

Courting Season

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Courting Season

by [januarydevine](#)

Summary

Ten years after the war, Hermione Granger is a single mom struggling in her custody battle with Ron Weasley. After declaring she's given up on dating and love, she turns to the courting matching system to help her find safety and security for her and her son's future. Much to Hermione's surprise the matching system for courting is not only impressive, but kinky. So when she's matches with Draco Malfoy... Well, that just makes it all that much hotter.

The complications of Hermione's relationship with Ron and her secret courtship with Draco collide into an emotional slow burn filled with flirty banter, nosy mothers, and kids who say the darnedest things.

Courting Season is Kinky

Mid August

Hermione Granger stared into her mother's amber eyes. Her father had always said they had the same eyes, golden ringed with layers of shades of brown. A twinge of cold grief wound through her at the thought of him.

"I can't tell if you're joking or not." Hermione finally said. Jean Granger's expression gave nothing away. "How did you even get this?" Hermione looked back at the computer, the email her mother had forwarded wiggled on the screen. "*Courting Season begins September!*"

Jean shrugged, "I sign up for as many wizarding community things as I can. I like to be involved in that part of you life."

Hermione sighed but before she could explain why courting was not for witches like her. Jean placed a hand on hers. "I just want you to consider it. Everything you've complained about with dating is why this system exists. You get paid, a contact to make sure your needs met, there is an extensive sexual part, and—"

"Mum," Hermione blinked at her. "I don't want to talk about my sex life with you." Her non-existent sex life, but still, no thanks.

"We are grown women, Minnie. I'm a doctor. And so are you." She shook her head like Hermione was being immature. "Just look through it. Please?"

"Fine." Hermione huffed. "But I've given up on dating. I don't want to date. I don't want to even think about love—"

"Yeah, I know that's the point. The whole point is you don't need love to be happy! The system is very impressive from a technology point too. There's an entire algorithm set up to match you from wizards or witches from around the globe."

Hermione furrowed her brows, "Do you get an affiliate paycheck from me joining this or something? You're talking like you went to a training seminar."

Jean chuckled, "I just want you to be taken care of sweetie. I'm getting older. You have Leo....with your father gone, I just worry about you." The mention of her father and her son in one sentence made her chest tighten again.

"Okay." Hermione shook her head. "I'll look through it. But I can't promise I'll apply."

Later that evening after getting a cranky Leo into bed, Hermione sat at her desk with a glass of wine and scrolled through the application.

She was reluctantly impressed...

The blue glow illuminated against face as she scrolled through the questionnaire. The system required every intimate detail of her sexuality.

Hermione read through the process. It was very straight forward. Fill out the extensive application. Be matched with potential pairs who have overlapping interests. The more honest you are the better the results. A dedicated coordinator ensured a vow of privacy so all parties were connected discretely. Hermione's mind raced with possibilities for further privacy requests. That would be a high priority for her. Not that she was going to do it...

If she filled out the application she didn't have to accept anyone. They remained anonymous until both parties accepted a match. If she wanted to decline she could at any point.

Hermione didn't want love. She'd gone on her fair share of dates, but it was exhausting. She wanted security and safety and a certain level of sexual compatibility that would ensure her needs were met. Companionship could be nice, but not necessary. This was actually a very logical solution the more she thought of it.

Hermione sipped her wine and began filling out the application.

Describe in detail every phrase, pet name, or title you want your partner to use. Once she began filling it out, she couldn't stop. She loved how meticulous this was. And she had to have refill her glass of wine through the process.

The current question that glowed in front of her had her biting her lip.

Filling it out was tedious. She held a deep appreciation for the system by the time she'd stopped herself half way through. The website used an array of personal data, imagery, and algorithmic tools to match with potential partners. And half way through Hermione scoffed with realization. This was just a fancy way of saying it's a kink focused matching service. It was seriously designed specially to make your kinkiest dreams come true. It wasn't marketed as a kinky sort of thing, but clearly that's what it was. No wonder these kind of relationships progressed so quickly. Now she wondered why she ever judged it in the first place. No feelings necessary. It was more like, *are you good at making me come and do we agree on the rules? Can you take care of my kids?* Very practical.

A week later Hermione was giddy with excitement about being so close to finishing. *Pun intended.* Not only was the application long, but she also attached her own proposal and requests for how she'd like to be courted. She called it, "*An integration period to test the dynamic with privacy and discretion.*"

It felt like a new beginning for her. It was a struggle to bring up her sexual desires to dates because of the fear of rumors being spread about her.

At the end of the day, the wizarding community was a small one. Even on an international level. Someone always knew someone else who knew someone else.

There were hardly three degrees of separation in London alone.

And Hermione didn't need Ron accusing her of being some kind sexual deviant in their custody battle. As a single mom and as an apprentice in the medical healer's program at St. Mungos her time was limited in the amount of dating in general she could do.

Wasting her time with bad sex by a wizard who claimed they knew what they were doing, but actually was just borderline abusive, was not on her list of a good time. So not only would this give her a match, but also help her take off any pressure to be in a typical relationship. She would be required to fulfill her responsibilities for her partner. Just the idea of it all made a zinging sensation run up and down her spine. It was sort of progressive in a way. Sex. Money. Roles. Duties. Expectations. All of it listed up front and clearly communicated. And the cherry on top, no feelings necessary!

Hermione was determined to finish it before her hospital shift. It had taken a lot of effort to just fit filling this out into her schedule, working piece by piece in between her student's tutoring sessions. It would take more than just the questionnaire, but the point of this whole thing was to match with someone compatible enough that each time they met, both partners would understand each other easier and quicker than ever before.

How often would you like to be told, 'I love you'

Hermione twisted her lip between her teeth, while typed in her answer.

How important is kissing to you?

Extremely high. Hermione wrote.

Another question appeared.

Use the attached charting tool to rate each area of your body you'd like to be kissed. If you have any questions, list them in the chat box.

The list was extensive. Ankle, inner knee, neck, inner left thigh, outer right thigh, elbow, shoulders. It went on and on.

Hermione opened the chat box.

If I've never been kissed on my knee, should I guess or leave it blank?

Leave it blank.

Hermione left a lot blank.

What are the most important things for you in a formal arrangement?

Privacy. Trust. Safety.

Why? Please explain in detail.

As a single mother it is especially important for me to consider the future of my son first. His well being is my first priority so discretion is important. Until a permanent and public agreement has been established for forward progress.

She didn't want a romantic relationship. She didn't want the responsibility of another person's heart. Or to give her own. Just the thought of falling in love made her want to gag and wretch her dinner. Hermione didn't need anyone else. Leo brought her all the joy she needed and everything else Hermione could easily schedule into her life. Like sex. And the other expectations could be scheduled too. Okay it wasn't *always* easy to fit everything into her schedule, but she knew how to prioritize and sex was a priority. It had been too long.

And she wished to be taken care of for a couple of hours a week. She didn't want to make as many decisions anymore. Sometimes a witch just want to be tossed around on a bed and very meticulously licked, kissed, and fucked.

She continued listing her wildest fantasies in an answer box. Things she had never said out loud. The things that felt too taboo to do so.

Her stomach fluttered as she wrote the words. As she described, in detail, all the things she wanted to happen to her. The things she wanted to finally experience. This section was the longest piece. She kept adding to it over the last few week. Thinking of scenarios that would be fun to explore that had just been imagined for so long. She wanted it to be perfect.

There wouldn't be anything forgotten because she made a promise with herself. If she was going to commit it wouldn't be for someone that couldn't handle all of her.

The last question appeared and Hermione let out a slow breath.

List your safe word.

This would be it. She would find someone to have fun with and Leo would be safe and taken care of. That's all that mattered.

And with that thought she pressed submit.

Hermione is Not High Maintenance (she just knows exactly what she wants)

Early September

Hermione slung her bag over her shoulder in the staff break room at St. Mungo's hospital satisfied and tired after hard night's work.

"Great job, Dr. Granger." Dr. Padma Patil said as she passed her in the hallway. "That call you made on that acid hex saved that wizard's leg."

"You're too nice, Dr. Patil! Thank you!" she said with a wave. Hermione loved her job and today was one of those days that made the long road to get here worth it. She had been on top of her game today and it left her feeling confident and ready to face the custody meeting with Ron. The sunrise ribboned through the buildings as she exited the hospital. Hermione smiled wide breathing in the fresh air...

Draco Malfoy stalked passed her into the hospital. He nodded briefly and she still had that silly grin on her face, but it turned into a yawn the second his eyes slid to hers. So she looked like an idiot trying to nod back, because suddenly her face was making an expression like she being smashed against a glass window.

Draco was gone before Hermione finished yawning. Astoria had just been admitted to the ED before Hermione left, grateful she didn't have to deal with the witch. It was always heartbreaking.

Two hours later Hermione sat in the meeting room at the DLME courthouses with a blank expression. She'd become an expert at concealing her emotions when she needed to.

"Then it's agreed. Leo will go to Ron's every Saturday and every other Sunday." The mediator had done their best to help them both feel satisfied by the agreement, but Hermione felt sick. The court ordered mediations were never easy and always emotional.

Ron's smile turned condescending, "See you both tomorrow morning at ten."

Hermione signed the agreement and went straight to pick up her son. Ready to hold him and look into his hazel eyes.

Leo Granger barreled towards her as she opened the front door of her mother's house. The auburn waves of his hair stuck straight up. From snot or glue, she could never be sure. The bridge of his nose, speckled with dark freckles, wrinkled in delight as he raced towards her with his wide grin.

"My little Lion!" Hermione growled playfully into his neck as she hugged him. "Mumma Lion!" He barred his teeth with his low growl.

“You smell like glue,” She said, running her fingers over his hardened hair.

“Yeah, we glued cereal on a picture of a Meglosaurus.” His slight lisp made everything the cutest thing she’d ever heard. Hermione picked him up, and Leo’s hands clasped around her neck

“Better than snot.” Hermione replied.

“You want to put your snot on my cereal?” He gave her an offended look.

Hermione looked down at him chuckling, “That’s what you took from that?”

He gave her an innocent shrug.

She found her mother sweeping cereal off the ground in the kitchen. Hermione lifted her wand, sending it all to the trashcan.

“Thanks sweetie, very well done.” Jean Granger clapped. Her mother never let her forget how impressed she was by her magic.

Hermione slumped against the barstool and sighed.

“Let’s hear it. How did it go?” Jean leaned forward on the other side.

Hermione spent the next half an hour updating her on the meeting and cried about all the foul things Ron said about her.

Unfit mother. Disorganized. Lazy.

“It’s going to work out. Ron will calm down and Leo will get to know his dad. This is a good thing.” She patted her hand. Hermione hadn’t told her mother the other horrible things about Ron. It wasn’t relevant anymore. But still the words stung.

“Thanks mum.” Hermione squeezed her hand. Jean wasn’t a very affectionate person and that was fine, but Hermione had been craving a hug. And that hollow pit in her stomach opened wider.

After showering Hermione climbed into her childhood bedroom’s twin bed and slept for a few hours. Night shifts had her sleeping schedule unrecognizable. She had work again later that evening, but she made sure to wake up early enough to meet with her muggle tutoring students and spend a few hours watching a movie with Leo. But even during the movie her mind raced with all the things she’d needed to get done during the weekend. Schedule Leo’s dentist appointment, study the last three chapters on infectious disease protocols, do eight loads of laundry...actually when was the last time she washed her pillow cases.... Oh and some point she needed to take an everything shower. It was never ending.

Leo pulled away as the credits on the movie began. “Time to poop!” he sang down the hallway.

A buzzing sound from her wand drew her attention. Hermione turned onto her back stretching her legs on the couch, wiggling her numb arm where Leo had been laying.

Her practice exam results were early.

When she opened her email, she was happily surprised to find the results were *not* from a practice exam but from the You're My Match website.

Quickly opening the email she read the message, she bit down on her lip as nervous energy wound around her chest, like a frantic bee.

"Mum!" Hermione yelled, sitting up.

"Yes?" Jean said from the living room doorway. The doorbell rang. "I'll be back." Her mother scurried away before Hermione could tell her the news. She couldn't wait though.

"Dear user number 1647,

Listed below is the information of three matches that are compatible with your application. Once you select your match, your profile will sent to them. If they accept, they will contact you with further instructions.

Click on each profile for an in depth explanation of where your interests, values, and compatibility overlap."

She eagerly opened the results.

Three profiles unfolded, no pictures, because that was part of the process. Privacy was highly valued in the system, which is why Hermione agreed to it in the first place. There had been a whole section on attraction. Including sorting through thousands of photos, selecting any all people you found attractive. It was all added to the algorithm ensuring you'd be physically attracted to the participants selected.

You have the following matches:

Highest match - Profile 625369

Second match Profile 52637

Third Profile 76484

Fourth Profile 589224

Fifth Profile 78305

Hermione clicked on the least compatible profile and immediately knew it wasn't going to work. She couldn't sacrifice that much of her list. The profile showed a Venn diagram , one representing Hermione and the match. Too much remained on her side as

unfulfilled. Originally when she first decided to use the dating service she was sold on only going for 100% matches.

“Hermione, that’s not going to happen.” Susan Bones told her a month ago. “It’s never happened. But the system will help you prioritize what’s important to you, so even if someone is say, 70% compatible. They still have your seven top priorities.”

Hermione sneered slightly, “That’s quite disappointing.”

“Your application is also-” Susan closed her eyes, “Can I be frank?”

“I prefer it.” Hermione replied through the floo call.

“You’re very high Maintenance.” Susan smiled politely as she said it.

“I just figured if I was going to try, I didn’t want it to disrupt my life if it didn’t work.” Hermione shrugged. Her plan made the most sense, it was not high maintenance. It was practical.

Hermione was grateful she hadn’t held back though now.

She clicked on the highest matched profile. Seeing that the Venn diagram overlap almost entirely sent a whooshing sensation through her chest. This person wanted a three month commitment and to speak about a future permanent role if the two parties were still content with the arrangements. She bit on her bottom lip, curious to know what stopped them from being completely compatible.

Hermione had put a much higher emphasis on kissing than he had.

One of them wanted anal by force and the other wanted it by enthusiastic begging.

Sleep in separate beds if in a permanent relationship.

No physical contact in front of child(ren)

Interesting.

Perhaps 100% compatibility wasn’t necessary after all. Hermione didn’t bother looking at the other profiles.

If she pressed the accept button her entire profile would be sent to him and he’d receive all her personal details. All her private fantasies. Her picture. He’d know who she was. If he accepted her back they’d chat for a short time and develop some kind of rapport and then they’d meet. Each pair set this up differently depending on the structure and dynamics wanted by the partnership. Which meant this companion would have to be the first to initiate and tell her what to do. Because in this dynamic, Hermione did not want to be in charge of anything at all.

Hermione took a breath and hit accept.

“Mum! I need help wiping my butt!” Leo screamed.

Her mother popped back into the living room. Hermione grinned, “I matched!”

Inconceivable

Draco Malfoy did not like the look on his mother's face. "What do you want?" He narrowed his eyes at her.

"Am I not allowed to visit with my son?" Narcissa recrossed her legs, leaning back in the chair on the other side of his desk.

"Mother," Draco blinked. "You floo called my secretary, scheduled a meeting at my job, and showed up ten minutes early so you could simply visit me?" He looked at her blankly, "you realize we live together and I just saw you over breakfast?"

Narcissa looked like she was gloating. Had Scorpius finally eaten broccoli or something?

"The application system was updated." She clasped her hands in excitement.

Draco's face fell, "Tell me you did not come all the way here to talk about that." He closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose.

"Hermione Granger!" Narcissa shouted.

Draco furrowed his brow snapping his head up, "Mother I need you to go--"

"She applied." Narcissa sat up straighter in the chair.

"Hermione Granger?" Draco scoffed. That was comical.

"Yes and you already matched." She smiled so brightly it was almost manic.

Draco leaned back in his chair with a sigh, "Can we save the gossip for dinner?"

"You need to contact her immediately. Her application was absolutely fascinating and I was impressed. She has a son. Six. Just like Scorpius. She's a healer. A tutor. And because I know it's important is also--"

"Mother," Draco was hitting his limit. "I have a meeting a ten minutes. I need to prepare for it and--"

"Are you even listening to me?" Narcissa's voice was impatient. Draco was about to apparate out of his office to get away from her before he said something foolish.

"You are a match with Hermione Granger!"

Draco blinked at her. The individual words all made sense but strung together made zero sense.

"What do you mean I matched with Granger?"

Narcissa sucked in a breath. “This is just the best news. I want you to contact her first.”

Draco threw his head back in a belly shaking laugh. Granger applying for a courtship was unbelievable enough, but them matching was just ridiculous. Granger wouldn’t even know what to do with him. He was, well he was very controlling.

“Mother that is truly inconceivable and while I do not think this joke was worth your visit, it was a good one.” Draco stood, gathering the file he was supposed to be reading before his mother rudely interrupted him with a fake meeting.

Draco was at the door when Narcissa stood her expression seriously offended. She was pouting dear gods.

“I’m going to accept her application.” Narcissa said flatly.

“Of course you are.” Draco huffed.

“I’m going to interview her and introduce her to Scorpius as his tutor.” Narcissa became even more serious.

“Oh what a perfect cover. What was it you pitched the last time? A chef?” Draco smiled, sweetly.

“I expect you to contact her as soon as possible. There will be other suitors matched with her, clearly ones with more brains than you. By now she’s probably accepted someone else’s application because she doesn’t realize you’re her match!” Narcissa was truly upset with him now.

Draco sighed, “I’m not sure what exactly you’re trying to convince me of, but I have no faith that Hermione Granger will show up to be my son’s tutor. Let alone show up on date with the me. I am skipping this season. I told you ten times and I’ll tell you again there is no way—” Draco stopped mid sentence as his mother tapped her wand, displaying her email.

He swallowed. Hermione Granger’s face illuminated next to his. The Venn diagram almost the same circle.

Narcissa hit accept and the screen illuminated with confetti.

Congratulations on matching this courting season!

Hermione Granger matched with him....

Then a notification popped up. *“This application has been matched by five other parties.”*

Draco’s mouth tightened at the smug smile on his mother’s face.

“Do you believe me now?” Narcissa held her head high. “And she doesn’t even want to go on any public dates. You need to review her application immediately. There are certain parts only you can access.”

"I'll believe it if she shows up." Draco rolled his eyes with scoff. This was truly inconceivable...

What's The Catch?

"Hi." Hermione greeted Susan Bones through the floo call.

"I have an offer for you." Susan grinned.

"Okay." Hermione's stomach twisted. She projected her calendar with her wand. The small, color coded squares held her entire life.

"This offer is really good," Susan replied.

"They agreed to all my stipulations?" Hermione wasn't convinced that was possible with all of Susan's attempts to change her application.

"Yes, three days a week. And it would replace all of your current tutoring students. Doubling your current income."

Hermione frowned. "What's the catch?"

Susan offered her an eager smile, "Just look at the offer first and then call me back. Have an open mind."

"Tell me the catch, Bones." Hermione repeated flatly, her patience was waning. She didn't have time for this.

Susan pursed her lips, "The offer is from Narcissa Malfoy."

Hermione expected ten other things that didn't include that. Hermione scoffed, "And she's aware that I was the, uh, nanny and tutor she requested?"

"Yes." Susan nodded, "She specifically asked for you to meet with her in person as soon as possible. Especially if you have any reservations about her sincerity."

Hermione mulled this over. Double her income...

"And they know about Leo?" Hermione asked skeptically. Her son was the highest priority in her life. A huge part of the reason she was even doing this whole thing.

"Yes," Susan nodded enthusiastically.

Hermione mulled this over. Draco Malfoy... When was the last time she even saw him...

"And Malfoy knows it's me?" Hermione couldn't quite believe that part.

"Of course, Hermione all parties agree. Draco has a son. Scorpius. He's six just like Leo."

"And did they send over the profile on Scorpius too?"

"Yes, it's in the offer," Susan's voice turned soft. "Hermione, it's a really, really good offer. You shouldn't let the past get in the way of this. You've been waiting for a high match rate and this is absurdly high and—"

"I'm doing a job. It's not a favor if they pay me," Hermione said. "That's what the arrangement is."

"Well, they've had some security issues and want to have someone they trust."

Hermione snorted, "They trust me?"

"Apparently so. Your background check is quite extensive. And well, you are...you."

"And they really don't mind Leo being part of it?" Hermione would not let Leo be pushed aside in any form.

"When I confirmed with Narcissa she seemed indifferent, if not a little pleased. She said it would be good to have another child around."

"Alright." Hermione said, nodding. "I'll consider it." They were a high match. It would be silly if she didn't consider it.

When they ended the floo call, an owl was already waiting at her window with what Hermione assumed was the offer. Hermione fed the owl a treat and took the proposal and sat back at her desk. The clock chimed six in the evening, urging her to open the mail quickly. Soon she'd head to the hospital for her shift in the emergency department.

She hadn't planned to go into teaching, let alone private tutoring, but when she needed money it was the easiest thing to do. It was flexible, interesting, and it paid decently in both the muggle world and the wizarding one. And now it gave her the unique opportunity to assume that role at the Malfoy's home.

Hermione opened the large envelope and sagged in disappointment. It was another legal summons from Ron. Unhappy with their custody arrangement. *Again.*

Even thinking about enduring another court hearing made her chest ache. Ron had continuously ripped her custody proposals to shreds. Insinuating Hermione was unfit to be a mother, her schedule was too much, her income too meager, her status as a single mother, "*clearly demonstrated*" how unfit she was. It didn't matter what she said or did, Ron was refusing to compromise. Another aspect of why this matching system was appealing.

If it worked... she didn't let herself go there. No, it would take time before they'd share those responsibilities and Hermione would not rush any of it. Hermione read through the concerns aka accusations.

The pain surrounding her relationship with Ron was difficult to handle. Hermione did not regret the path her life took. Every time she looked at her son she was filled with determination to make a life for him. There was nothing that could make her regret Leo. But

the legal battle with Ron was draining her and there was so much going on in her job. It required her to compartmentalize so much to focus on how well she was doing in her career. Even if she had been behind her other peers.

Over the next ten months she would get more responsibility at the hospital. She had five big exams to take that would be the key to getting promoted to a second year apprentice. That's when she would get to be a fulltime healer, but still with part time pay. It would take another year after that to finally graduate to healer. That was the light at the end of the tunnel. In one year and ten months she'd be a fulltime, and fully paid employee. Healing was what she was most passionate about. The puzzle of it, the focus it demanded, the team work involved. Hermione was great at separating her feelings, easily and quickly. She worked well under pressure, and the work was thrilling and rewarding. But as a part time first year apprentice, only four months into this portion of the healing program, money was always the issue. Extra earnings went to saving for the years that working at the hospital wouldn't be enough to cover her expenses, but after Ron's abrupt interest in their son, the majority of her paychecks now went to legal fees. Leaving very little in savings and leaving Hermione stressed about money all the damn time. The income from tutoring Scorpius would be a very welcomed piece of this process.

Hermione wouldn't give into the sadness that tugged inside her, the grief that threatened to pull her back into that state of apathy. No, she'd push that aside and take the next step towards creating the future she wanted for her and Leo. Happy, safe, and full of love and laughter. Just like the home she grew up in. Her wand alarm went off and she tossed Ron's letters on her desk.

Picking up her phone, she face-timed her mother.

"Hi Leo," Hermione grinned. Her son had paint smeared on his face and her mother did too.

"Grandmum is not very good at painting," Leo stated as his greeting, "but I am really good mumma. Look, I painted a lion! Just like me!" His paint covered mouth unfolded into a wide grin.

