slammed against the doors of the vault. She would be covered in bruises come the morning.

Perfect, glorious, magical bruises from the force of her husband's need for her.

Hermione clenched down on him with each snap of his hips, his length reaching an impossible depth inside of her. She wanted nothing more than to be filled with him.

"Come inside of me, Daddy. Give me a baby. Make us yours."

~

The cool gold on the vault doors soothed Draco's back, worn out from the exertion. He sank down to the ground, seating himself on the platform of the vault atop their strewn robes. His wife didn't wait for instruction to climb into his lap and quickly nestled into his embrace.

Draco pulled her in closely, eyeing the perfect olive skin of her inner thigh to make sure all of his spend would remain inside. Where it belonged.

"I missed you, Daddy." She murmured up into his neck, a single fingernail tracking down his chest.

Their bond resettled in his core, feeling warmer and lighter than it ever had, unburdened by the lies that weighed them down. He kissed the top of her head affectionately, breathing in

the familiar jasmine and parchment that calmed his senses. “Baby. There are no words for how much I missed you.” His chest exhaled with the anxious energy he had been holding for months. Years. “She wasn’t you.”

“No. She wasn’t.”

“Promise me? No more secrets?”

“No more secrets, Draco.”

“Besides, it’s my turn to pick a name. Since I didn’t get to have Noelle.”

“Oh?” She responded, looking up at him with a sly smile breaking onto her face. “I suppose that’s fair. Have you been considering it for a long time?”

“An eternity, my love,” Draco whispered, allowing his head to rest back against the door.

“His name is Scorpius.”

Chapter End Notes

Suggested Listening: *Shut Up and Listen* by Nicholas Bonnin, Angelicca

Works inspired by this one

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