An orange, yellow and brown blob of artwork appeared on the screen. "Oh I love it. Very abstract." She chuckled. "I'm just about to head to the hospital so I wanted to say goodnight before I leave."

"Did you get some studying in?" Jean Granger asked, wiping paint off her nose with a napkin.

"I did. Thanks for taking him early today." Hermione hated how often she had to ask her mother for help. Hermione hated asking for help in general, but it had felt especially excessive lately between work and her custody meetings.

"You know I don't mind. I'm happy to spend time with him. He's helping me hone my art skills, he's quite the art critic." Jean's grey streaked brown hair was splattered with bits of yellow paint.

"Well, good luck earning his approval. And thank you again." Hermione replied, "I love you little lion."

"I love you mumma lion." Leo blew a kiss to the phone. Her heart swelled and her throat ached. Gods, she loved him more than she could even describe. He was the most important person in her life and-

Leo sneezed loudly. Hermione grimaced as a yellow glob of paint snot flew from his nose onto the camera.

"Please don't try to eat any paint." Hermione shook her head. "Or stick the paintbrush up your nose."

"But the paintbrush tickles so good!" Leo protested.

"I'll have him paint free when you pick him up. Bye honey!"

Hermione gathered her things for her shift.

Just before leaving an owl pecked at her window.

The large silver envelope and wax seal told her exactly who it was from and her stomach fluttered wildly as she opened it. Hermione's eyes bulged when she saw the sum. Susan must have underestimated her current income. It was nearly three times as much.

Before sending the owl away, Hermione replied with her own letter asking to meet with the Malfoy matriarch.

Welcome Aboard, Grandma!

Hermione hadn't interacted with the Malfoys much in the years since the war. Only crossing paths on a few occasions so brief they hardly registered at all. The only true memory was years ago when Hermione had volunteered at Azkaban in healer's school, but she only saw Lucius Malfoy a handful of times to treat a severe wound. Hermione hadn't given the Malfoys much thought after that. Not that she held any ill will towards them per say, just indifference really.

Hermione apparated outside of the manor's gates. She'd be entering the manor for the first time since Bellatrix tortured her. It would be fine. She took in a deep breath and walked with her head held high, all the way to the door and rapped the door knocker.

"Miss Granger, thank you for coming." The Matriarch's smile eased some of Hermione's nerves. Narcissa Malfoy looked visibly aged for the first time that Hermione could remember.

"Thank you for the opportunity." Hermione replied following Narcissa through the foyer and into a brightly lit sitting room. "And thank you for accommodating my schedule." It was early Friday evening, Hermione would head to work as soon as the meeting ended.

The manor had been redecorated. It was still moody, but the natural light and change of decor made it much more regal than haunting like she remembered.

Narcissa gestured for Hermione to sit in a plush grey wingback chair, then served tea and Hermione graciously took the cup.

"I have to say, your application is a little untraditional." Narcissa said, sipping her tea. "But I'm impressed with your requests."

"You are?" Hermione's eyes widened.

"Yes, it makes sense. I'm only disappointed I didn't think of them." The witch smirked. "Before I invite Scorpius to join us, I'd like to hear any questions you have about your role. I want to be clear about both of our expectations. Then I'd just like to see how he does with you. He can be occasionally unpredictable behavior wise."

Hermione pulled out her list of questions confirming twice that the pay was correct, Leo would be welcomed, and when she was satisfied, accepted the role to court Draco Malfoy all without having spoken to him directly in years. What a wild day it was.

Narcissa's relaxed nature during the conversation did not help ease the awkwardness of the next few questions.

"You can discuss the other parts with Draco privately, yes?" She set her tea cup down.

“Yes.” Hermione stuttered. Although their first private meeting hadn’t been scheduled yet. He hadn’t contacted her at all...

“And you’ll know he’ll continue to make public appearances, due to the privacy request you’ve stipulated?”

“Absolutely.” Hermione nodded. “I prefer it.”

“And you’re sure you don’t want the live-in quarters here? We have a suite with a separate entrance and kitchen.”

“For now, I’d just like to see how things go.” Hermione replied.

Narcissa nodded.

When Scorpius entered the room, he walked in with his head held high, arms behind his back and a wide toothless grin. White blonde hair combed neatly.

“*Salvē, Miss Granger,*” He bowed, speaking a greeting in Latin.

Hermione instantly grinned.

“*Avē!*” Hermione replied. Narcissa watched on as they exchanged greetings.

Six year olds were her speciality and she had come prepared.

Hermione turned to the boy, tapping a finger on her chin. “Scorpius. Would you happen to like dinosaurs?”

His eyes grew wide, but his mouth pursed with suspicion. He looked at his grandmother and slowly back at Hermione, leaning towards her while whispering, “How did you know that?”

Hermione smirked, “Is that a yes?”

With grey eyes identical to his father’s, Scorpius retreated and assessed her with small hands propped on his hips “Why do you want to know?” Ah there was that infamous Malfoy skepticism. The blossoming Slytherin in him.

Hermione couldn’t help but chuckle. “Because I brought this book,” she reached into her small bag, pulling out a very large picture book. Scorpius’ eyes grew wider flashing behind her again. “How did that fit inside your bag!” He jumped up and down and Hermione heard a huff of laughter from behind them.

“I am a very talented witch,” She winked, moving easily onto the floor, positioning the book on her lap to face him. Scorpius knelt down in front of her. “This book will be our first lesson. It discusses the differences between muggle animals and magical ones. Together we are going to explore archeology and other animals including zebras, lions, hippogriffs, dragons, and unicorns.”

“Did you know my dad is a dragon?” Scorpius gave her a haughty look, and it took her back to first year at Hogwarts. Draco’s twin through and through.

“I did know that.” Hermione said. “And you a scorpion.”

“How do you know so many things!” The boy said with a mix of astonishment and accusation.

“You better get used to it.” Hermione shrugged. “And my son is Leo, like the lion.”

“Lee-ohh” Scorpius said slowly. “Does Lee-ohh like dinosaurs and unicorns and dragons?”

“Yes, he does. So much that I keep finding dinosaurs and unicorns in my bed.” Hermione frowned and Scorpius laughed loudly showing off his missing teeth.

“My son has the same book, he’s six just like you and he’ll join us on Monday. I’m going to leave this book with you, it’s yours to keep.” Scorpius grinned as Hermione handed it to him. “Over the weekend I want you to read this book and create a list of as many questions as you can think of. And on Monday we will begin to answer them. Can you do that?”

Scorpius nodded vigorously, but his eyes went behind Hermione again, “Can we do that dad?” Hermione turned slowly to find Draco Malfoy watching them. He stood in the doorway of the sitting room, dressed in an all black suit, white blond hair carefully styled into a perfect mess.

“Sounds like fun,” Draco replied with a soft smile towards his son. Then his eyes slid to Hermione. Gods. How long had he been there without Hermione even noticing. “Granger.” He nodded.

Hermione and Narcissa stood, “Hello dear, I thought you’d gone or I would have sent for you.”

“It’s fine. I still managed to witness your interview.”

“Hi, Malfoy.” Hermione said, smiling politely. She didn’t know the last time they even spoke. And now... nervous fluttering twisted through her.

“His name is Dray-coh” Scorpius tugged on her arm. “It means dragon. I thought you knew that?”

“I’m leaving Scorp, come give me a hug goodbye.” Draco dropped into a crouch as Scorpius ran and into his arms, dropping his book with a soft thump on the carpet. Draco leaned in kissing his son’s temple. Scorpius placed both small hands on his father’s face and spoke to him. Draco’s face grew serious, taking in his words. Both sets of grey eyes landed on Hermione.

“Ask her. Ask her dad.” Scorpius squeezed harder on Draco’s mouth pushing his lips into a fish-like pout. Draco peeled his hands away and stood.

“Scorpius believes you can read minds.” He said, his eyebrows raised.

Scorpius stood with his arms folded against his chest with a look of awe and healthy skepticism. Draco's own face mimicked Scorpius's, though a much less serious version.

"Hmm." Hermione tapped her chin. "Well, I'll just say this Scorpius. This weekend when you discuss animals with your father, make sure to ask him about hippogriffs. He has an extensive history with them."

Draco's lip twitched, but he sent her a look that said, *really*?

Scorpius looked between them and Narcissa let out a soft chuckle.

Draco frowned down at Scorpius, "I think she can read minds too."

To Hermione's surprise, Scorpius leapt up with a shout, running towards Hermione, "That is so cool! Will you teach me? I want to read my dad's mind and find where he puts all the treats. And where grandma hides her galleons." Scorpius gripped Hermione's legs in a desperate plea. "Please, please, please!" He shook her.

"I'll consider it." Hermione smiled down at the boy, patting the top of his head.

He'd get along well with Leo.

"Alright, well I'm off." Draco said, moving to Narcissa with a peck at her cheek.

Then he was in front of Hermione, all six and a half feet of him, his woodsy cologne enveloping her like someone tossed a weighted blanket over her head. It hit her hard and almost knocked her off balance. With a hand extended in front of her, she slipped hers against his. He gave it a brief, polite shake. "Nice to see you Granger. Welcome aboard."

Then he was gone.

"Well, the courting season has begun." Narcissa sighed, looking at the empty door frame. "It would be too much to get my hopes up again, and yet every September I still find myself hoping." Hermione didn't know what to say as the witch shared such personal thoughts. Perhaps old age took away her filter.

"How does tonight's event work?" Hermione said, opting for curiosity rather than prying for private details about Draco.

"Tonight is just a gathering of eligible folks to mingle. There are a few galas he needs dates for." She said with a pointed look. Hermione smiled because she had nothing else to add.

Narcissa eyed her curiously, "Will you be attending any courting events?"

"Oh, no." Hermione chuckled, "No, I'm happy to take this more untraditional route."

Narcissa, who apparently had no problem prying for personal details, asked, "Do you have other, uh, tutor-nanny options you're still looking at?"

Hermione shifted, “I’m not sure. I haven’t thought too much about it. Your offer came at the right time.”

“Ah I see.” Narcissa nodded, “Well I am so very thankful that this has worked out so well. Welcome to the family!” She clapped her hands.

Hermione cringed at the word.

“Is she my other grandma now?” Scorpius asked, looking perplexed.

Both witches let out a loud laugh which helped loosen the awkwardness inside Hemrione.

Surprisingly she left the manor feeling a relief like she hadn’t in a long time.

This could work.

A Dream Or A Nightmare, Draco Could Not Decide, But He Is Very Embarrassed!

Draco Malfoy nursed a glass of firewhisky in his office Sunday evening, tapping his signet ring against the glass. Scorpius hadn't stopped talking about Hermione Granger all weekend. Neither had his mother.

Well besides the thirty minute lecture he got about being friendlier to the dates he still had to go on. The last date called him an asshole, but that was only because he was an asshole.

Why did he have to talk to his dates? He hated dating. He hated the whole circus of it. And he had a horrible reputation for one night stands.

Truth be told Draco Malfoy couldn't stop thinking of Hermione Granger either. The alcohol burned nicely as he took another sip staring into the fireplace. He'd seen Granger every now and then. Fluttering down a hospital wing, passing him around a corner with a fierce look on her face as she stalked down the halls of the DMLE courthouses. Hermione never seemed to notice him. He was good at being invisible though, it was part of his job.

Granger had won his son over in seconds. Then reminded him of being attacked by a hippogriff, which always made him think of her punching him in the face, and what had he said?

"Welcome aboard."

What the was this, a boat house? Was he going on a some muggle airplane? *He was supposed to be fucking courting her!* He couldn't stop replaying it.

He sounded like a complete idiot.

Closing his eyes, he leaned his head back against his leather chair. Draco hadn't dared to look at her application until she confirmed interest. Their high match value was unheard of.

Unrealistic. A fantasy. A fairytale.

And her file sat on his computer waiting to be perused because she accepted the role. Well, what was the phrase Granger used? *An integration period to test the dynamic with privacy and discretion.*

It was smart and he was grateful. Extremely grateful. He would not go through another public failure. It was already enough that Astoria was always the topic of gossip nowadays. He didn't need another story about his family to circulate. Hermione would end things. There was no way this was even really happening.

Fuck it. He clicked her file and began reading. The more he read the harder his cock grew.

This was a dream. Or a nightmare. Had Granger hacked the system somehow? Was this some weird way to psychologically torture him for revenge.

He adjusted himself. This was too much. There was no way she'd be willing to do this.

Draco shut his laptop quickly. If she showed up on Monday he'd send her an invite. She'd refuse and this whole charade would be over. This was truly inconceivable. Narcissa probably spiked her tea with something that made her accept the role.

"Welcome aboard." For fuck's sake. He groaned loudly.

Pilly popped on his desk and drew him away from his embarrassment.

Pilly furrowed her brow, before sighing, "I have a question..."

Happy Birthday to Hermione

Monday morning Hermione woke up at four to walk on her treadmill while studying eight toxicology chapters on overdosing, poisonings, and toxin antidotes. Then she took a quick shower, woke Leo up, made breakfast, packed lunches, and hit rewash on whatever load was still in the washer she'd forgotten to switch over. Finally, she looked in the mirror and attempted to tame her damp curls and do her makeup, once she got herself ready for the day, she turned to Leo and wrestled him into some clothes and by 6:50am they were ready to floo to the Malfoy manor.

Hermione slapped a large smile on her face. Everything would be just fine. After letting go of all her students on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the money from the Malfoy's would absolutely be the best thing to happen to her, but it almost felt a little too good to be true and anything with money made her anxiety spike. This had to work.

Leo wore his green dino jacket and wrapped his arms around the large book on magical and muggle animals like a shield. His wavy auburn hair was still uncombed. Well she couldn't always do everything. A soft yawn bloomed on his face.

"Are you ready?" Hermione asked as she grabbed some floo powder.

Leo looked up at her, with another yawn. "Yep. Ready to learn about dinosaurs."

Hermione and Leo were greeted by Narcissa and Scorpius.

The two boys assessed each other.

Leo was the first to speak, pointing at the book Scorpius dutifully held. "Do you like unicorns, because I do," He said quickly.

Scorpius nodded, "Yes, but giraffes are better."

Narcissa gave a warm smile to Hermione that caught her off guard, quickly reciprocating it. For some reason all Narcissa's kind smiles were throwing her off. It's not like she expected the witch to snap at her, but the earnestness in her greetings were still surprising. Not that she was complaining, of course. Hermione was just often too guarded in general.

"Scorpius was just about to sit down for breakfast, would you two like to join us before lessons begin?" Narcissa gestured to the kitchen as they walked out of the floo room.

"We already ate, because mum said we had to be polite." Leo frowned with a thumbs down. Hermione chuckled, "We did already eat breakfast, however we would love to join you. I'll have a coffee."

"Please join us for breakfast every morning," Narcissa said. Hermione quickly understood that was not a request. Okay then.

Ten minutes later the four of them sat at a round table tucked into a corner of the, “*non formal dining room.*” Surrounded entirely by windows, it was a breathtaking view of the rose gardens, hedge maze, and sprawling yard with tall trees that lined the perimeters, and a greenhouse glinted in the distance.

Hermione immediately had multiple ideas for lessons for the boys. Perhaps they could take a walk outside today, search for insects and practice counting in latin.

As Hermione sipped her coffee, Leo ate a muffin mirroring Scorpius. They peered across the table with curious, but apprehensive glances.

Hermione felt a deep sense of urgency for the boys to get along.

“Scorpius,” Hermione said, setting down her cup. “What is your favorite color?”

“You can read minds, can’t you? Read my mind and tell me.” He leaned his elbows onto the table eagerly awaiting her answer.

Leo’s head whipped to Hermione. “Mum, can you read my mind for real life?”

Hermione smirked, “I do always know when you tell a lie, don’t I?”

Scorpius’ face grew serious and glanced at Narcissa, who looked entertained with the whole interaction.

“She really does know when I’m lying.” Leo whispered to Scorpius.

“What’s my favorite color?” Scorpius said again, louder this time, a challenge gleaming in his eye.

“Hmm,” Hermione’s smirked, narrowing her eyes. “You have more than one favorite color.”

Scorpius’ mouth dropped open, glancing at Leo in a conspiratorial whisper, “I do. I do have more than one!”

Leo bounced in his chair, hands pulling at his wavy hair. “Mum, why did you never tell me this before!”

“I’m going to say your favorite colors are green, silver, blue, and purple.” Hermione lifted her chin and then drank a victory sip of coffee.

Scorpius slapped both hands against his face yelling, “Oh Merlin! You are a mind reader!”

“Good morning,” Draco said as he walked into the room, then stopped. “Granger, you’re here quite early.”

Leo chimed in before Hermione could reply, “Mum gets up waaaaayyy before the sun!”

“Dad! She really can read minds!” Scorpius grabbed onto Draco’s arm pulling vigorously.

Draco smirked at Scorpius, “I think that’s going to come in quite handy with how sneaky you are.” Then he turned towards the table, “You must be Leo, the Lion.” Draco said, offering his hand to Leo.

“And you must be Draco the Dragon.” Leo said, extending his hand shaking Draco’s with both of his. Hermione pursed her lips as she unsuccessfully tried to hide her laugh. Leo’s serious face was killing her.

“How did you know that?” Scorpius exclaimed, putting both hands on the table leaning towards Leo, “Can you read minds too?”

Leo frowned, leaning forward too, “No, mum just tells me things because I ask a lot of questions.”

“Hmm,” Draco said, glancing at Hermione. “That feels familiar.”

Hermione narrowed her eyes at Draco, resisting the urge to send him an eye roll. “Ha-ha.”

“I like your jacket Leo,” Draco said, pointing to it hanging on the back of his chair. “What is your favorite dinosaur?”

Leo lit up at this question and Hermione couldn’t help the grin spreading on her face as his excitement.

“A megalosaurus,” Leo said immediately.

“Meg-uh-low-soar-us” Scorpius repeated to himself.

“No.” Leo said, “It’s meh-guh-LUH-soar-us not megalow-soarus.”

Scorpius frowned. Draco glanced in Hermione’s direction with a look that said, ‘*that seems awfully familiar too.*’

“Leo, there is a difference between saying spells and dinosaur names, you don’t need to correct Scorpius, that is not your job.” Hermione said.

Leo turned to Hermione with a furrowed brow, “You said we were teaching Scorpius about dinosaurs today.”

“I said, I am teaching you both about dinosaurs.”

“What else are we doing today?” Scorpius asked, his toothless grin made him look adorable.

“We’ll be doing lots of reading, some counting and writing, and some math with baking.” Hermione smiled at Scorpius’ growing excitement.

“We are baking mum’s birthday cake!” Leo said with a clap.

“It’s your birthday?” Narcissa said, frowning. “Draco..” Narcissa’s voice trailed off in disappointment.

"Yes," Hermione said, pulling Leo back down into his chair, "I am officially twenty-seven today."

"Wow, that's old. You really are going to be my new grandmother." Scorpius said looking perplexed.

Draco gave him a confused look and glanced at Hermione.

"Scorpius, that's not polite." Narcissa chuckled quietly. "How about you say happy birthday to your teacher."

"Happy-birthday." Scorpius said with an over the top wave.

"Happy birthday Miss Granger," Narcissa said but spoke to Draco, "I wish I would have known beforehand, I would have made other arrangements for a better breakfast."

"It's completely fine, I plan to celebrate Saturday with a book in bed and a rare day off from studying." She chuckled, catching Draco's gaze, which had turned a bit sharper, more assessing and less of his polite curiosity he'd displayed previously. He must have realized he was staring at her because he rather abruptly said, "Well, I need to be on my way." He leaned down and kissed Scorpius' forehead, nodding to the rest of them. "Happy birthday Granger." He said quickly as he left. Leo frowned. "Her name is Her-MY-Knee"

Which made Hermione laugh and Draco turned walking backwards, "Goodbye Lion." He told Leo with a small salute.

"Bye Dragon!"

A couple hours later Hermione laid on a floor surrounded by soft pillows with the two boys next to her. Scorpius had a large room dedicated to lessons, filled with toys, books, craft supplies, and everything else a teacher could need for two kindergartners.

"My other teachers never laid on the ground." Scorpius said with a curious look at her.

"Well, I'm sure I'll be very different from most of your previous teachers." Hermione replied, "And I like reading while lying down." Finding ways to rest was key to her busy schedule. She was always tired.

Hermione waved her wand and the book floated above them, opening to the first page. "Alright, let's begin." She flicked her wand again and images of the book projected into the air above them.

"Woooww" Scorpius whispered. Hermione began reading the book, doing what she normally did with Leo, acting each character's voice out as the images acted the story above their heads.

Both boys were wide eyed and hanging on every word as she read.

"They stooped low and as their eyes slowly adjusted to the darkness of the cave, there on the sand was the glistening pile of treasure." Hermione said.

"I knew they'd find it!" Leo said.

"I want to find a treasure," Scorpius replied, sitting up.

"Do you think we could go on a treasure hunt?" Leo asked Hermione.

"Absolutely." Hermione nodded. "That would be very fun."

A loud buzzing sound came from her wand.

"Time to make a cake!" Leo bounced up from the floor and Scorpius quickly followed.

Hermione chased them down the hall to the kitchen.

"Both of you go sit at the table and color those letter Bs and I'll tell you when it's time to mix."

"B for brontosaurus!" Leo's lisp made him whistle the S sound as he sat at the table.

"B for birthday cake!" Scorpius sang following Leo to the table.

Hermione set up everything they needed to bake the cake and called the boys over shortly after and within thirty minutes they were all a bit covered in cake flour.

"Alright now it's your turn Scorpius, scoot over here. Is it alright if I hold your hand while you do that?"

"Sure."

Hermione positioned Scorpius in front of her on the stool, slowly helping him whisk the cake batter. Then once he got the movement she allowed him to stir on his own.

Leo sat on the countertop watching.

"Well done," she said. "Now I'll pour this into two cake pans and then we bake for forty minutes."

"Is that long?" Scorpius asked, hopping on the counter next to Leo.

"It sounds like forever." Leo said, looking at Scorpius.

"What are we going to do for that long?" Scorpius sagged his shoulders dramatically.

Hermione placed the cake pans into the oven and set the timer.

"We can eat our lunch in the garden or we can continue reading or-"

"Can we eat this?" Leo pointed to the bowl of batter with his eyes wide.

“Of course.” Hermione grinned. “That’s the best part.” She dipped her finger in the bowl, scooping up a thick layer of chocolate batter.

“Yes!” Scorpius hissed. “Oh hi dad!” Hermione turned as she put her finger in her mouth, finding Draco Malfoy leaning in the doorway, eyes in serious contemplation. *Shit.* She should have asked if Scorpius could have raw cake batter.

She pulled her finger out of mouth with a wet pop. “Care for some cake batter?” She leaned against the counter with the two boys on either side of her, as they dove in with their entire hands.

“Looks a little crowded.” Draco said, walking into the kitchen. “What has Pilly made us for lunch, Scorp?”

“I dunno,” Scorpius shrugged. “I haven’t seen Pilly.”

“What do you mean?” Draco frowned. “Is she alright? Pilly?” An elf appeared in front of Draco with a wide smile. Then glanced in Hermione’s direction, her face dropped.

Pilly shrieked loudly and disappeared.

“What did you do to my house elf, Granger?” Draco said leaning on the counter with an arched brow.

“Mum did nothing. She loves elves! She looooooves them!” Leo snapped at Draco defensively.

“He’s teasing honey. It’s alright.” Hermione patted Leo’s leg. “We’ve never met Pilly, Malfoy. I’m not sure why she’s upset.” Hermione did not like that the elf had such a fearful reaction though. That was greatly concerning to her.

“Hmm. I’ll talk to my mother.” His brows knitted together, looking at the space Pilly disappeared from.

“Can we summon her again and ask if I’ve done something to offend her?” Hermione frowned.

“No. Pilly is a free elf and she cannot be summoned,” Scorpius said, wagging a batter-covered finger speaking in a voice that mimicked an elf’s.

“Scorp had to learn the hard way that Pilly doesn’t take orders. If her reaction to you was that emotional I don’t want to embarrass her or make her think she has to be around you.” Draco said, with a shrug.

Hermione’s frown deepened. “I don’t know why an elf wouldn’t like me.”

“I’ll talk to her and let you know.” Draco said, his serious gaze returning. “Are you two joining us for lunch? I usually come home on my lunch break to eat with Scorpius...”

“Oh,” Hermione said, smiling awkwardly. “Your mother didn’t mention that.”

“Mum, you said we could eat lunch in the garden!” Leo said licking his hand enthusiastically.

“I want to eat with Leo.” Scorpius shouted, grabbing Leo by the shirt, then Leo, with equally messy, cake batter hands placed them on Scorpius’ face. “Me too!”

Hermione lifted her wand and sent a quick scourgify their way.

“I’ll take the boys outside.” Draco said, while pushed off the counter, and glancing at his watch. The boys cheered in unison and hopped off the counter running over to Draco.

“Scorpius,” Leo said abruptly, grabbing his arm and attempting to whisper into his ear but failing miserably, “We should make a treasure hunt for my mum’s birthday.”

“Okay, but we have to make it really hard because she can read our minds!” Scorpius whispered loudly back.

Hermione laughed as she began cleaning up the kitchen. Waving her wand and moving dishes back to the sink, pretending to busy herself while glancing over to the three of them.

“Dragon,” Leo hissed, standing tall, a serious expression on his face, “Could I enlist you in some help for a secret special opteration?”

Draco’s face grew serious too, “I love secret special opterations.”

Leo, turned walking backwards, “Mum, uh we are going to just play normal.” Leo pressed his lips together failing to hide his smile.

“We are not doing anything. And you shouldn’t read our minds.” Scorpius joined Leo’s backwards path, his face dramatically serious. His eyes narrowed on her, as he placed two fingers to his eyes and then pointed them at her.

Draco joined the boys, “We are doing nothing at all.”

Hermione waited until Leo retrieved her and then spelled the oven to turn off when the timer finished and charmed the cakes to exit on time. The boys led her around the garden searching for treasure. The Malfoy’s hedge maze made it extra special for Leo. Scorpius led the way giggling when Hermione got confused.

The treasure was a pile of chocolate frogs, a few knuts, and two white roses from the garden.

Draco was waiting there.

“*Happy Birthday Hermione*” A small banner floated above a spread of food on a blanket.

“My mother was also enlisted to help and this was her addition.” Draco waved to the picnic and banner. Hermione was touched by it all, a weird snagging emotion caught in her chest. Her birthdays were never that celebrated anymore.

"Wow," She smiled, "This is so very kind. My first day of work is proving to be very fun. Thank you Leo and thank you Scorpius." And then because it felt awkward not to, she thanked Draco, "And you too, Malfoy."

He nodded and checked his watch again, "Scorp, I've got to leave in less than an hour, I don't mind if you play, but I want to let you know-."

"We can leave you two alone." Hermione offered.

"NO!" Scorpius screamed so loud Hermione flinched.

"Scorpius, she wasn't trying to-"

"I want to play! You said I could play!" He stomped his foot as his cheeks turned pink, tears welling in his eyes.

"Okay. Okay." Draco moved towards him, kneeling on one leg, "It's alright. You can play." He rubbed his son's face gently, "It's okay."

Scorpius buried his face in Draco's shoulder, shyly glancing at Hermione.

"I'm sorry." Hermione said, "I didn't mean to upset you Scorpius."

Scorpius wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and frowned at Hermione as Draco whispered into his ear. The young boy shook his head.

Leo came up to Hermione and grabbed her hand.

"Yes, you will." Draco said. "Right now, Scorp."

"Sorry, for yelling." Scorpius blew a raspberry at her.

"It's okay." Hermione replied.

Draco sighed and Scorpius ran to Leo, "Want to go back into the maze? I can teach you the way." He sniffled.

"Yeah," Leo looked up at Hermione, "Can I go mum?"

"Of course."

Draco and Hermione stood alone at the picnic blanket as they watched their sons disappear into the maze. He was the first to sit down. Then grabbed a sandwich. Hermione followed. The sunshine would get more rare as the weather turned for fall. It felt so good on her skin. She quietly ate, watching Leo's head bob up from a bush and squeal as he dropped back down.

"Sorry about that." Draco said after a long stretch of silence. He grabbed a napkin and wiped his face. "Scorpius can be a little rigid when things don't go his way. We've been working on it, but it can be quite random. Believe it or not that one was very mild."

"I understand. I know it's not personal. Leo had this phase where he'd pinch me out of nowhere. When he was happy, sad, excited, angry. It was frustrating. I was getting bruises." Hermione said. She made a mental note to incorporate some social emotional lessons into her curriculum.

"How did you get him to stop?" Draco glanced at her.

"I don't know honestly. Partially I think it was because I kept speaking plainly that it hurt me, but also he just kind of grew out of it, but it was exhausting."

Draco waved at Scorpius who waved at him with both arms. "Parenting is so much harder than I ever thought it would be."

"It's the hardest thing I've ever done." Hermione agreed. "The best, of course. But so very hard."

"It's like evolution knew they had to be so fucking cute or otherwise we'd go insane." Draco grabbed a few strawberries and popped one into his mouth.

"I choose to laugh most of the time. I have to laugh or otherwise..." Hermione's voice trailed off. Having a parenting heart-to-heart with Draco Malfoy as their first real conversation in a decade was very weird.

"So you're a healer." He said after an awkward beat.

"An apprentice healer, but yes, emergency medicine at St. Mungos," Hermione said, glancing sideways at him. "What is it you do nowadays?"

"I work in special operations for the DMLE." Draco said, glancing at his watch.

"So you really are a secret spy," Hermione said, blowing a kiss back at Leo who blew her one. Scorpius blew her a kiss, his cheeks burning as red as the strawberries. Both boys screamed with laughter when Hermione blew him one too.

"Something like that." Draco huffed, "I'm glad Leo's here. Scorp's been lonely and it's hard to coordinate play dates." His thumb ran against his signet ring.

"Same." Hermione replied. The awkwardness was making her overthink all her words. So she opted for the least possible amount. Better than rambling.

"Any birthday plans?" Draco glanced at her at the same time Hermione looked at him. They'd been talking to each other without facing one another and maybe that's why it had been so easy to talk about their kids. They both looked away immediately.

Hermione grabbed a few orange slices and bit into one.

"Not today. My schedule is full." Hermione looked at the boys, just in time to see Leo shove Scorpius. "Leo!" Hermione called, "Soft hands please."

"I am!" He yelled back, gripping Scorpius' shirt

“We’re play fighting, it’s not real!” Scorpius replied defensively.

Draco said, “You too scorpius!” The boy rolled his eyes and pulled Leo by the hand ducking under the hedge

Hermione chewed on another orange.

“Another day then?” Draco said.

“What?” Hermione turned back to him, licking her lips from the juicy orange slice.

“Your birthday, you’ll celebrate another day.” He said as a statement not a question. Oh. He’s already going that route.

“Uh, I don’t know.” Hermione shrugged wiping her hands on a napkin, “When you’re a single parent, a healer’s apprentice, and tutoring full time, there isn’t a lot of time for much else. I have my first big exam coming up so studying for it is my main extracurricular activity. But I promised myself a day off on Saturday after my night shift. No studying, no cleaning, just me in bed. A good book and a long nap. Probably some good Indian takeaway.”

“Will you have Leo with you?” Draco asked as Leo chased Scorpius like a troll.

“He’ll be with Ron.” Hermione said quietly. Then cleared her throat as the small ache began to grow. She turned to Draco and he was already staring at her. Hermione looked away, suddenly feeling extremely self conscious. She didn’t like talking about Ron and the topic had her body buzzing. Hermione squeezed the napkin in her hands, forcing herself to take slow deep breaths as if she were in the emergency department focused on a patient.

Several minutes passed and they sat there in a very awkward silence. Hermione wanted to melt into the ground.

“Sorry, uh,” Draco inhaled slowly. “Sorry I haven’t reached out...yet.”

Hermione’s cheeks burned. He sounded so uncomfortable. Maybe this would not work out after all. He was clearly avoiding her.

“It’s fine. There’s no rush.” Hermione said quickly., cleaning her hands again on the napkin. Draco checked his watch again making it so apparent he didn’t want to be here.

“If you need to go-”

“Mum, is it time for cake yet?” Leo galloped towards her.

“Not until you eat your lunch.” Hermione replied, so very thankful for the interruption.

“Fine.” Leo grabbed a sandwich and stuffed it in his mouth, half of it hanging out. Mumbling with a mouth full, “Now can we?”

Fifteeen minutes later Draco, Leo, Scorpius, and Narcissa sang her happy birthday, all of them saying different things at once.

“Happy birthday to mumma Lion!” Leo squealed, licking his lips at the cake.

“...to my new grandmum teacher laaaaady!” Scorpius rambled with arms outstretched like an opera singer.

“...to Miss Granger...” Narcissa hummed politely.

“...to Hermione...” Draco sang low, catching her eye in the process.

And it was the first time she could ever recall hearing Draco Malfoy say her first name.

Hermione held her hair to the side as she bent over and blew out her candles.

Water Temperature

Later that night around eight in the evening, Hermione had just tucked Leo into bed when the doorbell rang. Before opening the door, she checked the security monitors on her phone first. A delivery man. Holding a very large bouquet of red roses.

Slowly she opened the chained door, the young male grinned, "Hey, how's it going, I've got a delivery for you, just need your signature."

Hermione's eyes went wide, trying to take in the extravagance. "I think you have the wrong place."

"Are you Miss Hermione Granger?" The muggle frowned checking his paperwork.

"I am." Hermione unchained the door.

"Oh good." The relief flooded his face, "Here you go." She signed the clipboard and then handed her the flowers, a small envelope, and a small package.

"Goodnight." He tipped his head and left.

Hermione placed the roses on her dining table, and relocked her door. Checking it twice.

Then stared for several moments at all twenty seven of the red roses. "*Happy Birthday, Hermione.*" The card read.

No one she knew would send her something like this. Hermione refused to let her mother do anything except make her dinner this evening for her birthday. Her free labor was enough of a gift. Hermione inhaled slowly, grabbing the envelopes and went back to her desk in her bedroom where she'd planned to be for the next three hours studying.

Her textbooks were already opened, her water refilled, her highlighters ready.

She sat back, leaning in her chair as she opened the envelope. It was him. She was sure of it. Spiky excitement buzzed through her veins. So this was it...

Hermione opened the perfectly wrapped package and her heart beat hard against her chest, thudding like slow heavy footsteps.

Inside the box was a muggle cell phone, a hotel key card, an invitation to meet at a luxury hotel Saturday, and a detailed list of instructions for the meeting.

Her skin went flaming hot.

Text me and confirm you're available for Saturday. I expect you to be in the room no later than noon. Be in the master suite, stand by the window. I will send you what you'll be wearing once I've heard from you.

Hermione's mouth parted as she exhaled.

She grabbed the phone. It had one contact in it. No name just a number. Her thumbs trembled slightly as she hovered over the phone's keyboard.

I'll be there. Thank you for the flowers. They're beautiful.

She hit send and shot up from her desk, running a hand through her hair. *She was going to have sex with Draco Malfoy. SHE WAS GOING TO HAVE SEX WITH DRACO MALFOY!*

Her phone buzzed against the desk and she froze, staring at the phone as it illuminated with a response. *Oh gods, this was really happening.* All at once she flung herself towards the desk, practically tipping over her chair as she sat down.

You're welcome. If you need to cancel for whatever reason, please let me know as soon as possible.

Hermione frowned. Maybe he didn't actually want this. But he must have some interest, even if it's not a love match. They just needed some level of sexual compatibility. Duties. Expectations. Roles. Needs fulfilled. All of this appealed so very much to her and he had agreed, hadn't he? Or more likely, he didn't actually think she'd show up. He doubted her. The audacity.

I just blocked it off on my calendar. Now it's permanent as a tattoo. If you need to cancel for whatever reason please let me know as soon as possible. Hermione smirked at her phone. Ha! Take that you annoying prat.

I won't go easy on you. He replied quickly. *There is no special treatment.*

Hermione rolled her eyes. He really didn't believe she could do it. Hermione was not a prude.

She replied, *Good thing I like it hard. If you took it easy on me I'd be disappointed.*

Wear green tomorrow. Oh so he was going to try to test her. Trying to ruffle her feathers in front of the kids. Little did he know Hermione was excellent at being indifferent and

following instructions.

Okay. Any specific requests? Hermione shot back.

Something you love. Something you feel beautiful in. That wasn't the response she expected and her chest felt a bit fluttery.

I can do that.

How was your day? Hermione's stomach flipped. Did he really care or was this part of the game? Hermione shook her head smiling. It didn't matter. That was the beauty of it! When she could, Hermione preferred honesty. So that's what she gave him.

The best birthday I've had in a long time. Slightly bizarre considering the circumstances, but great nonetheless.

Good to hear. When was the last time you masterbated?

Her stomach tightened and she released a shaky inhale.

This morning while I was in the shower.

How did you do it?

With a vibrator.

Water temperature?

Scalding hot.

How often do you do it?

Almost every morning that I shower, usually while my conditioner soaks in my hair.

Record it tomorrow morning. Don't send it to me until I tell you.

Hermione's heart thumped heavily into her chest. They'd signed NDAs. She was legally protected, but still, the risk of sending a him a video... gods it was such a turn on.

Okay.

Are you going to bed soon?

Not yet. Hermione still needed to study which she wasn't because she smiling at her phone like an idiot.

What will you be doing until then?

Studying.

Don't stay up too late.

Already giving me a bedtime?

Do you need one?

I don't think so.

Remember to go through our personal contract. Update things as necessary before Saturday so we are on the same page. Don't text me again, unless I initiate the conversation.
Understood?

Yes.

Go to bed by 10pm.

Hermione rolled her eyes. Fuck. She really needed to study.

Okay.

When he didn't reply she put the phone away and forced herself to compartmentalize. Like a shot of espresso in her veins, her brain was energized by the thrill of what just happened. The perfect adrenaline rush for her study session.

At 10:15 she crawled into bed and had never looked forward to her early morning wakeup call more.

Draco sat at his desk Monday evening and set down a muggle cell phone into a concealed drawer. There was no way she'd send the video. It was still truly hard to wrap his mind around.

He sighed. *Good thing I like it hard.* He'd barked a laugh at that. Cheeky witch.

Haggard

Hermione towed off her body in the mirror and wrapped her hair up. The video of her touching herself sat on her secret phone, which she placed multiple notice-me-not-charms on and a protective spell just for good measure.

When she dressed, she selected a dark green blouse, with a lace detail lining the v neck, the bodice was form fitting which contrasted nicely with its lantern sleeves. She'd bought the shirt months ago and hadn't had the chance to wear it yet. She paired it with a black belt and her good jeans that flattered her bum.

Narcissa and Scorpius greeted them at the floo again and the boys raced towards the dining room together.

"What a lovely color on you, Miss Granger." Narcissa linked elbows with her on the way to the room. Catching Hermione off guard slightly. Nonetheless Hermione held her head high.

"Thank you," she beamed.

When they arrived in the dining room Draco was sitting with the boys at the table. He looked stressed when he met her eyes.

"Good morning." Hermione greeted with a wide smile. She sat down across from Leo and Narcissa sat beside her. Hermione's coffee order already on the table. Happily, she began to add eggs and toast to her plate.

"Trying to fit in with the Slytherins, Granger?" Draco's expression had softened slightly, as he grabbed his fork. He was really trying to get under her skin.

"No way!" Leo swung his head dramatically towards Draco, "Gryffindor is in our blood!"

"When I go to Hogwarts I'll be in Slytherin," Scorpius frowned. "Will you still be my friend?"

Leo looked startled, "Were you two friends?" He glanced between Draco and Hermione.

Both of them stopped mid-bite, awkwardly glancing at each other.

"Not really, but that doesn't mean you can't be friends. In fact I hope you are." Hermione said, giving the boys a grin.

Narcissa let out a small breath beside her.

"But you're friends now right Miss grandmum teacher?" Scorpius's genuine curiosity was so cute. His big wide eyes and knitted blond brows reminded her of a kitten pouting.

"Uh, yes, of course." Hermione replied, focusing back on her food.

“Oh yay.” Scorpius happily went back to his food.

“Why does he keep calling you that?” Draco asked frowning.

“Grandma called her our family.” Scorpius explained, defensively. “And because she’s old, duh!”

The silence at the table was unnerving. Palpable and heavy.

“What’s on the agenda for today?” Narcissa asked rather hastily.

“Some math games, painting, and lots of reading.” Hermione replied grateful for the subject change. Then sipped her coffee needing to stay occupied.

“Will you read to us like yesterday?” Scorpius asked. “Pleeeasse?”

“Absolutely.” Hermione said, stifling a small yawn.

“Late night?” Draco asked, leaning back in his chair, with his tea in hand.

“Not particularly, I just get up early most mornings.” Hermione replied without looking in his direction. She was very good at playing games and if he wanted to play, she wouldn’t back down.

“Up before the sun to run!” Leo sang. Hermione chuckled, “Exactly.”

“You run?” Draco asked.

“I used to run, but now I usually walk on my treadmill so I can study in the mornings.” Hermione took a bite of food. “Malfoy, did you ever get a chance to ask Pilly why she was so scared yesterday?” Finally making deliberate direct eye contact with him.

“I did. And she wouldn’t tell me.” He replied, a serious furrow in his brow.

Hermione pursed her lips, “That is very disappointing. Should I invite her to tea or something?”

“No, she’ll come around.” Narcissa replied glancing warily at Draco, “I’m sure she’s just feeling shy.”

Hermione’s frown deepened, “Alright. But if she doesn’t, I’d really like to apologize.”

“For what?” Draco’s brows knitted together.

“Anything. I don’t know. I love elves and I don’t want her to be upset with me.” Hermione chewed on her lip.

“Do you have a mum?” Leo asked Scorpius suddenly. The room went deadly quiet and Hermione’s eyes went wide. “Leo.” Hermione hissed.

“Sorta, she’s a little crazy though.” Scorpius shrugged.

Hermione had had several interactions with Astoria in the emergency room. Not that she was allowed to disclose that, nor would she want to.

“Do you have a dad?” Scorpius asked matter of factly, chewing a piece of toast.

“Scorp.” Draco let out a frustrated breath. Hermione’s chest tightened.

“Yeah his name is Ronald, but I only just met him a few months ago. And mum says I don’t have to call him dad.” Leo said, looking at Hermione for confirmation, “Right mum?”

Hermione nodded. The boys happily chewed their food, oblivious to the awkwardness in the room. Several minutes passed and Hermione didn’t look up from her food. Then she couldn’t handle it anymore.

“I’m going to set up for today’s lessons.” Hermione said at the same time Draco said, “I’ve got to leave Scorp.” They both stood simultaneously.

They glanced at each other. “See you later,” Hermione awkwardly waved and excused herself from the table, grabbing her purse on the way. At some point it would not be this awkward. Or they’d just get used to it. Or it wouldn’t work out at all and that would be fine too.

The morning flew by in a whirlwind of six year old boy tornados bouncing from one activity to the next. Just before lunch, Draco walked into their school room and stopped at the doorway.

Hermione’s hair was covered in glitter and the boys were covered in glitter, their faces were painted like tigers. Hermione’s face was currently being painted.

“We’re almost done.” Hermione laughed as a paintbrush ran down her neck. “That tickles”

Scorpius held a hand tightly on her forehead, dragging a brush across her mouth. “Stay still”

“I’m trying,” Hermione giggled. “What exactly are you painting me as?”

“A unicorn,” Leo shrieked.

Scorpius’s brows knitted in frustration. “It was a surprise!”

“Oh it will be surprising alright,” Draco said, “ Scorp, I’ll be in my office for a little while, I’ll meet you at the patio table for lunch.”

He waited a few moments but Scorpius didn’t respond. “Scorp?”

“I heard you, but this takes consternation!”

“You mean conservation.” Leo, corrected.

"Yeah, that." Scorpius' tongue slipped out of his mouth as he swirled the brush on her face.

Hermione chuckled, "I'm giving you both three more minutes to be finished."

"Fine." Leo frowned.

After Hermione cleaned up all the glitter with a few cleaning charms she sent the boys to wash up in the attached bathroom and grabbed a compact mirror out of her bag, her face was a full rainbow of stripes and polka dots and a mish mash of colors. She took a picture with her phone.

This is what she hoped Leo's childhood memories were always filled with.

After dropping her mirror back in her bag she checked her phone. She had a missed call from her mother. Watching the boys try to wash their hands at the same time, she called her back.

"More soap!" One of them, demanded.

"Take turns, please." Hermione reminded them. "Hey mum," Hermione put her purse on her shoulder and walked closer to the boys. "Sorry one second." She leaned against the door frame, "Dry your hands and pick an animal to walk to the table as."

They giggled and she turned towards the school room in search of quiet.

"Okay, sorry, how are you?" Hermione asked, walking aimlessly around the room. Wondering if she read all of the books on these shelves before the three month trial ended. She was up for the challenge. It was filled with all kinds of things Hermione wanted to explore. It really was a great room for school.

"I'm good honey, just wanted to check in on you and confirm your schedule this week."

"Oh, thank you. Yes, Thursdays and Fridays are my night shifts. Then I have a day shift on Sunday. I'll drop Leo off Thursday morning and sleep at your house before students come over if that's alright." Hermione pulled down, *The Hungry, Hungry Caterpillar*. This would be a good afternoon read.

"That sounds great. I always look forward to seeing my little lion," Jean hummed. "How are things going otherwise?"

"Good." Hermione's cheeks heated. Hermione turned back to the boys just in time for Leo to barrel into her legs wrapping his entire body around them. "Can we be monkeys?"

"Yes, you may." She tapped his nose, before wrapping an arm around his shoulders.

Scorpius hung back and watched Leo and Hermione with an unreadable expression.

"I'm anxious to hear a longer update. Perhaps Thursday?"

"Sure. Thanks mum. You're the best. I'll call you again later when I have more time." Hermione said.

“Love you sweetie.”

“Love you too.” Hermione hung up the phone and put her phone back in her bag.

“Alright little tiger monkeys, let’s go to lunch.”

Hermione flinched when she turned to find Draco watching them in the door frame. Damn his unnerving ability to just appear at will.

Scorpius had just noticed too and copied Leo’s attack on Draco’s legs.

“You’re quite sneaky.” Hermione said to Draco. “We should put a bell on you.”

Draco’s lip twitched as he ran a hand over Scorpius’ hair, “Didn’t mean to scare you. I didn’t want to interrupt your phone call.”

“Oh sorry, I just needed to check in with my mum.” Hermione said, “I usually stay off my phone while I’m with Scorpius. I promise.”

“No need to apologize. Check your phone as you need.” He nodded, then looked down at Scorpius, “You ready to eat?”

“I only eat-” Scorpius paused, turning his head towards Hermione, “Grandmum Teacher, what do tigers eat again?”

“Deer and pigs sometimes, other small animals.” Hermione mused, peeling Leo off her legs.

“Oh right,” Scorpius bared his teeth at Draco, “I only eat deer and pigs sometimes and other small animals.” He said in a growl.

Draco smirked. “Well you’re in luck, I believe that’s exactly what we’re having for lunch.”

“Is there also some other food in case we don’t like deers and pigs?” Leo asked running over to Draco.

He nodded. “I believe so, yes.”

“Oooh ahh ahh.” Leo replied, “That’s thank you in monkey talk.”

“Oooh ahh eeee.” Scorpius said, pointing down the hallway. Both boys bolted out of the room.

“Would you mind if I used the bathroom really fast?” Hermione asked Draco.

“Take as much time as you need.” Draco said, his eyes lingered on her beat before following after them.

As soon as she walked into the bathroom, Hermione remembered her face paint. After cleaning it off she used the bathroom and because she felt compelled, Hermione pulled out the secret muggle phone.

8:08am: Send me the video.

8:30am: Send me the video

9:09am: Why aren't you responding?

Hermione shook her head. She sent the video and then replied.

I am at work. I can't and will not always be able to check my phone. I have very firm priorities.

What priorities? He responded immediately.

Private priorities that are irrelevant to this arrangement.

Fair. Have you eaten lunch yet?

I will be soon. He was such an annoying prat.

Good girl.

Hermione didn't respond, but her cheeks remained flushed as she sat down at the outside table where lunch had been set up.

Draco stood on the lawn with the boys watching them run in circles on small brooms pretending to fly. When Draco spotted her, he called the boys over and they headed her way. He was so tall. He'd filled out so much since his school days, broad shoulders and muscular arms in a form fitting white oxford. Draco was *very* fit.

“Please tell me those brooms will not go off the ground.” Hermione said, with a grimace.

Draco rolled his eyes. “They’re only practice brooms.”

“Mum, did you see me? I was flying so fast! Like a tiger!” Leo said, dropping the broom on the concrete with a clatter.

“Leo, you must take care of things others let you borrow, please put the broom over there where Scorpius is placing his.” Leo huffed, but did as he was told.

Draco sat to the left of her and the boys sat in front of her.

They chatted away about tigers and their pig sandwiches, which was technically accurate, since they were ham. Then only ten minutes later they were both back on the brooms jumping over a stone pathway.

“They seem to get along well.” Draco said, breaking their silence.

"It's only been two days, I'm certain at some point there will be fighting, but so far it's the best I could have hoped for." She smiled softly watching Leo throw his head back in laughter.

Draco looked at his watch and grabbed his water glass.

"You can leave if you need to." Hermione offered. "You don't have to stay."

He glanced sidelong at her. "I'm aware."

"Sorry." Hermione said quickly. She needed to mind her own business.

"I'm leaving tomorrow morning for the next two days on an assignment." Draco explained. "My schedule can be unpredictable so when I have the option, I'm here."

"You don't have to explain, I shouldn't have said anything." Hermione said, her cheeks flushed hotter now with embarrassment. After he didn't reply Hermione pulled out her key ring of flash cards from her bag, she whispered a charm and had them flipping in front of her while she ate. Hermione could feel Draco staring at her, but she didn't care. Her multitasking was the key to keeping everything together.

"Would you like some assistance?" He said after another stretch of silence.

"No. I'm fine." Hermione replied truthfully. She didn't want any extra favors from him. *No special treatment* as he phrased it. It was Hermione's least favorite feeling to owe someone something.

"My mother mentioned you're still taking other tutoring students. How does that work with your hospital schedule?"

Hermione waited several moments before responding, quietly reciting the card's answers. It flipped when she got the answer right.

Turning to face Draco, she replied, "I only take a few and it's in the afternoon before my shifts. My mum watches Leo those days. It's why I'm grateful to have him here while I'm with Scorpius, having more time with him is special." Her eyes went back to the boys and her heart squeezed again watching them enjoy each other's company so thoroughly.

"Are we not paying you enough?" Draco asked.

She jerked in his direction, "I'm very happy with my allowance, Malfoy."

"Then why are you still taking other students?" His face was blank, unreadable. It made sense he was some sort of spy, so serious and silent all the time.

"Because I want to." Hermione replied flatly, as she her grabbed a sandwich and took a bite. These Malfoys sure liked to pry.

"You look exhausted." Draco said it in an accusatory way. Like he was offended by her tired presence. Hermione choked on her bite of food.

Hermione cleared her throat a few times, before grabbing her water. After taking a large sip and taking in a slow breath, she turned to Draco once more.

In her best teacher-like voice she spoke to him, with just a bit of extra condescension.

“Some thoughts you should keep inside your mind.” Hermione tapped her temple in emphasis.

He arched his brow, unfazed. “I think you should get more sleep.”

Hermione’s eyes flared, “And I think you should stop sharing your opinions with me.”

“I think you’re stretching yourself thin and when we agreed to this, I assumed you had the time to accommodate my son.”

“I do have time. I am here eight hours a day, three days a week like I agreed to in my contract.” Hermione replied tensely.

“It’s unsafe to watch children when you’re exhausted.” He said matter of factly, his eyes hardening.

Rude. So damn rude.

“I’m uncertain where you expect this conversation to go.” Hermione said calmly. “ I don’t have to explain my schedule to you. If you are concerned about my wellbeing then you should have been part of the interview and asked those questions, but I can assure you I am very capable. And insinuating I’m unsafe for not only Scorpius, but my own son is extremely offensive.” Hermione’s jaw set as they held each other’s stare.

“Are you two fighting?” Scorpius asked, making both of them jerk towards the children. “No.” They both said simultaneously.

Hermione’s annoyance lingered all day. Was she stretched thin? Yes. Was she unsafe? Absolutely not. Safety was a top priority of hers. How dare he even insinuate that.

Another delivery came to her door around eight in the evening again, no delivery man this time, just a box on her doorstep.

Wear this on Saturday.

Confirm you’ve received it.

Hermione’s mouth dropped open. The deep ivy colored silk trench coat from Burberry was stunning. The So Kate Black Louboutin’s were drool worthy. And then the pieces of lingerie she was supposed to wear underneath was... hot. It was all so very sexy.

Hermione hoped he wouldn't be disappointed when he finally saw her in it. She'd never worn anything like this before. Sitting at her desk for another study session, she pulled out her phone.

I've received the package. The items are lovely. If he thought lingerie would scare her...

Hermione studied for half an hour before he responded.

Use this for tomorrow's shower. He sent a video of himself. It was dark, angled diagonally, he was sitting on a couch stroking a thick cock.

Fuck. Hermione's nipples pebbled as she watched. It was cropped, showing from his abdomen to his knees, legs spread wide as rubbed his shaft up and down slowly and then more vigorously. Hermione's thighs squeezed together as he came with a low deep grunt, thick ropes of his cum landed on his stomach and Hermione unintentionally moaned. He had a very nice body indeed. Muscular arms, carved abs, strong muscular legs.

Do I have to wait till tomorrow? Hermione was ready to come right now.

Yes. Do not come tonight. If you do, you don't get to come on Saturday. Use it in the shower tomorrow like a good girl.

Fine...

Wear a skirt tomorrow.

Okay.

Send me your morning video right after you're finished.

The following morning Hermione came hard in the shower finally enjoying his video how it should have been enjoyed the first time.

She sent her recording. He replied immediately.

Can you meet on Saturday at 2pm?

She hadn't received any compliments from him which was driving her bonkers, but that response made her frown. She hoped he was not postponing just to cancel.

Any particular reason for the change? Her anxiety was spiking and she wanted reassurance from him. She did not get it.

My schedule changed. Can you accommodate?

Yes, but I can only stay till six.

That's plenty of time, we should be done by four.

The boys had just finished breakfast and Hermione was lesson planning next to them when Draco walked in with a small suitcase and a briefcase. Narcissa had morning plans and was already gone. Hermione was still annoyed with Draco, especially since he had plenty of time yesterday to apologize for his overstepping, but all he did was glare back at her the remainder of lunch.

She did not look at him when he said goodbye to Scorpius and high-fived Leo. But then Draco said, "I hope you're able to sleep this weekend, Granger. You look quite haggard."

Her eyes dragged slowly up to him, wishing she send him a good jelly legs jinx.

He stared back at her unbothered.

"Mum doesn't look like Hagrid." Leo said, perplexed, "She's much too short."

"Who's Hagrid?" Scorpius asked

"Our friend, he's a giant. He can lift me really high into the sky. Mum, can we take Scorpius to visit Hagrid?"

Hermione was still busy holding Draco's eye stare and stood.

"I'll talk to his dad about it. Right now, actually." Hermione walked past Draco and into the floo room.

He took his time following her and her temper was spiking rapidly.

"I don't mind if you take him to Hagrid's. Just don't let him touch any weird animals." Draco grimaced.

"What is your problem?" Hermione hissed, her hands on her hips.

"I don't have a problem." He said casually. "You have a problem. A sleeping problem. One you should remedy immediately."

"You need to stop giving me unsolicited advice and stop making remarks on how I look." Hermione snapped. "I don't know why I have to even explain this."

"If I said, I liked your skirt, would that be alright?" He said, casually as his eyes dropped down to her ruffled cotton skirt. It hit just below her knees, but suddenly she felt like she might as well be naked. Then she was thinking of him naked. A blush crept up neck knowing they'd seen each other orgasm. Hermione's brows knitted together as she tugged on the skirt, "What?"

He sighed with an eye roll. “You’re blocking the floo Granger and I hate to be late.”

Hermione bit down on all of the things she wanted to say and left the room without looking back at him.

Someone Call Draco Malfoy

Chapter Summary

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Every morning she dutifully sent her morning videos and each evening she received one of her own. She watched them as a reward for studying, they were absolutely delicious.

The night shift on Thursday was a busy one, a group of quidditch players came in after a particularly nasty game. All hands were on deck. Hermione was happy to be busy and got a lot of practice with suturing skills.

Viktor Krum's friendly voice was a welcome one and she laughed easily at his corny jokes. He was a bit dazed from the bludger hitting his head so it was a good sign that he could keep coming up with them.

"What do you call a train that carries bubble gum?"

"I'm not sure."

"A chew-chew train." Viktor chuckled and so did Hermione.

"Leo is going to love that one."

She pointed her wand filling in the last few sutures a screaming wail came from another bed in triage.

"Just get him already!" The sad voice yelled, "Draco Malfoy!"

"He's on his way, just calm down." Padma replied.

"Please, I'm in so much pain. I can't handle this... Please help me!" Hermione's eyes briefly closed. *Shit.* It was Astoria.

Hermione ignored the wailing as best as she could and finished Krum's stitches on his forehead, moving to the large swollen laceration on his cheek.

"St. Mungo's fundraiser gala is coming up soon, will you be going?" Krum asked, with his eyes closed.

"Yes, of course. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to dress up and get out of my scrubs." Hermione replied.

“DRaaaaacoooo, please!” Astoria’s cry was heartbreaking. A few moments later the curtains around them flew open, Draco stood there looking angry and bewildered. Then he saw Hermione crouched over Krum’s face and his face went blank.

“Malfoy, she’s this way.” Padma Patil popped her head in.

“Apologies.” Draco cleared his throat, doing a double take at Hermione as he left.

“Dracooooo please, tell them to help me!”

“You’re swelling is down and these stitches are looking pretty great if you ask me.” Hermione said as if nothing had happened.

“Of course they are, Ermione. You’re a brilliant doctor.” He grinned with bloody teeth.

Hermione briefly saw Draco as she rolled Krum’s wheelchair to the lobby. He was in a deep discussion with Padma who looked pained during the conversation. Draco’s steely expression was not helping. Good to know he was an asshole to everyone and not just her.

Friday morning she went to her flat, faceted Leo and slept before going back to her mum’s house. There she met with two muggle students. One she was tutoring in advanced chemistry and the other in advanced environmental science.

The lessons were straight forward as both were preparing for their first exams of the semester, but Hermione’s brain lagged and she hated that Draco was right. She was so tired.

She chugged a pepper up potion while her and Leo watched their Friday movie and a then large coffee on her way to her next night shift. Thankfully it was much slower and on her break she was able to take a twenty minute power nap. She got into her flat on Saturday morning just as her mum showed up with Leo.

Hermione ate breakfast with Leo while they talked about things they could do at school with Scorpius. Her knee began to bounce the closer the clock got to Ron’s pickup time.

When Ron’s hammering knock pounded at the door Hermione’s whole body jerked.

“I just don’t understand why I can’t have him sleep at my house.” Ron snapped.

Her only win during their last custody meeting was that she’d successfully deterred overnight visits.

“We can discuss it at the next meeting.” Hermione said at her doorway.

“There is no good reason for you to keep him away from me. It’s selfish.” He said with righteous indignation. “You hid him away from me for years and now my own son doesn’t even know me.”

"He doesn't know you because that was your choice. I have the documentation of those conversations, Ron."

"Oh whatever, Hermione. It's my right as his father." He uncrossed his arms, leaning towards her. An intimidation tactic. One that still made her feel queasy. Hermione willed herself to remain impassive, straightening her shoulders.

"He doesn't know you. You can't expect him to feel safe with you instantly. He needs time to adjust to this new part of his life."

"It's been five months since his first visit. It's enough time to transition to weekends already. It's a fucking hassle dropping off and picking up every day." Ron's voice rose and Hermione's eyes dropped to her feet. "I won't discuss anything else without my solicitor present."

"You make everything so fucking complicated." Ron groaned and then pushed a hard finger into her shoulder. It forced her to take an unstable step backwards. She stopped herself with a quick hand on the doorhandle. The pitter patter of small shoes had both of them turning.

Leo's uncertain glance at Ron almost had Hermione in tears. Saying goodbye was still new, still a struggle for her. Hermione bent down on one knee, zipping up the green jacket with dinosaurs. "I'll see you tonight okay?" Hermione pressed a hard kiss on his forehead and his small arms wrapped around her neck. "Can we go to Scorp's house tomorrow?" He whispered.

"No, sweetie, you'll be with Ron again." Hermione squeezed him again.

"Oh." His shoulders sagged.

"I love you." Hermione replied

Leo pulled away and his small hands went to her cheeks. "I love you mumma. The mostest in the world, you know."

"I know." Hermione kissed his cheek again and stood. Any more time and she'd start to cry.

"Hey Leo." Ron ruffled his hair, earning a nasty glare from Leo that he'd no doubt inherited from Hermione.

"I just brushed my hair Ronald." Leo said with a sad frown.

"Call me dad," Ron grinned.

"No," Leo folded his arms, "Can we go to the park now?"

"We're going to meet up with Lav and the twins first," Ron smiled.

"Those babies cry so much it hurts my brain."

"Same," Ron agreed with a nod. "I'll throw in some ice cream though."

“That’s a deal.” Leo gave him a thumbs up and turned to Hermione, “Bye mummy.”

Hermione slept until one in the afternoon and felt good, great even. The nervous excitement of meeting Draco was like rocket fuel in her veins.

At 1:50pm she slid the hotel key card against the suite’s door. It was a penthouse, with open windows showing off beautiful views of London, but she didn’t have time to gawk or be nosy, she’d followed instructions as she was told.

And one minute after 2pm Draco Malfoy walked into the bedroom.

Ask Me

There was a slight hint of surprise in his eyes to see her there, like he really couldn't believe she'd shown up. It was only a flash, before his face went wholly blank.

Hermione's pulse did jumping jacks as they stared at one another.

He held her stare, slipping his hands in his trouser pockets. Unruffled and unbothered.

Draco Malfoy was the man sending her lingerie and roses and videos of cum shots and- fuck he was the boy who hated her guts and made fun of her at school and- gods. The heat between her legs spiked and she shifted in her shiny new heels that *he'd* sent her.

The forbidden nature of Draco Malfoy made this extremely sexy. Thudding violently against her chest, her heart continued doing acrobatics.

"Last chance to leave." Draco said finally breaking the tense silence.

"Are you sure you even want a someone haggard like me?" Hermione placed a hand on her hip, grateful her voice was steady at least. Her pulse was not, she was probably entering tachycardia right about now.

The corner of his lip tugged, slightly. "If I didn't, I wouldn't have invited you." He arched a brow, challenging her to ask the next question on her mind and the fact that he even knew what she wanted to ask made her grit her teeth.

"We need rules." Hermione said. Her skin flashed hot and cold. They were really going to do this.

"Strict ones." He replied, with a firm nod.

"I did this so it wasn't complicated."

Draco nodded, "As did I, obviously."

"I don't want anything to be different than it was this week at the manor." Hermione's mouth was dry. *This was really happening.*

"Great. Perfect really." Draco replied.

"And we'll just take it week by week between you and I." Hermione inhaled. "Until the three months are up, I don't want to discuss any future commitments."

"Are you just going to repeat our entire contract out loud?" Draco blinked.

"Don't refer to me as anything except your son's tutor." Hermione added.

His jaw was set tight. "Don't touch me in front of my son."

Hermione narrowed her eyes. “Don’t even look at me for longer than three seconds.”

“Don’t make any mention of pretending to be his mother or joking that they might be brothers.”

“If you say anything derogatory in front of Leo about the Weasley family-”

“We don’t really need to talk much at all.”

“The less interactions the better,” Hermione replied. “And I want it in writing that my job, my career, none of it gets interfered with.”

Draco glared at her. “Nothing that happens in here means anything. Nothing I say holds any weight outside of these doors.”

“Agreed.” Hermione said firmly, nodding a few times. They stared at each other for a long moment. It stretched taught, building into some invisible eclectic pulse. Hermione’s spine ping-ponged with a hot zinging sensation. “I don’t think that’s enough rules,” she said, breathlessly.

“We can add more if this even works more than once.” Draco said, taking a step forward.

“Are you wearing what I asked for?” Hermione nodded.

“Take off your jacket.” Draco turned unbuttoning his cufflinks and rolled up his sleeves.

Hermione stood there frozen like a deer in wandlight, as she watched his dark mark appear on his forearm. He set down one silver cufflink at a time on a table that sat between two large armchairs. Without looking at her, Draco said, “You’re going to regret not listening to me the first time.” His grey eyes slid to hers and a wave of heat flooded her chest. “Take off the jacket.” His words were hard, edged with impatience.

Hermione couldn’t look at him while she unbuttoned the trench coat. She shifted in her heels, with her eyes focused on the chandelier’s light reflecting against the ceiling. She watched the spectrum of colors dance in pastel hues as she began undressing. With every button that came undone her skin grew hotter, nervous energy raged through her and then she dropped the coat to the floor with an audible swallow. *This was really fucking happening.*

Draco had no reaction. The silence was suffocating. Ear splitting. No intake of breath, no gasp, no compliments. She was wearing next to nothing. Scraps of lace covered her breasts in the smallest way possible held together by thin straps that criss-crossed all over her body. Another patch of lace between her legs with more tiny straps over her bum.

“Spin around. Slowly.” His deep voice slithered around her as she turned. The movement was a bit rigid, but she managed to not fall or pass out. He was still standing there, hands in his pockets assessing her like he was considering what to do with her. Her nipples hardened and her hands flexed then balled into fists at her sides.

Draco sat down in one of the chairs next to him, spreading his legs wide, he rubbed a hand against his jaw, still observing her with sharp intense eyes.

“Step three paces closer.” He shook his arms out on either side of the chair making him look extra large. When she was done taking those three steps, she was certain she was tachycardic. Hopefully if she fainted she might not remember the embarrassment of it.

He rubbed his thumb and forefinger together. “Drop to your knees.”

Slowly, Hermione bent down, reaching for the ground to steady her. Once she was on her knees it was the first time she saw a spark of something happening behind his guarded face.

“Now crawl to me.” His voice was rough and it skated across her skin like a dancing flame. Hermione swallowed and leaned onto her hands.

“Keep your eyes on me.” He warned, licking his lower lip.

She maintained eye contact as she put one limb in front of the other. Seductively, her hips swayed with the movement. The soft plush carpet slid against her skin as she crawled past the bed. Her long hair fell over her shoulders, tickling her back and making her skin pebble. When she made it to the space between his legs, she leaned back, on her knees with her hands placed on her thighs. Hermione peered up at him and a deep thrill ran through her when she saw his hard cock through his black trousers. He grabbed her chin tightly, rubbing his thumb across her bottom lip. Her breath caught in her throat as he stared at her.

“I’m going to fuck your pretty mouth now,” he said, just a hint of breathlessness at the end of his words. Her eyes fluttered at his praise. So minimal and yet it felt like a hot coal was dropped inside her stomach. He was really making her work for it, dammit.

Draco held her chin while he unbuckled his belt, then did the same for his trousers, pulling out his heavy cock. He pulled her chin forward releasing it only when her face was a few inches away.

“Bring your hands up on my thighs.” Once she did, he hissed. “Open.”

Hermione licked her lips and opened her mouth. Draco’s other hand lifted his cock up, pressing the tip against her bottom lip, rubbing slowly along the curve of her mouth. Hermione’s hands gripped tighter against his taut leg muscles and his breath hitched. He brought his other hand against her cheek, gripping the side of her face, fingers intertwining into the base of her hair. He could easily control every movement of her head, like a steering wheel.

Draco used her mouth to tease himself for several long minutes. Saliva dripped from her lips as he continued rubbing his head on her tongue and mouth. She began wiggling her hips as the throbbing sensation between them intensified. A small noise escaped her.

“Don’t worry,” His words slurred a little, his eyes half-lidded like he was drunk, “I’ll take care of you, just take care of daddy first.” Hermione moaned as his cock slid half way in her mouth. He hissed as he did it a second time. And with his hand tight against her face, forced her all the way down.

She gagged hard.

He was big and her mouth was small. The head of his cock hit the back of her throat and he slid out quickly.

“Breathe through your nose,” he said, with a small pant. “Now, hold my cock.”

She gripped him, happy to finally touch him after seeing him in the videos. His silken smooth skin felt good in her hand. Her thumb ran down his shaft and he let out a satisfied sound. Hermione felt it all the way to her toes.

She began sucking, hollowing her cheeks, breathing through her nose and using her hand in combination with the movements.

“Fuck,” He groaned, leaning further into the chair. The grip on her face pulled her down again as his hips pushed up in short thrusts.

Hermione gagged again but he fucked her through it. She finally found a good rhythm again, opening her mouth wider, flattening her tongue.

“Don’t you dare stop,” he panted, “You’re going to swallow all of it.” Hermione’s own hips were rolling now, her head bobbed vigorously and she could feel him getting closer as his breathing intensified. “Godsdamn.” He moaned loudly as came, throwing his head back. Hermione sucked him through it, meeting him thrust for thrust, vaguely feeling his seed hit the back of her throat. She swallowed obediently, barely tasting anything at all. He stopped moving, panting for a few moments, but his hand kept her mouth still wrapped around him. His eyes were still closed when his hand dropped away from her face lifeless. “Stand up.”

On shaky legs Hermione stood, blood rushing back to her feet. Slightly dizzy from the whole ordeal she wobbled, Draco’s hand shot out and grabbed her thigh.

“Turn around.” His fingers lightly brushed against her legs as she moved.

Without warning, he tugged her hips back, pulling her on his lap. His still hard cock, pressed against her inner thigh. He adjusted her body so that her head rested on his shoulder with her legs spread wide by his knees. His nose dragged against her neck. Draco smelled good. Like smoked wood and caramel, and something else she couldn’t quite name.

Hermione let out a low whimper as his palms dragged roughly up her thighs. He spoke into her neck, “The only thing you’re allowed to say is my name.” His warm lips brushed against her skin and she wanted his mouth everywhere. She leaned into it, hips rocking into his body.

“Draco.”

“Again.” His hands squeezed higher up her thighs and Hermione’s breath sawed.

“Draco,” she moaned slowly. His hands explored her body cupping her breasts. They were both moaning at that point.

“Louder.” His aggressive tone made Hermione loudly shriek with pleasure. He tugged on her nipples.

“Draco,” Hermione repeated, begging him, her hands tightening around his forearms

“Fuck.” His hands pressed down her torso, back in between her thighs and his cock twitched against her core.

He lifted her up off his lap. And like a child holding a ragdoll, picked her up by the waist and tossed her on the bed. She landed on her side, somehow with her heels staying on her feet.

Hermione barely had time to catch her breath, before he flipped her on her back and pulled on her ankles until she was at the end of the bed.

It was all so hot, so perfect. This was exactly what she wanted. Malfoy sank on his knees throwing her leg over his shoulders. Gripping her hips, extremely tight.

“Draco!” Hermione’s voice was full of shock as his warm mouth landed on her pussy. He was aggressively slow. Like he was savoring every time he licked and sucked her. She gripped the blankets behind her head. Apparently he didn’t need air to breathe as he continued feasting on her. Her hips began moving on their own, his low vibrating moan send a long rolling zing of pleasure though her.

His fingers teased her entrance, making her buck her hips, but he pushed her hips down into the bed with his forearm.

Shooting stars began bursting throughout her body. “Oh my, oh, Dra-” Hermione clenched her eyes shut as she came, in short panting breaths. Her blood felt molten hot as sparks of pleasure pulsed through her entire body. Once she stopped rolling her hips, Draco lifted his head. A cheeky grin spread on his face that was so sexy Hermione gave a half moan, half breathy laugh. After wiping his mouth with the back of his arm, he crawled over her with all of his clothes still on, just his heavy cock out, thick and veiny, and wet with precum.

He pressed into her and they both gasped, as their eyes locked onto one another. He leaned onto his elbows, tugging at the lace covering her breasts. Sucking slowly on her nipple, he murmured into her breast. “Be a good girl, come for me again.”

Hermione was panting loudly, already half way there. His hips thrust inside her harder and faster, rolling in a way that hit a spot just right; she started shaking from the pleasure it produced. Draco’s mouth moved to the other breast, kissing and licking her nipple with so much enthusiasm her legs tightened around his waist, pulling him closer to her.

“You better fucking come with me, right now,” he growled as he leaned his forehead against hers, he shifted between her legs, both of them sucking in short breaths. His eyes were a mixture of grey and blue hues swirled together. They were so beautiful. Hermione cupped his face and his eyes fluttered. Two thrusts later they were both coming together.

Draco’s body went limp against hers, his head falling on her chest. Hermione felt like her limbs were full of popping candies, as she wrapped them around his shoulders.

They laid there for several minutes catching their breath. Wow. Wow. Wow.

Slowly, Draco peeled himself off of her. "Good job," He murmured and inhaled deeply, an attempt to steady his sawing breath. Even minutes later they were both still struggling to breathe. He readjusted himself into his pants and lifted her limp leg, gliding his hands down her calf, before slipping off her heel. He did the same to her other one. They watched each other. It was still sexy.

"Sit up," He said gently, offering her a hand. Once she was upright, he began undoing all her straps, slipping off the pieces of lace from her body. After her bits of clothing were removed he held her hand all the way to the bathroom, where a steamy shower waited for her.

"Fifteen minutes in the shower." Then closed the bathroom door.

Hermione stood on weak legs under scalding hot water feeling so fucking grateful. This was exactly what she needed. This was the self care missing from her schedule. She found herself so thankful for her mother of all people, for the best orgasms she had in a very long time. Her vibrator was no longer going to cut it. The water shut off after fifteen minutes and Hermione took that as her sign to get out. She towed off and found a large fluffy robe and body butter waiting for her. When she walked out of the bathroom, Draco was on the hotel's phone. The room had been tidied, the lights still dimmed. The only thing she found peculiar was Draco without shoes on. The entire time he'd been completely dressed, and now seeing him in black socks made her giggle for some reason.

He glanced up at her, arching a brow. She just smiled back, he offered her a soft smile in return. It was surprisingly not awkward, another thing she was grateful for. They were on the same page. They were a system match. Two high profile people getting their needs met privately.

"Come here." Draco summoned her from the bed, where he sat down and leaned against the headboard. He patted the space next to him.

Aftercare was a highly valued part of her application. Hermione was ready for it. She crawled onto the bed, hesitating just slightly as she sat next to him, unsure what to do. He watched her, waiting for her to settle. Then as if to correct her, he slid his arm around her back and pulled her sideways against his body, his other hand slipped under her robe and pulling her leg over his thigh. Half of her body was draped of his.

"What are you doing?" Hermione asked wondering if he wanted to fuck her again. The idea sent a small thrill through her. She was sore, but-

"Cuddling. Ever heard of it? So far you're terrible at it." He said, as he pulled her arm across his torso. He crossed his long legs at the ankle, slipping deeper into the bed.

"Gee, thanks." Hermione grumbled.

His thumb and forefinger lifted her chin, forcing her to look at him.

Draco's thumb traced her bottom lip and her mouth parted slightly.

“Ask me,” he said quietly. It took a few moments for her to remember what he was referring to, and when she did her face flushed. His eyes dropped to her cheeks and another wave of heat flooded her face. She swallowed audibly.

“Ask me,” He said again, his eyes meeting hers, “Ask me, and I’ll kiss you.”

He hadn’t kissed her once yet, she assumed it was deliberate. Their kissing values didn’t quite match after all.

“I don’t need you to kiss me,” she whispered back.

“Yes you do,” he smirked.

Her jaw tightened, “But you don’t want to kiss me.” It was fine. She really didn’t care. His eyes dropped to her lips, as his thumb stroked the line of her jaw.

“Ask me,” he repeated. She wasn’t sure how to handle this softer side of him... Hermione let out a small frustrated breath and his eyes bore into hers with challenge. She could feel his steady heart beat under her palm and she wondered if he could feel hers because the tachycardia was back.

“Do-” she cleared her throat. She could ask a simple question. “Do you find me attractive?” It was barely above a whisper and her voice snagged on the last word. Her chest felt like it was cracking open, like she’d just spilled her darkest secrets to him in one question. His hand slipped up her face, cupping her cheek, bringing her face closer to his.

“Yes.”

And then his mouth was on hers. Soft. Chaste. Slow. One simple, somehow very sexy kiss.

He didn’t look at her afterwards and she was grateful. Instead she opted to lay her head back against his chest and Draco grabbed the remote flipping through the channels at a speed neither of them could actually decide what to watch. Until Hermione saw one she’d recognize anywhere.

“Wait,” she said, “Go back, I love that movie.”

“This?” He went back a few channels. “What’s it about?”

“Just watch it and see.” She grabbed the remote from him and rewound the movie to the beginning. Then handed it back to him.

Hermione felt a little stiff at first, but as The Princess Bride began to play, she found her whole body relaxing. Muscles she didn’t know were tight eased, her breathing slowed, and she enjoyed Draco’s body heat and the softness of her robe, the dim lights of the room, and his hand that slid up her thigh again, pulling her closer, running small lazy circles against her skin. They didn’t speak, Hermione was honestly too tired to do much else. Her body wasn’t used to this. The only sounds were their random huffs of laughter.

Every time Draco let out a short low chuckle, it vibrated in his chest against her body, making her feel even more warm. It was satisfying that he enjoyed the movie.

Around 4:30pm when the movie ended, Draco pulled away from her.

He used the bathroom and Hermione yawned as he came back into the room.

“Dinner is being delivered shortly, stay as long as you want.” He said, slipping his shoes back on. Hermione lifted onto her elbows observing him as he put his cuff links back on. “I’ll see you next Saturday at the same time.” He said, standing by the bedroom door.

Hermione let out a huff that earned her an icy look from him. “I haven’t agreed to be here again,” she said, matching his iciness.

“You will be here next Saturday.” His tone was absolute. And a real fucking turn on. He held her stare for a moment longer and turned away leaving without another word.

Hermione fell back onto the plush pillows. Yeah she would be back, but she’d still fuck with him, he deserved it after all the shit he said to her this week.

Indian food was delivered to her room. *Gods bless courting season.*

Officially Courting

Draco Malfoy walked out of the hotel lobby with a racing heartbeat and feeling overwhelmed in every way possible. He was officially courting Hermione Granger...All he had done was fuck her, so why did it feel like he just jumped off the roof a very tall building and was about splatter his guts on the asphalt?

Good. Great.

“Hermione,” Dean Thomas leaned over the counter where she was charting the last patient she saw. He was her boss and supervisor for the program. Sunday’s day shift was coming to an end and she was ready to see Leo.

“Hey, how did that jelly legs jinx go?” she grimaced. “I’ve never seen one that bad.”

“It was brutal,” he sighed. “I just stopped by to say you’ve been doing really well. If you can take more shifts, I’m happy to send in my recommendation.”

Hermione’s chest swelled with pride, “Thank you Dean. I-” she sighed, “I’ll let you know when I can do more.”

He straightened, tapping the counter. “Please do.”

“Hermione, can I grab you for a second opinion?” Padma asked in a rush.

For the first time in the five months since Ron had demanded time in their son’s life she was late for pick up. Only thirty minutes, but Ron was behaving as if she’d chopped Leo’s arm off.

“This is so irresponsible.” He snapped at her in his doorway.

“Ron, don’t yell at me in front of Leo.” Hermione stayed calm, balling her fists so they wouldn’t shake. Leo clung to Hermione’s legs. “I was at the hospital and I had to give an unexpected consul-”

“I don’t care about your fucking excuses, keep running your mouth like you didn’t just make us wait here for half an hour. We have plans, you know, plans to go see my mum!”

Crying rose in the background, two babies screaming like synchronized alarms.

“Now the twins are awake.” Ron shook his head, he took a step forward and grabbed her wrist, squeezing painfully hard and twisting her hand backwards. “This is unacceptable and I’m gonna tell my lawyers about this. I’m done playing nice.” Ron hissed, he let go roughly and slammed the door in front of her face. Hermione blinked rapidly and scooped Leo up in her arms, turning into a sprint before apperating to her apartment. Her whole body was crawling. Her breathing sawed. She couldn’t sink into the numbness. Leo was here. Leo needed dinner and- and- She could feel the ache in her stomach tightening and then flipping violently, making her sick.

“Leo baby,” Hermione’s voice shook. “I just need to go to the bathroom for a few minutes.”

He stared at her with innocent concern, “Can I watch a show?”

“Of course,” Hermione smiled, but her eyes were filling with tears. She turned, swiping at them as she turned on the T.V. It only made it worse and the tears fell faster.

As soon as she was in the bathroom she vomited until there was nothing left. Slumping against the bathtub, she pulled her knees to her chest and sobbed, feeling the twisting vice around her chest tighten to the point of pain. She gasped for breath as her stomach cramped painfully again and she heaved green bile.

Hermione leaned against the wall sucking in air. In through her nose, out through her mouth.

She could do this. It was alright. Ron was far away. Everything was alright. She was fine.

Once she could breathe, she stood slowly, then she washed her face and brushed her teeth. Then after checking on Leo again, decided to shower. She scrubbed her body clean twice, willing the sickening feeling that clung to her skin to go away.

Later that evening Hermione was feeling better, although the unease of everything still vaguely lingered inside her chest. Leo was asleep curled next to her in bed after a bad dream. She had a textbook in her hands and everything was alright. A delivery came and exhilaration blossomed, overruling the ache.

Twenty-seven roses and another official invitation to join Malfoy at the hotel. Hermione bit her lip, annoyed with her silly smile. *I'm allowed to enjoy this.* Her emotions were so guarded it felt unnatural to allow it.

Confirm your attendance immediately. The card read.

Hermione crawled back into bed and grabbed their phone.

The flowers are unnecessary. Hermione wrote.

That's an odd way of saying thank you. Draco replied.

I've checked my schedule and I will be able to attend on Saturday.

Send me your calendar.

Hermione rolled her eyes. *Absolutely not.*

It will make things a lot easier.

I'll give you the information as needed.

You're not allowed to orgasm even once before Saturday.

Hermione gasped as she read his text, which made Leo jerk in his sleep. “Sorry, honey,” she whispered, rubbing his hair.

That's unnecessary too. And quite rude.

Next time you'll listen the first time I tell you to take off your clothes.

Hermione bit her bottom lip. *Fine.* Wishing she could send an eye roll along with it.

Tomorrow is Monday...

Astute observation, Malfoy.

Are you going to be able to behave yourself?

Are you? Hermione scoffed.

Obviously. Are you?

Obviously. A prickling sensation spread up her neck and scalp as irritation burned through her. He kept continuously doubting her. She was not some simpering fool after fucking him a single time. Plus, the rules were her idea!

Good. Draco replied.

Great. Hermione wrote.

Wear green. Hair down.

She didn't reply. His doubt made her want to do the exact opposite. So she did.

Monday morning she strolled through the dining room wearing a Gryffindor t-shirt tucked into black jeans, her hair in a long braid down her back. Leo ran towards Scorpius with such excitement it made Hermione's heart swell. She didn't even glance in Draco's direction, who sat next to Scorpius with a daily prophet open and a cup of tea in his hand.

“Scorp!” Leo squealed, Scorpius jumped from the chair and the two of them crashed together in a violent hug.

“Easy now,” Hermione frowned, “There will be no concussions today.”

“What's a combustion?” Scorpius asked Draco.

“It's a brain injury,” he replied.

“Mum you'll just fix us up though.” Leo's grin made her chuckle.

“Yes, but I prefer not to.” Hermione said as she sat down. She could feel Draco's eyes on her and she happily, and easily avoided them. Narcissa came in, greeting Hermione with a wide

smile. Hermione was excellent at avoiding emotions. Too good at it sometimes. But still Draco's doubt motivated her to dig deep into her indifference.

"Scorpius has been asking non-stop all week when Leo would be back." Narcissa smiled at the boys as she sat beside Hermione. Leo piled fruit and toast on his plate, while Scorpius stared at Hermione.

"You can fix brains?" He said skeptically.

"Yes, I'm a doctor. Well, an apprentice." Hermione took a sip of her coffee, but her stomach twisted and she grimaced slightly, setting her cup back down. Her appetite wasn't fully back since dealing with Ron's outburst. Hermione opted to nibble on some toast to ease the discomfort.

"Is that how you know so many things?" Scorpius asked, "Your brain must be so big!"

Narcissa turned to Hermione, "Something wrong with your coffee dear?"

"Oh, no." Her cheeks flushed, "Just my stomach feeling a little off this morning."

"Mum threw up yesterday." Leo said, "It sounded like so gross."

Hermione closed her eyes briefly as the mortification washed over.

"Are you sick?" Draco asked. Hermione refused to look at him.

"No, I'm not sick. I promise." She said, biting more toast. Hermione really needed to teach Leo about privacy. She remained quiet, forcing herself to finish the toast. When Draco finally got up to leave for work Leo stopped him. "Wait," He turned in his chair and Draco stopped in the doorway, "Scorpius told me you catch bad guys, is that true?" He peered over the chair, his little hips wiggling.

"Only when I have to." Draco replied.

"How do you know when someone's a bad guy?" Leo asked

"They're usually very unkind and tricky."

"If I ever saw a bad guy, could I tell you where they are? Like could I be part of the operation?"

"I'll consider it." Draco replied. Hermione glanced up at him without thinking, his eyes caught hers. *One. Two. Three.* They both turned away at the same time as if they'd both been counting.

The week continued smoothly and Hermione couldn't be happier with how less awkward things went the second week. Each evening Hermione received a text from Draco.

Wear green. Hair down.

Each day Hermione ignored it. Fueled by his doubt. They didn't speak to each other more than necessary, barely a few words as he said his goodbyes. By Wednesday he hardly acknowledged her at all. It was easy to ignore him when her mind was completely preoccupied by her upcoming exam. The first one to help her make it to the second year apprenticeship. Leo struggled to say goodbye to Scorpius Wednesday afternoon and it made Hermione's happy they were getting a long, but it also made her patience thin. Her nerves about the test were becoming frayed with every moment longer she spent forcing him towards the floo room.

"I want him to play at my house!" Leo demanded, stomping his foot. Hermione picked him up as he flared his legs. "We'll have to schedule a playdate." Hermione replied, shifting him as he twisted in her arms. "Today!" He grabbed onto the side of the doorway as they walked into the floo room.

"Nope, we just spent all day here," Hermione grunted. "Plus, I have to go take my exam this evening."

Narcissa offered her an understanding smile, "They enjoy each other so much. Good luck on your exam dear."

"Then on the weekend?" Leo's bottom lip popped out trembling as he gave up, turning to a new tactic.

"No honey, you'll be with Ron and at grans house, then we're going to the zoo Sunday, remember?" Hermione finally waved goodbye to Scorpius and Narcissa as they stepped into the floo.

Leo's tantrums turned worse as she dropped him off at her mother's house to head into her exam. "He'll be fine." Her mother reassured her with a sobbing Leo in her arms. "Seriously, put it all in the back of your mind and head into your test knowing you are brilliant. You always have been." Jean squeezed her shoulder. "I believe in you honey."

"Thanks mum." Hermione felt herself wishing to be hugged again, but that's not how Jean Granger did mothering. Hermione held her head high as she entered the exam room. She couldn't tell how she did after she finished which left her anxious as hell the following day. It didn't help that Leo was still struggling too. Usually he was content to color or read or do something simple while she tutored her students. His interruptions were incessant and frustrating. Her mom had to take him out of the house, which left Hermione feeling an overwhelming amount of mom guilt.

Thursday's night shift was extra stressful as many higher ups from St. Mungo's were observing her cohort of apprentices. Including Dr. Markham, the head of the Emergency Department and a prominent researcher. Dean Thomas caught up to her as she walked down the hospital's hallways. "Hey you'll be at the hospital's fundraiser right?"

“Yes, of course.”

“I officially asked Seamus for it,” He said, with a sheepish grin.

“Oh that’s a really exciting update,” Hermione grinned as they turned a corner. At the end of the hallway Draco Malfoy stalked towards them. Hermione’s steps faltered slightly, but she kept moving, pulling her eyes away from his before he looked her way.

Dr. Thomas sighed. “Yeah, I finally put myself out there. Thanks for all the encouragement.”

“I am very proud of you, I know how long you’ve been wanting to do it.”

Draco walked passed them without looking at her. Good. Indifference was exactly what she wanted.

“Thank you it was very difficult actually.” Thomas said, as they stopped. .

“I’m rooting for you two.” Hermione peered into her patient’s room.

“Thank you.” Thomas began walking away, and then walked backwards, calling out to her, “Great job today Granger!”

Friday morning Hermione arrived at her mum’s house ready to shower and change before catching a few hours of sleep. And then the day would begin again, with meeting her muggle students. As she peeled her clothes away, she received an image of last Saturday. Draco on his knees with his head in between her legs, her heeled feet wrapped around his neck. Hermione’s face was in the throws of her orgasm, hands gripping the bedding for dear life.

He offered no context, no other messages. She didn’t reply, but the image of her spread out like a feast, in her strappy lingerie and high heels, did make her feel extremely sexy. It put a bit of pep in her step as she worked through another long night shift. Pepper up potions and caffeine helped her be alert as Ron picked up Leo Saturday morning, but it didn’t help with Leo’s emotional outburst about leaving with Ron.

“Great.” Ron rolled his eyes. “Look what you did now Hermione. He hates me. Are you happy?”

He held a screaming Leo, whose arms were reaching towards her, his face so red that his freckles disappeared into his skin. “Mum! I don’t wanna go!”

“Maybe it’s not a good idea today.” Hermione said, swallowing the ache in her throat.

“Are you trying to break our legal custody agreement?” Ron said, patting Leo’s back. “He’ll be fine. He’s always happy when he gets to my house. And we’ll be taking him to my mums to play with his other cousins.”

Hermione crossed her arms, “Fine.”

“Mumma!” Leo reached for her. “Please!”

“Just go,” Hermione said stepping back, “I love you Leo.”

When she finally crawled into bed, she cried herself to sleep.

Two-to-Three Days of Max Discomfort

Hermione woke up frantic, rushing to change into the new lingerie Draco had sent her.

On my way. She texted

When she arrived ten minutes late he was already in the room, sleeves rolled up, cufflinks on the table.

“You’re late.” He said, eyes dragging up and down her coat.

“I’m sorry.” She hoped the charm for eye puffiness would last the whole time.

He was quiet for a moment, “Any more rules you’d like to add?”

She shifted in the second new pair of shoes he’d sent, her mind raced, but came up blank. “Not at the moment.” She looked up at the ceiling, steeling her spin and swallowing away the emotions of the day. Everything would be okay. She was fine. “You?”

“Yes, but I’ll give them to you tomorrow.” His mouth tightened, as his thumb and forefinger circled each other. One hand slid into his pocket. “Take off your coat.”

Hermione still couldn’t look at him, but she obeyed quickly. She wanted the distraction and she was really fucking horny. The coat dropped to the floor, revealing Hermione in an ivy green lace teddy, garter straps attached to black stockings.

“Turn around.” Hermione did this part a bit more confidently.

“Go to the bed, face down.” Draco’s face was impassive, unimpressed. She followed his orders and her thighs squeezed together when she felt him stand behind her.

He gave her no warning when he spanked her.

It felt wonderful. His large hand hit the most cushioned part of her ass. He held it there after, rubbing away the ache in soothing circles, before smacking her again.

The third crisp slap stung and she gripped the bedding next to her hands. The fifth one made her whimper, and tears stung her eyes. She let out a strangled cry on the sixth one. The tears a welcomed outlet. He let her lay there for a few minutes, her skin hot and throbbing, her wet pussy feeling the same way. She couldn’t hear anything except her own muffled breathing into the bedding. Tip of his wand dragged against her buttocks and healed her about 75% of the way, leaving a subtle soreness as a reminder of her punishment.

“On your hands and knees, stay close to the edge of the bed.”

She moved onto her knees, core throbbing at the sound of his belt buckle coming undone. Her hips wiggled at the sound of his zipper. Draco’s left arm snaked around her waist and he thrust inside her with no warning, fucking her hard. Her legs struggled for purchase, and his

grip tightened. His other hand skated up and down the side of her body, brushing his fingers against her nipple, down her torso, around her bum, and down her thigh. She moaned loudly and rolled her hips into him.

“Good girl.” His voice was rough, turning her on more. Hermione gasped. Hot spiky pleasure erupted down her spine as his fingers slipped over her clit. “You’re so good at being used,” he hissed, thrusting harder into her. Another moaning cry left her mouth. His fingers expertly stroked and teased her, making her clit swell with a throbbing painful need. “Dirty fucking slut,” he said it angrily. Hermione relished in it. His anger, his force, his tight grip on her waist. She whimpered and gasped his name.

“That’s right, remember who the fuck is in charge. All you’re good for is being filled with my cum.” Her eyes fluttered as his thumb moved faster over her clit. Her hips rolled with him, her bare legs locked around his clothed ones. Surprisingly, him not taking his clothes off really turned her on.

I want you to come,” Hermione panted.

“Beg me.” He slowed his thumb to a painful tease.

“Please Draco, I want your cum.” His hips slowed too.

“Please. Don’t slow down.” She begged. When he still didn’t listen she begged again and again, “Please, please.” He didn’t listen. He pulled out, then pressed the tip of his cock in holding it there

“Who’s in charge of you?” He demanded

“You are,” she whimpered. “You’re in charge.”

“And you’re just my whore.” He moved just a little further inside her and her pussy fluttered.

“Yes,” She cried out as his thumb pressed down against her clit, fuck how was she so close.

“Say it,” he snapped.

“I’m a whore.” He didn’t move.

“Try again.” His disapproving tone skated down her skin as his thumb continued swiping slowly over her throbbing clit, so ready to come, but still not quite there. Her whole body was hot, every part of her hypersensitive to everything he said and did.

“I’m your whore, Draco.” Hermione moaned. His leg came up next to hers, forcing her legs wider and finally his cock slid deep inside her.

“Yeah you fucking are,” he said, “Now come loud like a good whore.” There was nothing gentle about it as he began fucking her in earnest. She started moaning.

“Louder whore. Let me know much you like being fucked so I’ll fuck you again.”

Hermione felt self conscious as she allowed herself to be louder, testing her vocal range as moaned and gasped.

“What a beautiful sound.” Draco panted. Bright bursts of light flashed behind her closed eyes. During her orgasm, he came too, making hers even better and somehow longer. Stretching it out as he rode her and she moaned through every perfect wave of pleasure.

They both were breathless when he pulled out and Hermione fell into the bed face first.

Gods. She had no words.

Draco’s voice turned gentle again, “Turn over.” She pushed herself over without much grace, her hair falling over her face. Her body was spent.

Draco fixed his pants, grabbed his wand and pushed Hermione’s knees open. Hermione didn’t recognize the spell he used between her legs.

At her expression he replied, “my cum stays inside you until the spell wears off. And when it does, you’ll make yourself come again using my cum as lube. Record it.”

Her eyes went wide and her stomach tightened. Fuck, he was so good at this shit. He offered her his hand, but surprised her when his arm swept underneath her legs. He carried her to the bathroom where the shower was ready for her.

He watched her this time. Leaning against the bathroom counter as she washed her skin and hair. She didn’t mind. Most of it she spent underneath the water with her eyes closed.

When the shower stopped he handed her a towel and when she was dry he rubbed her shoulders and legs with lotion before helping her into a robe, then scooped her up again. Within a few minutes they were back in bed, her back against his chest, sitting in between his legs.

His fingers tugged her chin up. “Have you learned your lesson?” His other hand slipped between the folds of her robe, holding onto her ribcage. She inhaled sharply as his thumb brushed the underside of her breast, making her shiver.

“Probably not, I liked that too much” she shrugged.

His lip twitched, “Prettiest little slut.” His eyes dropped to her mouth. The anticipation of his single kiss was something she’d thought about all week. It was a reward for her, not for him, for whatever reason. He stared at her as he leaned in. And they kissed again, watching each other the whole time. One, small, sweet press of the lips. Perhaps it was her imagination, but she swore he lingered just a breath longer this time. It felt like a small victory in a weird way.

They both turned away as soon as it was done. He hadn’t turned on the tv and she didn’t mind the silence. His hands began to play with each of her fingers. Tugging and rubbing gently on each one. It was soothing. She relaxed deeper into his chest, extending her legs out next to

his. Something struck her. “Can I ask you sort of a personal question?” Hermione said, softly. “Possibly,” he hummed. She imagined his eyes were closed, he sounded tired.

“Do you- do you think...” she trailed off, unsure how to actually say it. Draco’s fingers traced her middle finger, then her ring finger, then her pinky.

He waited for her, interlacing their fingers together and wrapping his arms around her. The tight embrace relaxed her. When was the last time that she’d been hugged? This was the closest to it she could remember in a very long time...

“Do you think this works so well because of... our, um, history?” Hermione frowned at the awkwardness of her words.

“Probably,” he huffed in amusement. “I’m also not overthinking it like you are.”

“The chances of us being paired feels wildly rare.” Hermione blew a breath. She was overthinking it.

“Thanking my lucky stars then.” He breathed, his warm breath tickling her neck.

She let out a contented hum and within minutes her eyes glazed over, falling fast asleep.

Hermione jerked hard as her wand’s alarm sounded from across the room. How long had it been going off? Draco’s large body was still wrapped around her, his legs locked tightly with hers. He was snoring softly and they were sort of sideways on the bed. Or at least Hermione was, Draco was like a six and a half foot weighted blanket trapping her against the mattress and fluffy pillows

The alarm chirped louder.

“Malfoy,” she pushed on him. “I have to leave.”

“Hmm...” he stirred slightly, but his eyes remained closed. Hermione huffed, pushing and pulling her way out of his arms. Scrambling out of bed, she checked the clock. *Shit. Shit.* She had to be at Ron’s in ten minutes.

“I can’t be late again.” She flung her robe off, darting across the room to her bag. Draco bolted up. A bewildered expression on his face.

“I fell asleep,” he said with borderline offense, like it had been Hermione’s fault. Sticking her entire arm inside her bag, she searched around for her clothes. Phone, other phone, ink pot, pepper up potion, Leo’s toothbrush, floss, something sticky, and finally, jeans. She pulled them out, then went back to searching for a shirt. Luckily, finding it was much faster.

Draco scrubbed his face a few times and shook his head, “What happened? Did we get drunk?”

“What?” Hermione looked at him like he was an idiot as she bounced to get her jeans on. No underwear was fine.

“I don’t know why I fell asleep.” Draco said with accusation. She didn’t have time for his attitude. She grabbed her shirt. Then groaned loudly, because she did however need a bra. Digging through her bag once more she pulled out a large dinosaur stuffed animal. She tossed it over her head, “Not today. Not today.” She reached in again. Finally finding the lacy white bra she’d packed. Her fingers were slipping on the clasps as she tried to connect it. “Merlin!” she shrieked.

Draco cleared his throat and slid off the bed, his face became a mask of coldness. He walked to the chair and sank into it, his hand rubbing his jaw, before grabbing his cufflinks.

The clasp on Hermione’s bra finally worked, one of them at least. That was fine. She only needed to have the bra to ensure Ron could not stare at her nipples. Hermione tugged her shirt over her body and didn’t bother searching her bag for her shoes. “Bye.” She slid her bag on her shoulder, waved awkwardly towards Draco’s general direction and apparated away.

Hermione was one minute early and thanked *her* lucky stars as she knocked on Ron’s door. Leo opened the door and Hermione crouched, catching him with a tight embrace.

“My little lion!” Hermione’s eyes watered, breathing in his scent. He pulled away, swinging around her neck, “I got to chase gnomes! They’re all over the burrow and they’re fast, but I roared like a lion and was fastest like a tiger. And I flapped my wings like a dragon!”

“Did you have fun?” Hermione brushed her hands over his small face. Grateful to see his smile.

“Yeah I did,” he grinned, “Oh and I have another wiggly tooth! If I push really hard, it bleeds!” Hermione huffed a laugh and hugged him again. Relief flooding her that he was happy again.

Ron stood in the doorway, his arms crossed. “See you next weekend buddy.” Then he looked down at Hermione’s bare feet. “Seriously?” His eyes were full of judgment.

“I’m trying a new thing,” Hermione said, standing up holding Leo’s hand. “It’s called grounding. It helps, uh, reduce stress.”

“Riiight,” Ron frowned, then mumbled something incoherent.

“Bye, Ron.” She turned, but Ron’s arm darted out, gripping painfully around her forearm. He tugged her so close she could smell his sour breath and her stomach churned violently.

Hermione gritted her teeth, “Take your hand off of me.” Hermione left go Leo’s hand in case she needed to grab her wand.

"If you're telling our son lies about me, you'll pay for it." Ron shoved her arm away with more force than Hermione was prepared for. She stumbled backwards, slipping on the front step.

Her ankle twisted with an ear cringing pop. Deep pain erupted through her foot and tears immediately erupted in her eyes.

"Stop being so damn clumsy." Ron's front door slammed shut.

Hermione breathed through the pain, hobbling slightly.

"Mumma lion?" Leo's face was full of sadness and confusion.

"I'm fine." Hermione said as tears streamed her face. "I'm just going to call grandma." Hermione transfigured a pencil from her purse into a crutch, and then transfigured the floss into a sturdy wrap for her ankle. Hermione's mother pulled up in her car ten minutes later. Ron's curtain's fluttered closed as they drove away, Lavender's wide eyes catching Hermione's from the car window.

"Is it broken?" Jean frowned at the scan Hermione performed on her ankle. It was propped up on the couch, swollen and bruised.

"No, just a bad sprain." Hermione said, relief flooding through her like cold water.

"And you're sure you don't want to go to the hospital? Perhaps an x-ray is necessary?" Jean wrung her hands together.

"I'm fine." Hermione said. She was fine.

"Sweetie," Her mother's gentleness made her shut her eyes. "You should report him." She said in a hushed way, glancing at Leo who sat at the dining table, slurping noodles into his mouth.

"There's nothing to report. I slipped." The words burned like ash on her tongue.

"I know that's not the truth. I know it and your little boy over there saw it too." Jean's expression turned protective, "There is nothing wrong with filing a report."

Hermione huffed, "No one will believe me." Then she inhaled a cleansing breath, "I'm really fine. I can heal most of it and the rest will just take time."

Jean didn't look convinced.

"Two-to-three days max of discomfort," Hermione smiled, "Thank you for your help mum, you're the best."

Breaking The Rules

Hermione received flowers the following Sunday morning, with another invitation, and directions to text him immediately. It was her day off thank goodness. She wouldn't have to explain anything to her coworkers.

Thank you for the flowers. Hermione opted for gratitude this time.

Are you having fun at the Zoo? Hermione did not know how he knew where they were supposed to be, but didn't have the energy to ask.

We had to reschedule. I twisted my ankle and opted to save it for another weekend.

How did you hurt yourself?

Slipped on a step picking up Leo

So clumsy...

Hermione didn't reply. She didn't know what to say. Uneasy with the topic in general, she only opted for honesty about her injury because she'd be wrapping her ankle up for the next few days to ensure proper healing. Now at least she could avoid any questions it at the manor.

Jean insisted she stay with Hermione Saturday night and took Leo to the park this morning. Hermione was grateful for the rest as she caught up on the next exam's reading.

Half an hour passed when she received another text.

New rule. You're going to cancel your other tutoring students. Today. Or I'll do it for you.

Hermione chewed on lip. It was an out and she really wanted it. But having that income gave her a sense of safety. If things didn't work out, three months allowance wasn't going to be enough. She could sell all her name brand clothing Draco gave her, which would be a nice chunk of money. Gods she hated stressing about this. Hermione considered moving in with her mother again...

Okay.

Okay? I was expecting a fight...

Well I guess it's your lucky day.

Oh this isn't a personal request. Scorpius told me he wants you all to himself. He demanded to be your only student. Very selfish that boy.

Hermione chuckled softly, stretching and wiggling her tender toes.

Scorpius said that?

More or less.

Very well. For Scorpius then.

I want a video of you Monday morning.

Send me some new material to work with...

That's not how this works...

Please?

Only because you're so pretty.

Hermione pursed her lips clutching her phone to her chest for a moment. The swooshing through her stomach was so silly. A single compliment from him and she was blushing like a fool. When her phone buzzed again she received a video of him from the shower, a full body view this time. *Gods...he was so hot.*

You're very pretty too. She wrote back.

Tuesday Hermione turned quickly and tripped over a stuffed animal falling softly against the couch with a small laugh. The boys tackled her, grabbed the star shaped plushie and ran across the room screaming, “victory!”

Hermione could hardly catch her breath from laughing so hard, but it died down when she found Draco leaning against the door frame. He was in muggle clothes, dark jeans and a black Henley. She could hardly catch her breath for a different reason now.

Hermione cleared her throat. The boys marched over, beginning to sing, “Time for lunch! Time for lunch!”

“That’s why you hurt your ankle, Granger, when are you going to stop being so clumsy?”

It happened so fast Hermione screamed. One minute Leo was standing there smiling, the next he grabbed a wooden block and drilled Draco in the head with it.

Draco grunted as blood dripped down his forehead. “Ouch.”

“Oh my gods!” Hermione bolted off the couch.

Scorpius was faster though, "Don't hurt my dad!" He yelled in his face and shoved Leo hard into the floor.

"Scorpius." Draco hissed, pulling him away.

"Well he shouldn't say mean things to my mom!" Leo cried back, grabbing his arms and pinching hard. Both boys wailed in tandem, one boy's gasping silence was filled with the other's howling cry. Hermione picked Leo off the ground and cradled him to her chest, lifting his face checking for any sign of injury. He was fine, but Draco wasn't. The corner of the block nicked him pretty good. She moved towards him, adjusting Leo on her hips.

Hermione grabbed Draco's chin, turning him to examine his cut. "It should only need a few stitches." Draco had stilled, Scorpius was laying against his chest, whimpering.

"I'm fine, Granger," he said it softly, but his discomfort shocked her back to reality. Her hand had slid against his cheek, her thumb slightly rubbing against his face.

"Oh," Hermione jerked away, a flood of embarrassment twisted through her. She rubbed her hand against her pants. "Sorry." Draco glanced away from her awkwardly, clearing his throat.

Leo would hardly look at Draco and Hermione felt so mortified she'd touched Draco like that in front of the kids she needed space. "Perhaps we'll just have lunch separately for today."

"Good idea." Draco nodded and left.

Hermione sank back on the couch rubbing Leo's back. Food appeared in the room within a handful of minutes. Leo darted over to find a note from Scorpius and Draco. "Draco said he plans to learn to catch things better and Leo's sorry for pushing you." Hermione read aloud, the whole thing made her want to cry. Her haughtiness about the rules came crashing down. She didn't know why she'd done that. Leo wouldn't talk about what happened. Only crying when Hermione asked him to apologize to Draco. Hermione met Scorpius just as Draco and him were finishing lunch but Leo refused to look at Draco.

"I'm really sorry." Hermione said, apologizing for both accidents, also noticing Draco's cut had been sutured well.

"It's alright," he said, nodding briefly before leaving, but he didn't look at her.

Draco grabbed his jacket. It did not feel okay. *Fuck she screwed up.* She really needed him to know it wasn't intentional.

The boys were fine within minutes again and they seemed content to forget all about the incident. The only silver lining of the day.

Friday morning Hermione crawled into her own bed to sleep after her night shift. Not having tutoring students helped her immensely and Hermione felt the need to thank Draco. Part of her didn't want to give him the satisfaction but she also felt like she owed him something for breaking their rules.

I just got home from work and I am grateful for the extra sleep. Thank you.

Ten minutes passed when she realized with utter horror that she'd just broken another fucking rule. She wasn't supposed to be initiating conversations unless he initiated it. *Fucking hell.* Hermione slapped her face with both her hands. Anxiety flailed through her like a like a balloon losing air.

The extra sleep might be breaking my brain this week. Apologies for texting you and breaking yet, another rule.

It's fine.

Hermione didn't respond.

When Saturday arrived, Ron picked up Leo with a large lolly in his hand.

"Hermione," Ron nodded politely.

"Good morning," she yawned, opening the door wider than she meant to.

Ron looked around her house with a judgemental frown, "Maybe you should use your weekends to clean up around here." His eyes glanced at the small dining room holding multiple stacks of random things, the cups on the counter next to her sink, the laundry basket on the floor in the kitchen.

"That's the plan," Hermione smiled in agreement. *Just keep the peace.*

"Ready to go Leo?" Ron handed him the candy.

"Yeah," Leo shrugged. He gave Hermione a long squeeze and when they left Hermione cried for no reason at all.

That afternoon she arrived inside the penthouse's bedroom at 1:45pm, to her surprise Draco was already there. They stared at one another. Hermione counted to fifteen before Draco spoke.

"Take off your coat."

Hermione did, managing to keep most of her eye contact with him in the process. "Good girl." He hummed as the last button came undone. Today's ensemble was a silky short black nightgown, without any underwear on. Something she might wear overnight to impress someone. Hermione desperately wanted to impress Draco.

"Face down on the bed."

Hermione was anticipating being spanked again for breaking the rules.

His hands ghosted the hem of her dress, lifting high up her back. When Draco's warm mouth met her cunt she yelped, pulling away from him. His hands splayed on her hips, pushing her down on the mattress with rough force, "Stay still." He said, immediately annoyed with her.

Hermione could hardly stay still. Not with him kissing her ass, her thighs, the backs of her knees. Her calf muscles, her ankles. Draco slipped off her heels, as he pressed soft kisses to the arch of feet. She couldn't breathe and also felt a certain thrill at the new things she was learning that turned her on. Draco licked up her legs back to her wet core, sucking her deeply. He spit on her asshole, rubbing it with his thumb as he licked her pussy.

"You'll come twice like this." He said it into her thigh, kissing her with wet lips, then sucked so hard on her inner thigh it was painful. She shrieked loudly, but he didn't care. He kept doing it. Sucking so hard she'd yelp in pain. Hermione was so caught off guard by the whole experience she was in a frenzy. Hermione rocked her hips against his mouth. The soft silk of her nightgown teased her hard nipples, Draco's thorough ministrations between her legs made her body flood with pleasure, and as his thumb pressed deeper into her ass, two of his fingers slid inside her pussy, stroking at just the right place. Something felt like it snapped inside her. Hermione's back arched, as a sharp wetness released from inside her. Draco moaned loudly against her, sucking deeper, lapping up her squirting climax. He didn't stop. He kept kissing her ass, licking her legs, and sucking her clit until she was whimpering and moaning through another ridiculous orgasm that had her lifting onto her toes.

Draco's hard cock pressed immediately inside her as her previous orgasm still throbbed through her. "Ahhh," Hermione gasped. His body folded over hers, intertwining their hands and pressing into the bed. The cold signet ring he sometimes wore pressed into her hand, his fingers were still wet with her slickness. It made her moan.

His face was buried into her hair next to her ear, "Tell me who owns you?" His hot breath caused a rush of zinging sensations through her body. Like several bouncing balls were flinging up and down her body, bringing with it a tight burst of pleasure.

"You." Hermione panted, turning towards his face.

The pleasure only building further as he rolled his deliciously hips against her. He groaned, pulling one hand free from hers. Sliding it down her body, he pressed underneath her belly. "All you're good for is breeding." He hissed angrily, "You're just a filthy whore, my own personal slut to fill up and use and fuck." Hermione whimpered. Their faces were separated by a sheer curtain of her hair, they shared breath as he continued to speak to her. Rough and angry and perfect. His hand rubbed her belly. "That's what you want, you just want to be bred, fucked until you're so full of my cum you can't walk." The signet ring pressed into her

clit and it began vibrating. Loudly, sucking in a breath by the shock of pleasure it forced through her, making her legs shake, she spread them wider.

"You can't stop me from filling your pussy with my cum." He purred into her ear, smug and arrogant. "Because I won't stop even if you asked." Hermione could hardly breathe as he rubbed the ring over her clit. His hips slowed slightly and he pressed her harder into the bed. His mouth pressed closely to her ear, lips dragging against her skin, he said slowly, "I love coming inside you. I fucking love it." Hermione came so hard she screamed. Her body pulled taut and loose all at the same time. Draco came with her, repeating the phrase three more times. "I love coming inside you. I fucking love it." The dominance in his voice made it all that much better. Like he really did own her and he loved being the owner.

He laid against her for several long minutes after they came. His hands released his grip on hers. And for a moment she thought her might kiss her.

When he pushed off the bed Hermione turned herself over just in time to watch Draco suck his ringed finger clean. He had halfway turned around, like he was doing it just for himself. Her heart skipped several beats, making her feel faint.

Draco watched her shower again, but didn't carry her. She laid back against his chest, drowsy and ready for a nap. They didn't say anything, just moved through the routine of the aftercare they'd done previously. One of his hands slid up her robe against her thighs, gliding slowly up and down in rhythm with her breathing. The other hand sliding against her middle finger, then her ring finger. It was so soothing and grounding. She was asleep within minutes.

When she woke to her wand alarm he was gone and it wasn't until that evening when she kissed Leo before tucking him into bed that she realized Draco hadn't kissed her.

He'd punished her after all. And it stung.

Hermione Granger Loved Being a Woman

Sunday morning another invitation and flowers arrived. There were no instructions to text him. Monday morning he wasn't at breakfast and she didn't inquire why.

Tuesday morning Draco was at breakfast drinking tea when they arrived. The boys greeted each other so loudly Hermione flinched. Draco didn't look up from the Daily Prophet. That was good. She'd broken a rule, he'd punished her. Everything was back to normal.

"What did you eat for dinner last night?" Scorpius turned to Leo as he licked the top of a muffin, "Dad was on a date so I told Pilly to give me candy for dinner and she did!" He laughed with his head thrown back.

Draco dropped The Daily Prophet and she was almost certain his eyes were on her face. Hermione's pulse had ticked ever so slightly, but she was proud of herself there wasn't even a single twitch on her face. Nothing was going to bother her.

"She also fed you other things, didn't she?" Narcissa frowned.

"Yeah, some mac and cheese!" Scorpius sang.

"I had mac and cheese too!" Leo gasped, "We are twins!"

"I love cheese. Love it the biggest in the world!" Scorpius's arms stretched wide. Hermione began flipping through her flashcards, reciting acronyms for disaster protocols.

"Not as much as my mom, she eats cheese for dinner all. The. Time." Leo said with big eyes.

"Cheese isn't dinner." Draco said.

"Sure it is." She flipped a card. "Brie and apples are my favorite dinner. Favorite lunch too."

"You could make a weak argument for that to be a snack." Draco drawled. He was baiting her into an argument, but she didn't want to bite. Okay maybe she was a little bitter that he hadn't kissed her. So what.

"Tomato, tomato." She replied, biting her lip. "Merlin." She hissed. Annoyed with herself she snatched the card out of the air and flipped it over. Damn, it was really wrong.

"Hermione, dear, what are your plans for Halloween?" Narcissa asked, "Scorpius was wondering if the boys would be able to trick-or-treat together."

Hermione paused, "Uh, we'll be with my mum. Doing it the muggle way through her neighborhood."

"Can we join you, then?" Narcissa asked plainly.

“Uh-”

“That sounds like fun for the kids.” Draco said, still staring at her.

“Sure. Yeah, let’s do it.” Hermione nodded, placing her cards back into the air. No reason not to let two kids trick-or-treat together.

“What’s gonna be your costume?” Leo asked, “Mom’s going to be Princess Buttercup and I’m gonna be the Dreaded Pirate Roberto!”

“The Dread Pirate Roberts.” Draco corrected and Hermione’s cheeks went hot as the card flipped in front of her.

“Yeah that.” Leo said, then his eyes went wide, “Wait, you and me should be R.O.U.Sesesss”

“Yes!” Scorpius cheered. “Yes! I want to be that.” He pointed at Leo while looking at Draco.

Draco set down his paper again with a warm chuckle, “Do you even know what that is?”

“No, but it sounds cool.” Scorpius lifted up his hands. Hermione frowned at Leo and pulled the cards down. “You’re ditching me just like that?”

He shrugged carelessly, “You could be the six-fingered-man. Oh be the giant! Be the giant!”

“What are they talking about?” Narcissa’s brows furrowed, “Usually I can piece it together, the muggle things I don’t know, but I am very lost.” She shook her head.

Hermione’s face softened. “Next time I’ll make sure to give more context, I hated when that happened to my first year of Hogwarts. It’s a muggle movie.” Hermione explained. “Scorpius you should watch it before committing to the costume.”

“Can we watch it today!” He shouted. “It should be a movie day at school!”

“I’ll join you for a movie day.” Narcissa said happily.

“Alright, movie day it is.” Hermione nodded, then glanced at Draco. His eyes already on her.

One. Two. Three. They both turned away.

“Oh and mum, can you tell them about dentistry today?” Leo asked, eating a green apple slice.

“Excellent idea.” Hermione nodded. “Leo has a dentist appointment tomorrow. My mum is taking him, so it’ll just be me and you Scorp.”

“Yes! Yes! Yes!” Scorpius fist pumped into the air. Hermione chuckled at the boy’s enthusiasm.

Narcissa pulled her aside after breakfast, "Would you like to take Scorpius out tomorrow? It would quite nice for you two to have some alone time." It was a question, but it also wasn't a question. Hermione smiled, "Sure. Any suggestions?"

"The Science museum is wonderful and I believe they have some new exhibits for children at their planetarium. Weekdays should be empty." Narcissa grinned.

"Alright." Hermione loved museums. It would be fun to go and do something.

Wednesday morning felt odd not coming with Leo. Everyone was seated at breakfast when she arrived.

"Are we leaving for the planetarium yet?" Scorpius greeted her before she sat down.

"Not yet." Draco replied for her. That's when she noticed he was wearing muggle clothes. Jeans and a jumper.

"This is the best day ever!" Scorpius's voice went deep and his hands went wide.

Hermione replayed Narcissa's words. *It would be quite nice for you two to have some alone time.*

There was no way that meant-

"Well, I have things to do, enjoy your field trip." Narcissa fled the room. Hermione blinked at the fruit on her plate.

Draco cleared his throat. "Museum opens at 9."

"That's what the website said." Hermione replied, slowly eating. She'd make him say it.

"What's the first thing you wanna do?" Scorpius asked.

"The planetary simulation." Hermione grinned at Scorpius just as Draco replied, "The space mission simulation."

Hermione tilted her head towards him, "Since when were you invited."

"Since my mother said field trips required a parent volunteer." He held her glare, biting into a crunchy apple aggressively.

"Well I didn't get your permission slip. So you can't go." Hermione gave him a way out.

He arched a brow. "Have you met my mother?"

"Dad are you dumb?" Scorpius asked, then looked at Hermione, "You might need to teach him some stuff about using his eyes."

Hermione placed her hand over her face but it didn't stop her laugh. Draco laughed too, which broke some of weird tension between them.

An hour and a half later, weird tension back in full effect, they weaved through the very crowded museum. Scorpius trying to hold both their hands. Hermione just tried to avoid looking at Draco, which turned out to be impossible with Scorpius constantly asking, "What's that?" Draco and Hermione both jumped to answer to avoid the awkwardness heavy between them. Why was this so damn awkward. A month into this role and it shouldn't feel so weird. "I'm the teacher." She hissed at him.

"Yeah, well teachers don't know everything." He hissed back as they shuffled towards a room for a short video on the solar system. The museum was a maze, designed to lead groups through different exhibits based on the history of space exploration and scientific discovery. Both exhibitions they wanted to see weren't until the end.

"Will you hold me?" Scorpius asked.

"Of course." Draco and Hermione said at the same time. They stared each other like it was obvious who he was speaking to. "I meant her." Scorpius grinned and Hermione grinned at Draco. She picked him up as they shuffled into small theater to watch an introduction video. An employee ushered them into a row. "Please scoot all the way to the end!"

Scorpius sat in between them grabbing their hands and smashing them together like dolls kissing. Hermione and Draco ignored it. "Please squeeze tight, we've got a large crowd today." Someone shoved into Hermione's shoulder, jolting her into Scorpius. "Sorry." An older woman said.

"Come here Scorp." Draco pulled him on his lap and Hermione shuffled next to him.

"Ma'am can you scoot down?" The older woman said.

Hermione's cheeks burned as her thigh pressed next to Draco's. It was fine. Nothing wrong with sitting on a bench together. As soon as the film ended Hermione shot up from the seat.

It seemed like Narcissa Malfoy charmed the museum to ensure Hermione and Draco were constantly touching. They bumped into each other so often from the crowds and Scorpius. And neither of them were happy about it.

"Can you stop." Hermione huffed as his elbow bumped into her again. "You really have pointy elbows."

"Maybe you shouldn't be in my way."

"Do you see another place I should go?" Hermione gestured to the long key they were standing in for some kind of ferries wheel ride. "If you would have just stayed home, none of this would have been an issue." Hermione sighed.

"Sorry I like being with my child Granger." He snapped.

They didn't look at each other for half an hour.

The only short line was for a cloud exhibit where there were small faux grassy hills inside a wide room. Different types of clouds displayed above them. It was quiet and the difference between the crowded hallways and this room made Hermione's whole body relax. A few small groups of visitors were scattered, laying on the grass and pointing above them watching the clouds change shape. A gentle narrator explaining the formations.

"I like this room." Draco and Hermione said at the same time. Hermione looked at him with offense.

"Miss Grandma Teacher, are you reading my dad's mind?" Scorpius looked at her with awe.

"Yes, because I am much smarter than he is." Hermione nodded.

Draco scoffed, moving to find a patch of grass to lay on. Scorpius and Hermione did the same. They watched the cloud swirl and twist. "That one looks like a hippogriff." Hermione chuckled.

"It's obviously a unicorn." Draco replied.

"You both are wrong. It's a stratocumulus." Scorpius frowned.

"Well aren't you so smart." Draco chuckled.

"My teacher is really good at teaching me things." Scorpius scooted closer to Hermione, turning on his side. She faced him. "Thanks Scorpius I really appreciate it when my talents are noticed."

"Do you have a dad?" He replied.

Hermione opened her mouth and then closed it. A small ache in the back of her throat. "Yes, I do. Well I did. He died." Hermione replied softly.

"How did he die?" Scorpius's face was so sincere Hermione smiled back at him.

"Scorp." Draco sighed.

"No, it's fine." Hermione glanced up at Draco. "I don't mind talking about it."

"What was he like?" Scorpius asked.

"He was a really fun person." Hermione cleared her throat, "He loved board games and I'm probably so competitive because of him. He taught me a lot about strategy."

"Was he good at wizard's chess?" Scorpius's eyes grew big. "I'm not. But I want to be the best in the world."

"We should definitely play then. My father was not a wizard and my mother is not a witch. I'm a muggle born witch, which means magic was brand new to my family." Hemrione

replied. The pride that swelled inside her caught her off guard. “My father liked muggle games more than wizard’s chess. Although he did think it was pretty cool.”

“What else did he like?” Scorpius asked.

“He liked cars. He took me to a lot of car shows to see old cars.”

“Hmm. That sounds boring.” Scorpius said.

Draco and Hermione chuckled. “Yeah, sometimes it was boring, but he usually bought me a treat during it so I was preoccupied by sugar.”

“Did Leo go with you?” Scorpius’ curiosity was so adorable Hemione had to hold back the urge to squeeze his little face like she would have done to Leo.

“My father died before Leo was born.” Hermione didn’t add that she found out she was pregnant the day he died.

“Why couldn’t you just fix him up?” It was such an innocent question and it made her eyes water. She blinked rapidly.

“I wasn’t a healer yet. I used to work with my parents at their dentist office and on a rainy morning we were driving to work and we got hit by a car. The man driving shouldn’t have been driving and my dad died from the accident. That is what inspired me to go to finally go to healer’s school.” The cold ache in her chest warred with the warmth of remembering how much her father believed in her. How much he cared for her after the war.

“I’m really sorry.” Scorpius said sadly. “Do you have a mum?”

“Yeah, I do. She was the strict one growing up. She’s why I’m so smart.”

“Can she read minds too?” Scorpius giggled.

“Probably honestly.” Hermione smiled.

“I don’t know what it’s like to have a real mum. I only see her sometimes” He shrugged. Hermione glanced at Draco who was clearly caught off guard by Scorpius commentary.

“Families come in all different combinations.” Hermione offered because Malfoy was frozen.

“Yeah that’s true. Leo says he didn’t even know he had a dad for his whole life.” Scorpius laughed. “I like having a dad.” Draco blinked, inhaling slowly.

“You have a great dad.” Hermione replied sitting up. “Shall we go find some more fun?”

“Yeah!” Scorpius leapt up.

They moved through two more exhibits with much less touching and Hermione was grateful that some of their awkwardness lessened. A different type of tension wrapped around Hermione when they reached the space mission simulation. Groups were packed into tiny rocket ships and closed inside. Hermione gulped as she stepped inside, turning her back to Malfoy. This was too much of a reminder of their cuddling position. They were standing, but still. Scorpius stood in front of her as the door shut. An overwhelming sense of claustrophobia washed over her.

“I do not like small spaces. Nor do I ever wish to go to space.” She mumbled. The lights dimmed. There were two round windows in front of them and square windows beside them which were actually tv monitors that became reenactments of a space launch. Hermione grabbed onto a handle next to her.

“This is so so cool!” Scorpius jumped up and down as he peered through the window of a fake crowd, cheering for their launch into space.

“Five-four-three-two-one-BLAST OFF!” Scorpius cheered with the announcer. The rocket shook and the motion of moving up and down was a little too realistic for Hermione’s sake. “Oh gods, sweet baby Merlin.”

“It’s not real.” Draco hummed into her ear.

Hermione shifted on her feet in front of him. “It feels pretty real to my nervous system.” She bumped into his chest. “Sorry.” She clenched her eyes shut as the rocket moved higher and higher. The windows displaying the rocket’s height as the speck of people and buildings grew smaller.

“Oh gods.” Hermione breathed.

“Mission is a go.” The announcer said, the rocket shook, moving side to side as they entered new parts of the atmosphere. Hermione fell backwards against Draco’s chest. His hand landed on her hip. “You’re okay, Granger. You’re perfectly safe.”

“I know that. I’m allowed me scared.” Hermione hissed. The rocket tilted backwards. Scorpius held onto the handle in front of him, “Weeeeeee!” He grinned.

Hermione didn’t care that she was leaning against Draco. Honestly feeling his heart beat against her back grounded her. She shifted again, feeling a swooshing in her stomach as the rocket began turning slightly. “How long does this last?” She gritted her teeth.

“Stop moving so much.” Draco’s hand tightened on her hip.

“I can’t help it. “ Hermione inhaled sharply, shifting again. It would all be over soon. Hopefully.

“Well one of us, quite literally can’t control what’s happening when your ass keeps rubbing against him.” Hermione stilled, slowly realizing he was hard. “And every time you wiggle, one of us can’t stop thinking about you naked, which is really not helping the situation.”

Hermione's cheeks were so hot they tingled. "Sorry. I'll move away."

"No, you are my shield." His arm snaked around her waist. "Just stay put and we'll both be fine." His mouth was by her ear and now her blood was feeling hot and tingling too.

"You are breaking so many rules." Hermione hissed.

"He's not paying attention." Draco huffed. Like the rules meant nothing. He punished her for touching him and here he was with a fucking hard on.

Scorpius turned around then, "Dad do you see all these stars?" Draco didn't move.

"Scorp, can you find your constellation?" Draco hummed near her ear. Hermione involuntarily shifted.

"Granger." He growled

"Sorry now one of us is also picturing inappropriate things." Hermione's voice went high.

"Like what?" He whispered, his thumb brushed against her hip.

"Absolutely not going to share." Hermione sighed, relaxing fully against his chest. "But it's really nice to imagine." She closed her eyes with a smile. "I love being a woman. No evidence to follow me around."

"Stop picturing me naked Granger, it's highly inappropriate." Draco whispered.

"Who said I was picturing you?" Hermione hummed.

"You are so rude." Draco said. "Seriously naughty."

Hermione squeaked. "Maybe I'll need detention."

He choked slightly, "I thought you were the teacher."

"I thought you were in charge." She replied. The rocket shook as they landed on a mysterious new planet.

A few minutes later they exited the rocket and Malfoy looked very uncomfortable. Hermione skipped with Scorpius all anxiety forgotten. For some reason she felt like she was winning the game then.

They ate lunch at the museum and Hermione forgot to glare at Draco when he bumped into her again. Instead she bumped into him back. And for the rest of the afternoon they just... hung out and had fun. It was weird and that is was not weird at all.

So Pretty

Their fourth Saturday arrived and Hermione found herself ready to be fucked sideways again. Draco sent her a black bra, a white button up blouse, a plaid skirt, knee high white socks, and brand new Louboutins. And when the coat came off, it was the first time Hermione saw a visible reaction from him.

About damn time. From across the room, she could see his chest lift with an intake of breath. His hands balled into fists and he lifted his head higher. His thumb and forefinger running together as he swallowed.

A button on her blouse popped open. Hermione shifted on her feet. “Sorry, I don’t know what’s happening.” Another popped open her bra peeking through. “Someone must have charmed all the buttons to pop off.”

She did.

Draco’s eyes heated as another popped open. “I wanted to speak to you about ways you can improve your grades, Miss Granger.” Draco took a step forward as another flew off.

“I’d be willing to do anything. I don’t even understand how I could have gotten such a low score.” She hugged her shirt closed as all the buttons fell to the floor. “I’m so sorry. This is so inappropriate for a meeting like this.” They did not plan a script, but as soon as Hermione saw the box of clothes he sent, she was so fucking grateful for that field trip. What beautiful inspiration for the bedroom. She didn’t care if he planned to stay silent and broody, she was willing to test out the role play a little further.

Draco played along so well. “I normally don’t offer extra credit, but I’m willing to make an exception.” Her thighs squeezed together as he stood in front of her, his eyes dropping down to her breasts. Draco pushed his sleeves high on his forearms, loosening his green striped tie.

“What kind of extra credit did you have in mind?” Hermione asked breathlessly as she took a step towards him.

His fingers dragged across the top of her breast and pushed off her shirt, then dropped down to a single knee, resting her foot on it. He lifted her skirt, “No panties, either miss Granger?” he tisked as he slipped off her shoes. When he stood up, he sighed, “There’s only one kind of extra credit you’re appropriately dressed for.” He lifted her chin. “Hands on the headboard.”

With her hands on the headboard, Malfoy wrapped his green striped tie around her neck, before unclasping her bra. It felt so deliciously naughty. Sucking hard on her throat, Draco slid h inside her, his hands gripping her thighs under the pleated skirt. She panted, bouncing slightly on his cock. He moved his slowly up to her breasts, massaging and teasing her nipples while his mouth dragged against the curve of her neck. He slowed, then went completely still. Hermione’s cunt squeezed hard against his cock.

“Again.” He breathed into her neck. She squeezed. “Again.” And for several minutes that’s all he asked for. Her cunt clenching around in his cock, while he held her breasts tightly, breathing the words into her neck.

When he tugged on the tie, it grew tighter around throat, pulling her head backwards against his chest. Draco’s hands rubbed all over her chest and down her waist. “How much will by grades increase now?” She breathed.

“I won’t know until later.” He kissed her neck softly. “You’re going to have to really patient with me while I consider it.” He began teasing her clit, with gentle fingertips.

“I can do that.” Hermione nodded making their cheeks rub together.

“You don’t have a choice either way. If you aren’t patient I’ll fail you.” He stroked her just long enough to make her believe she was going to come before he pulled away to run his hands back up her body.

“Are you blackmailing me?” Hermione rolled her hips as he slowly thrusted inside, pulling out and pressing in again. Teasing her, drawing out every building wave of pleasure.

“I’m giving you the option to either do very well in my class or fail it.” He kissed the other side of her neck, then sucked painfully hard, while he rolled his hips again slowly.

“I’ve never failed a class before.” Hermione gripped her hands harder against the headboard as he covered the sensitive marks in soft, featherlight kisses. It made her shudder with sparks of pleasure.

“I don’t think you should start now.”

“But what we’re doing it’s...it’s so wrong. It’s so inappropriate. What will everyone think of us?” Hermione panted as his finger circled her clit again. It was so sensitive and swollen.

“No one will know if you can keep your pretty mouth shut.” He licked her skin. “Can you do that? Can you be my dirty little secret?”

“Yes,” Hermione moaned as two of his fingers stroked her more urgently. “No.” She whined immediately as he pulled away just as she began to feel something start to happen.

“Well which is it, huh?” Draco’s teasing sweet voice was making her melt. His sweet side was something dangerous. Her hands fell off the head board limply. One of his hands gripped the headboard, the other on her waist, his hips rolling slowly again. “You truly might fail the whole class. You’ll have to come to my office often for extra credit.”

“Okay.” Hermione panted he slid in and out of her. “Yes.”

“Yes, what?” Draco purred kissing her shoulder. “You’ll need to be very specific.” He began sucking softly against her throat, her hands shot up, clinging to his neck. “I’ll be your dirty little secret. For as long as necessary.”

“Hhmmm.” His voice vibrated against her neck. “And?”

“And?” Hermione sounded annoyed. “And what?”

“Are you willing to do what’s necessary to earn your grade?” He kissed the column of her throat, his hand moving up to her breast, squeezing painfully hard. “You’ll have to put in a lot of work.”

“Yes, yes, anything.” She chanted as his hips rolled again, she moved with him, arching her back, gripping his hair. They moved together for several minutes and it felt so good. Hermione wanted to scream when he slowed down again. “I watch you in class.” He spoke against the hinge of her jaw as his fingers danced against her nipple. Hermione’s chest heaved. “You do?”

“I can’t help it.” His nose grazed her ear. “Your ass is quite distracting.”

“Sorry. I can wear less distracting clothing from now on.” Hermione replied, leaning into him, but he slid out, and she released a frustrated huff.

“See this is why you have to learn patience.”

She thought she might come just from the roughness to his voice, he sounded desperate too. He was edging both of them and it was so hot. “I’ll be patient and wear appropriate clothes to class.” They’d stopped moving, their chests heaving together, her knees pressed wide against the headboard. So many feelings moved through her at once, but mostly she really liked exploring her body together. She was having so much fun with him.

“I would actually prefer more inappropriate clothing if anything. That might move your grade up. I prefer skirts.” His other hand slid up her thigh, gently scraping his nails against her skin.

“Do you have any other feedback?” Hermione sucked in a sharp breath. “I- uh, it’s hard to know how, um satisfied you’ve been with my performance...in class.” She was breathless as she asked. His lips brushed her ear as he spoke, sending sparks of heat down her neck, making her skin tingle all the way up her finger tips.

Her hands had stopped gripping so tightly into his hair, now they were just absentmindedly running against the nape of his neck, as they held each other.

“Well you should have requested a performance review.” He breathed harshly as she stroked his neck with her palms, wanting to explore the bits and pieces she could of him. She touched him so rarely without being told to, it felt indecent. Which added to the naughtiness of the whole situation, like she was breaking some rule he had never spoken aloud.

“Can I have one now, since we’re talking about my grades and such. Feedback is highly important to me.”

Draco’s hands moved higher up her thighs, “You’re a very good girl.” He hummed. “You work so hard.” He kissed her underneath her ear. “I see how dedicated you are to studying.” His fingers stroked her clit softly, his cock twitched against her ass, making his trousers escape against her skin. “I admire how passionate you are.” Her hands ran through his hair, her

breathing beginning to shorten again as his fingers picked up speed. “I’m very, very pleased with you.”

Hermione moaned as he dipped his fingers inside her just enough to make that pulsing heat begin to rush through her, practically right where they left off.

“Then why am I failing? I don’t like to fail.”

“I may have lied to lure into my office.” He kissed the hinge of her jaw, licking it. “A teacher really shouldn’t favorites, but I think you might be mine...” He trailed off.

“Am I ever going to come?” Hermione cried as his hand pulled away from her core again. Okay maybe she would fail because she wasn’t patient at all.

“Of course,” Draco whispered. “Your face is so pretty when you come. I wouldn’t miss it.” Draco grabbed her hands, and used them as if they his own. Rubbing them over her torso and over breasts, forcing her to pinch hard on her overly sensitive nipples. She whimpered a small cry at the release, a wave of zinging pleasure zipped through her, sharp and hot. He let her arms go, and she gripped his thighs, digging deep against his trousers. Heat bloomed in her belly, shooting down her legs. She rolled her hips into him.

“Do you like when I call you pretty?” he hummed into her ear as his hands moved down her body again, his cock finally slid inside her again only to slide out taunting her. He gripped the headboard with his hand. “Yes, so so much,” she whimpered. He didn’t say it enough is what she wanted to say. Then as if reading her mind he began to make her melt, word by word as he pressed back inside her with a slow, deep thrust.

“Pretty thighs,” His husky voice danced down her skin, just as his hand ran up her thigh. “Pretty hips.” His hands swept up over her curving waist. “Pretty tummy.” His hands cupped her stomach. “So fucking pretty. You’ll make the prettiest babies.” He whispered into her ear. “My pretty little slut.” He licked her ear and Hermione sucked in a gasping breath. Heat swelled through her body. His hand cupped over her breast. “My perfect pretty little secret.” His thrusts moved deeper and harder. “And a good girl like you deserves to come on my cock.”

His fingers rolled over her clit agonizingly slow. Repeating so many times that Hermione’s legs were shaking, she grabbed onto the headboard, his hands wrapped on top of hers. He finally moved faster, desperation taking hold of him as he moved behind her. His excitement only made hers spark faster.

They were loud, as they came. He came first, moaning into her neck. Hermione came right after, the orgasm ripping through her, in sharp waves of the most satisfying release she could have imagined after being teased for so long. It was the best reward.

Draco pulled out and tugged her backwards with him. They fell with their heads landing at the foot of the bed, Hermione haphazardly slumped against his chest. Draco lazily threw his arms around her and neither moved for almost ten minutes.

After her shower, Draco opened the bathroom door and Hermione's eyes were on her neck in the bathroom mirror. "Would you throw me my wand?" Hermione asked. He paused before entering, turned around, grabbed it, then tossed it to her, saying, "For what?" She waved a hand at all of the dark bruises along both sides of her neck and lifted her wand.

"Stop," He snatched her wand back. "You're not allowed to heal them." He said flatly.

"I have to cover them up for work. Both of my jobs require it." Hermione huffed, with a hand on her hip. The oddness of this conversation was only magnified by the fact that she was completely nude and he was completely dressed.

"Cover it, if that's necessary, but don't make them go away. I want to know how long they last."

They stared at each other for a minute in stubborn challenge. Hermione's wand began buzzing stopping the staring contest as he handed her the wand. The small message floated from the tip of her wand and she screamed, jumping up and down. "Oh my! Fuck! I passed!" She threw her arms up in the air, "I passed!" she jumped around in a circle, the joy of officially being one step closer to her dream coming true was like a balm to her soul. Draco scooped her up as she jumped towards him and her legs wrapped around him. He spun her around "Congratulations." He grinned. "I'm very proud of you." She hugged him without thinking too much about it. Here she could hug him. That was allowed.

"Thank you." She said with a sigh as she released him. Draco began walking to the bed "I am so fucking happy right now. What a relief." He dropped her slowly onto the bed, but the adrenaline pumped through her and she began jumping on the bed. "I'm so happy! Yes! I passed! One down only four more to go!"

Draco chuckled as he sat near the headboard, "Come here." He reached an arm out to her as she plopped down beside him, criss-cross applesauce. His arm came around her waist and she sighed, leaning into his shoulder. "This is why I love studying, all that hard work and then finally getting the result you want is," she shook her head, "'I swear there is no better feeling.'"

Draco arched a brow skeptically, a little offended actually. Hermione pursed her lips, scooting closer, resting a leg on his thigh. "Okay, well there might be just one thing better." She grinned.

Today had felt so playful, it was wonderful. He leaned closer, tugging her chin up to him. The longer they held each other's stare, the tighter his arm became. Her eyes darted to his mouth, but neither of them moved. After a few moments she pulled away from him done with the staring game. Draco tugged her chin to face him again. His eyes softened, and his thumb began tracing her lower lip. Hermione's heart beat wildly as his eyes dropped her mouth.

This part was growing uneasy for her. She didn't want him to have to convince himself to kiss her every single time. It made her feel weird. As he started to lean in again, Hermione sucked in a small breath ready to tell him to stop, or something, maybe. Nope never mind. His breath danced over her lips. Right before his lips met hers his wand blared with a loud sound.

Hermione's whole body jerked and she let out a fearful cry.

"Accio wand." Draco kept a tight hold on her, rubbing his hand against her shoulder. She closed her eyes, breathing deep and slow to calm herself down.

Draco's wand landed on Hermione's lap. "I'm sorry. Are you alright?" Hermione opened her eyes with a nod. "Mhhmm." His brows pulled together glancing nervously at her face.

An audible sigh let his mouth when he saw the message on his wand. "I have to go." His disappointment was clear, which helped Hermione feel better about her own.

"It's alright." Hermione moved out of his way and tugged the blanket against her bare chest as he gathered his things. He hesitated at the foot of the bed. They didn't do goodbyes, but they usually didn't end things so early either. Things felt unfinished without their long stretch of cuddling. "Sorry."

The door closed and Hermione fell back into the soft pillows. She didn't want to stay here.

Hermione left to go home feeling a bit off as she did some laundry before getting to Ron's house. Ron attempted to accuse Hermione of getting there too early this time.

"Ron, I am barely eight minutes early. I can wait outside for the remainder of time if you wish." Hermione said exasperated.

"You're gaslighting me, Hermione. This is what you always do. You twist things around and make me wish I'd never had a kid with you." Hermione's chest cracked like a hex had hit her. She was grateful Leo wasn't around. He was sent to gather his things by a reserved Lavender, when Hermione knocked on the door.

"Yeah well me too." Hermione snapped, her jaw set. She took several steps back

"What did you say to me?" Ron stepped towards her, his hand balled into a fist.

"I'll wait here until Leo is finished packing." Hermione moved onto the sidewalk that lined Ron's street. Leo ran out and her world was right again.

"See you at the custody meeting." Ron said as he slammed the door.

When they arrived home shortly after Hermione's flowers were already inside her apartment. A card that read, *Congratulations Dr. Granger.*

"Wow." Leo sniffed, "They always smell so good."

Hermione's invitation held a glaringly obvious mistake, but she also had a bone to pick with Mr. Malfoy.

"Bath Time." Hermione said, her mind racing. The buzzing feeling of being around Ron crawled across her skin, like spiders creeping down her arms and legs. After Leo was bathed,

fed and in bed she walked on her treadmill to sweat off the gross feeling. Then showered under scalding water burn the rest of it all.

Hermione typed out a message to Draco as she sat down at her desk.

How did you get into my house?

I didn't. I'm in the middle of a work thing.

Okay, but someone obviously did.

Pilly. I asked her.

Hermione's chest flooded with relief that it wasn't a faulty ward or that she forgot to lock her door.

I would prefer if that didn't happen again.

Okay. Sorry.

I highly value my privacy.

I got it. I'm sorry. No need to explain. Then he added, *Room service said you weren't there when they delivered dinner.* Shit. Guilt lanced through her.

Sorry. I just wanted to go home. I had laundry to do. It was the truth at least.

When he didn't reply she wrote, *And as much as I'd love to be there again next Saturday, it's Halloween and I have plans with your mother, my mother and two R.O.U.S eseses.*

Oh, fuck. Duh.

Hermione let out a soft chuckle before replying. *Also I can't meet the following weekend because of a work thing.*

She purposely didn't say gala because she knew Draco was on the guest list and she didn't want an awkward conversation about being there together, but not actually together.

Alright. Are you working tomorrow? We could meet tomorrow to make up for it.

The fluttering sensation in her stomach eased the tension from being around Ron. Her shoulders relaxed and she let out a deep sigh.

I'm working.

Send me your calendar.

No.

You're being so stubborn.

And you're a control freak.

I have absolutely no idea what gave you that impression. Hermione let out a bark of laughter.

I like it though.

Yeah you do.

She bit her lip. She liked Draco Malfoy and that freaked her out. Goodnight

Are you actually going to bed?

No, I'm studying.

You don't get a break as a reward for passing your test?

Not if I want to pass the next one.

Well text me when you actually go to sleep.

Alright. Are you going to be up late as well?

Hopefully not, but I still want you to text me.

Okay, I will.

Thank you pretty girl.

You're welcome pretty boy.

Don't call me that...

Why not?

Because

You're welcome, daddy

You can't do that either. I can't explain why I'm hard at work. Hermione laughed loudly again

Please inform me if there is an appropriate name to refer to you as that is safe for work .

Detective Malfoy

Thank you, Detective Malfoy

...never mind

What?

Nothing. Go study. You're distracting.

She didn't reply until she was tucked into bed just after midnight.

Goodnight

Goodnight, dream of me (and me alone) fucking you

I was imagining you doing exactly that in the rocket, but don't tell my student's dad that he might be upset with me.

On the contrary he's very pleased to hear that. Sometimes performances reviews go both ways...

Hermione considered how she felt. Too many things at once. She rewrote so many variations of the text that she started to get frustrated with herself. Not knowing if this was real or not. Not knowing if he was asking her how she actually felt or if he was just continuing their dirty talk. It was a tight line to walk on. Plus she didn't even know what rules they were following anymore.

I am happily surprised by my experience in your class. I am very, very, pleased with you, Detective Malfoy.

At least I'm in bed to enjoy that title.

Record it.

Naughty, dirty girl.

I promise to keep it a secret.

I like keeping you as secret. Is that weird?

No, because it was my idea and I have brilliant ideas. Of course you like it.

Goodnight pretty secret of mine Something swooshed through her stomach like a large bird just took flight.

Goodnight, sweet dreams.

Of course they'll be sweet I'll be dreaming of your ass.

At some point you have to stop texting me so I can actually go to bed

Then stop replying to everything I write...

That would be rude and the last time I was rude you gave me detention

First of all you volunteered for detention because you're such a good little slut. Second of all I'm going to say goodnight... Goodnight

Goodnight

Now don't respond or I will give you dentition again.

But I liked it

Me too.

Hermione yawned and forced herself not to keep the conversation going. Even though she wanted to ask only a dozen questions about what he liked.

Facing Your Discomforts

The following day, Hermione's Sunday shift at the hospital was slammed. Several dozen cases of black cat flu sent hoards of worried parents bringing in their small children. She had to admit three toddlers to the ICU, several middle schoolers needed breathing treatments, she caught up several elderly people on their vaccines, and she spent ten minutes reassuring a sobbing mother that she wasn't crazy for bringing in her baby even though the three month old didn't have any symptoms, but sneezing.

By lunch she was ready to sink into a break room chair and enjoy her favorite meal. Hermione grabbed her phone and lunchbox.

Dr. Granger. Reading Draco's text made her feel hot all over. Sighing, and happily eating her apples and brie, Hermione replied.

Alright I see what you mean.

Are you on break?

Yes. And you?

Currently arguing with Scorpius about Halloween costumes.

Leo usually wins those arguments with me, so I'll call a Scorpius win too.

I've accepted defeat, just haven't informed him of that yet. Will you text when you're in bed at 10?

I'll text you when I get to bed, yes.

You're gonna regret your attitude.

You can't do anything for two weeks. You'll forget about it.

Unlikely. I have a very good memory.

Unless you're sending me date information that neither of us can attend.

An oversight due to my high-demand sexual needs.

True. You are very needy. So it's understandable.

So cheeky today.

Don't you like my cheeks?

I love them.

Hermione choked on the food in her mouth. *Good to know.*

In fact you should send me a picture of your ass tonight.

Just my ass?

Just your ass.

Alright that's doable.

Your ass is doable. Beg me right now to fuck you in your ass. Hermione's legs squeezed together involuntarily.

You made a rule just yesterday about texting naughty things at work.

The rule was vague.

Well to clarify, it's distracting.

Yeah well you don't have hard evidence on what turns you on. Also it's entirely your fault for having a beautiful bottom.

A beautiful bottom. Put it on my gravestone.

Mood killer, Granger. Another thing that's entirely your fault? My son's obsession with The Princess Bride....

That's an odd way to say thank you, but you are most certainly welcome.

He's memorized the entire film.

He'll fit in with me and Leo perfectly then. You'll be fine all by yourself lonesome, wishing you were cool like us.

Are six year olds a barometer of how cool we are?

These days? Yeah pretty much. Alright, going back to work now.

Did you even eat lunch?

Of course! Lots of Brie and apples! :)

“Do you have something to say, Ron?” Hermione asked as she took Leo’s backpack from him. Then took several large steps backwards. His glare put her on edge.

“Just thinking about what a bitch you are for making me miss Halloween with my son.” He shrugged, leaning against the doorframe.

“You chose not to take him for that holiday. You chose not to take him for any holidays. You specifically said you wanted to focus on your babies.” Hermione sighed. She could never do anything right.

“Well we changed our minds. Leo’s more fun than the twins.” Ron pouted.

“We have an agreement and I can’t discuss it-“

“Yeah, yeah, blah, fucking, blah.” Ron sighed, as Leo entered the door frame. “Bye buddy. See you two weeks from now because your mom hates that you like me.”

“I don’t like you. I tolerate you.” Leo said as he walked towards Hermione. Ron’s face went from shock to rage in seconds.

“You’re actually fucking brainwashing him.” Ron stepped towards her, but Hermione ignored him, grabbed Leo and apparated home immediately.

“Is Ron nice to you when you’re with him?” Hermione asked over their dessert that evening.

“Yeah. He’s fine. He doesn’t read to me like you do, or plays, but he takes me to the park and always buys ice cream and we watch movies and stuff. Some days he fun, sometimes he’s a boring guy and sleeps a lot.” Leo scooped up a bit of cheesecake and stuck it in his mouth.

“What about Lavender?” Hermione licked her spoon.

“Oh yeah she’s really nice. We’ve baked cookies together and do puzzles, pillow forts. Quiet activities she says for the babies.”

Hermione had asked these questions almost every week for the first two months of him visiting Ron, but she still needed reassurance. Especially today.

“If they’re ever not nice, you’ll tell me okay?”

“Ron’s not nice to you.” Leo frowned, “Are you going to tell grandma? Or do you tell Dragon?”

Unease twisted inside her. “He’s not kind, but I can handle it.” Hermione reassured her son. She’d handled much worse and she wouldn’t let Ron think her weak.

Around 11pm Hermione remembered she needed to take a picture and ran to the bathroom to moon the mirror.

You better be texting me in your sleep.

Just about to go to bed.

Your ass is technically in this picture but I'm going to mark this as a failing grade.

Hermione scoffed. *That's a low blow...*

I'll just have to take matters into my own hands. Wear a skirt tomorrow.

Absolutely not.

Absolutely yes. I'll give you a passing grade...

Tempting, but no.

Hermione had to keep some sense of structure for herself. Being at the manor and touching him in front of the kids seemed a line they should not cross until they knew what was happening at the end of their courtship. The rocket thing had been replaying in her mind so often it really freaked her out. She liked it, but they had rules for a reason. Duties. Roles. No feelings. What was becoming of their contract if there was no sense of structure?

Just wear something green then, please.

Fine, only because you asked so nicely.

Now go to sleep.

Why do you like me in green so much?

I think you mentioned something about control issues?

But green specifically?

I just like the color.

I'll have you know I like the color too. It's not a punishment for me.

It's not to punish you, but to remind you who's in charge. But good to know. Go to sleep witch.

Goodnight dream of my ass.

Every night since I laid eyes on it.

Monday arrived and Hermione wore a different green shirt, a more casual long sleeved one this time. Malfoy wasn't even there for breakfast and Hermione wasn't even bothered.

Speaking in a deep growl, Hermione read to the boys on top of a mountain of pillows. The images splayed sparkling above them about a taco eating dragon.

When she closed the book and the images faded the boys simultaneously cheered "another!"

"We've read three." Hermione said but didn't sit up, she was sandwiched between them and everyone was quite cozy and content on the raining day they were having.

"Hi dad!" Scorpius didn't move from next to Hermione's side. "Wanna snuggle with us?" Scorpius grinned

"Wish I could," Draco chuckled, leaning against the door, he crossed his arms in a dark green long sleeve shirt and black jeans. Hermione looked at her own black jeans and green shirt.

They matched...

"What! You guys are twins now too!" Leo said.

"What a funny coincidence." Draco smirked, "so strange."

Hermione shook her head, trying to make her smile disappear. *He wore green for her.*

Each afternoon after lunch that week Narcissa and Hermione worked on the boy's Halloween costumes together. And Hermione was caught off guard once again by the witch. Specifically by how much she enjoyed spending time with her. They started off chatting about the boys, but then they spoke about cooking and gardening. Hermione asked her a lot of questions about growing her own herbs and Narcissa talked about healthcare programs she volunteered for. Hermione shared some of the programs she volunteered for through healer's school, but didn't mention she'd treated her husband, confidentially and all that, but had told her spent summers at Azkaban, which Narcissa seemed to be quite impressed by. And by the end of the week not only did Hermione feel like they'd actually become friends, but now also created two complete costumes for the boys. Which looked so damn cute on them she could hardly stand it.

Malfoy texted her most evenings that week, sometimes it was only to say goodnight before bed, but regardless Hermione could admit it was nice to talk to someone. It didn't stop her from worrying every night that she was becoming too reliant on him.

Thursday afternoon Hermione spent ten minutes in a mediation room crying alone after the judge ordered Leo have his first weekend sleep over with Ron the night of the St. Mugo's gala.

"*A test for the wellbeing of the child. You don't have any issue with that do you Miss, Granger?*" The judge did not like Hermione and his condescending tone made her want to scream in court. She didn't of course. Ron's self righteous smirk made her want to grab her

wand and aim it at his face. It's also why she didn't do that either. There was no knowing what spell would come out of her mouth if she had. And in a room full of witnesses she couldn't risk being jailed.

When Halloween came, Hermione was so giddy that she didn't have to see Ron, but there was also a deep sense of relaxation that swelled inside her as she stepped out of the hospital Saturday morning she hadn't experienced since Ron wanted to be in Leo's life that she had desperately missed.

She went to her mom's house, leisurely ate breakfast with Leo and her mother, then slept easily until late in the afternoon.

Upon waking Hermione was hit with a different kind nervous energy. All three Malfoy's were coming over. It was just a little pubic outing.... for the kids. Not breaking any rules. Narcissa's idea. Exactly. If Malfoy brought it up she'd just blame his mother. *Wait*. That actually sounded too much like a couple.

Hermione opened the door at 5pm and welcomed all three Malfoy's inside forcing her nerves away.

Scorpius torpedoed towards Hermione, leaping into her arms. "Hermione!"

"Hi Scorpion." She grinned as she scooped him up, then smiled politely at Malfoy who was dressed in his typical black trousers and white oxford. "Narcissa, this is my mother, Jean."

"It's so wonderful to finally meet you." Jean and Narcissa hugged. "Yes, I've been dying to meet you. We are all just in love with Hermione." Narcissa looked at her with dramatic awe.

"Draco, I've been so excited to finally meet you. Leo talks about you all the time." Jean said reaching out a hand.

"The pleasure is mine." Draco shook her hand.

Scorpius grabbed Hermione's face, "I promise I'll be normal for all your muggles." His eyes were large and lined with concern.

"I have full confidence in you that you'll do great."

Leo frowned, shrugging. "I'm only sorta appreciative."

"Do you mean apprehensive?" Draco asked coming closer to them as her mother closed the front door.

"No dad," Scorpius rolled his eyes dramatically, wrapping an arm around Hermione's neck so he could face him, "You just don't understand us." The boy shook his head in disapproval.

Draco's mouth popped open in surprise and then he looked down right offended at the two of them. Like they were in cahoots together.

Scorpius continued to explain, “Hermione taught us about our emotions. And one of them is appreciation. And I am sorta appreciative because I'm also nervous. But I want the challenge of trying new things. Right?” He looked at Hermione, who nodded encouragingly. Scorpius nodded, looking at Draco, “We practiced thinking of feeling brave while doing new things so we know how to deal with our discomforts.” Scorpius’s little toothless grin made his words whistle. It was the cutest lecture Hermione had ever heard. Not to mention very accurate. Warm pride burst through her and she squeezed him to her.

Narcissa’s eyes were filled with gratitude, “Hermione dear, what a wonderful teacher you are for our boy. Scorpius. Well done.”

“It’s easy, when I’m teaching a genius.” Hermione smirked at Scorpius cupping his face, “You make me so proud. Your brain’s ability to relay information is remarkable.”

His nose wrinkled. “What’s proud? Is that an emotion?”

“It sure is. When I say I’m proud of you, it means I am very happy with the things you’re doing and I highly respect your hard work. It means I hold you in high regard.” Hermione glanced towards Draco. He was staring at Hermione strangely. Before she could attempt to interpret it, Scorpius pulled her face back to face his.

“Is that something only mums can feel?” Scorpius whispered. Which meant it wasn’t a whisper at all. The room flooded with a tense silence for a full minute.

“Scorp!” Leo skipped over in a wailing shriek that Hermione had never been more grateful for. “Wait mum can you hold us both at the same time?” Leo bounced in front of her.

“Let’s try it.” A few minutes later with a quick assistance from her mother, she successfully balanced both boys on her hips and began making her way to the dining room down the long hallway.

“What were you doing Leo?” Scorpius leaned behind Hermione’s head. The movement pulled the top of her shirt down.

“Pooping.” Leo used Hermione’s hair as leverage to look back at Scorpius. “It was like a lot of it and it took five hundred minutes to finish it all.” Scorpius’s legs wiggled, pulling him and her shirt lower.

“Ow.” Hermione grunted, lifting them up on her hips unsuccessfully. Leo somehow slid further down.

“That’s not even that long.” Scorpius sounded like he was rolling his eyes. He leaned closer to Leo, making Hermione loose grip on his waist.

“How is it you two always want to talk about poop right before we eat a meal.” Draco said as he wrapped his arms around all three of them in a large bear hug, pulling them close to him.

“Because Dragon, food is how we poop, don’t you know? My mum taught me that. It’s called digestible.” Leo tugged on Hermione’s hair in emphasis.

"Well your teacher is wrong, because it's called digestion." Draco replied as they turned into the dining room. "Finally." Hermione sighed. She set the boys down and adjusted her clothing.

"Alright, let's all grab a seat." Hermione waved at dining table that held soup, salad and homemade bread. Scorpius grabbed her hand. "Can I sit next to you?"

Draco glared at them from across the table as they sat down. "I didn't realize you could make my own flesh blood turn on me like that. What do you even teach in that classroom anyway?" Jean barked a laugh, while sitting at the head of the table.

"Oh Draco," Narcissa said, rolling her eyes, sitting at the other end.

Hermione shook her head with a small smile ghosting her lips. "You are so dramatic."

"Tell me about it." Scorpius frowned as he stared at Draco. He turned to Hermione and said with intense sincerity, "I'm sorry my dad's such a weirdo. Please don't judge me for it."

Hermione slapped a hand over her mouth but couldn't stop the barrage of laughter. Neither could Narcissa. And then neither could Jean. Draco pursed his lips intent to not join them.

"Well I like that he's a weirdo." Leo shrugged, placing a hand on his shoulder. "Dragon my mum taught me about an emotion called compassionate and I have compassionate that you're weird."

All three witches were in tears at the table. Draco burst into a rich laugh. It took almost ten minutes for all of the adults to calm down. And almost twenty for the kids. They didn't know why they were laughing but laughed all that much harder.

Eventually they stopped laughing long enough to serve dinner and begin eating. Hermione looked around at everyone as they ate and a special kind of pleasure formed inside her. Something that caught her off guard and made her feel extra nervous. This could all disappear and she shouldn't get used to it.

"Jean this soup is amazing, I must have your recipe." Narcissa said, sincerely.

Draco gave Hermione a funny look, because she was trying to hold in a laugh.

"This is Hermione's father's recipe." Jean said, smiling sadly. "Robert loved Halloween and he loved making this soup. So we make it every year to think of him. He would be so flattered, because Hermione and I don't like the soup very much at all." Jean let out a giggling laugh.

"What?" Draco chuckled.

"Eh," Hermione shrugged laughing too. "It's like a seven out of ten. Not his best recipe. He really loved it, but mum and I never wanted it for dinner. One year he wanted it on Halloween and begged us to make it a tradition. So we had this whole family planning session where we got to pick all the foods for the Holidays. Mom got to choose the menu for

Christmas, I got New Year's Eve. Dad got Halloween. We'd toss a coin for other smaller ones.”

“So you only eat this on Halloween?” Scorpius said while trying to balance a spoon on his nose.

“We used to, but now we eat it for every holiday.” Hermione looked at her mother who’s eyes were glistening. They were both crying the same kind of tears. The best ones. Where the grief is more sweet than bitter.

“What emotion are feeling mum?” Leo whisper yelled from across the table.

Hermione let out a deep sigh, swiping her tears away. “Happiness and sadness.”

Scorpius rubbed his hand on her shoulder. “Do you need a hug maybe?”

Hermione smiled. “I’d love one, Scorp.”

He jumped, wrapping his arms around her neck and before pulling away kissed her on the lips with a mouth covered in soup.

“Aww. You sweet boy.” Narcissa chuckled. Leo giggled loudly, “I wanna kiss you too mum!”

Hermione cleaned her mouth as their mother’s began chatting. When she caught Draco’s gaze she began counting. *One, two...* neither of them looked away until five. Where in the world did their rules go?

Narcissa and Jean’s friendship was instantaneous. They traded stories about Draco and Hermione like they were trading recipe cards.

“Oh Draco would do this annoying thing until about fifteen where’d pass out if he had to get a vaccine. It was obnoxious.”

Draco blinked at Hermione, “Who decided to invite my mother?”

“Oh Hermione had very big tantrums about airplane travel. Fourteen years old and sobbing in the airport uncontrollably. We had to order very expensive emergency anxiety medication from doctor’s in America just so we could get her home. We missed our flight. Cost us thousands.”

Hermione blinked back at Draco, “Why are we even celebrating Halloween?”

Leo shrieked. “It’s your favorite holiday mum, you silliest goose!”

“Did you ever have to spank Draco?” Jean asked curiously as if none of them were there at all.

“Halloween is canceled.” Draco covered his face with his hands.

Narcissa shook her head. "Yes, many times."

"No way!" Scorpius yelled. "You can't cancel it dad! You're not in charge!"

"Hermione too." Jean shook her head as they bonded in their disappointment.

Leo pulled on Draco's arm. "What's spanking?"

"That's a great question for your teacher since she seems to know everything." Draco's smirk sent a slithering heat down Hermione's spine. Looking down at her bowl of soup in an attempt to force her laughter to go away, she said, "We are not in school at the moment, so I will decline."

The clock chimed saving her from the conversation.

Hermione stood, "Okay, I'm going to go change into my costume."

"Oh, actually I need to change too." Draco stood grabbing a bag from the floor Hermione swore he did not have when he walked in. "Could you show me the bathroom, Granger?"

"Today you have to call her Princess Buttercup." Scorpius wagged a finger at him.

"Oh right," Draco nodded, clearing his throat. "Will you, Princess Buttercup, do me the honor of showing me the path to which one might find a bathing chamber?"

"Weirdo alert." Scorpio sang. Narcissa and Jean barked another round of laughter like two old friends.

Draco's brows knitted together. "I just listened to your instructions, how am I already losing?"

Hermione walked around the dining room table. "This way, Malfoy."

"As if you wish, Princess." Draco said very close to her ear as when they turned the corner. "Here you are," Hermione said, opening the door.

Draco pointed towards the bathroom. "What is that?"

"What?" Hermione stepped closer but saw nothing. Draco grabbed her hips, pushing her inside, then closed the door and locked it.

"Those two are vultures." He sighed, moving towards Hermione.

"They're really pushing their luck." Hermione shook her head. "Spanking? Really?"

"What are you doing?" Hermione said, as he grabbed her hands and wrapped them around his neck. He pulled her close and leaned against the bathroom door.

"Holding you." He tucked a few pieces of hair behind her ears. "It's Saturday. And it's my favorite part."

Hermione's fingers brushed through the hair on the back of his neck, she'd missed him too. She laid her head on his chest and they held each other for several minutes. Malfoy's hands glided down her backside over her bum, cupping her. "I should have planned this better and pulled you in here when you were in a dress." He murmured into her hair.

"We do not have time for you to fuck me."

He tugged her chin up. "If we had time, would you have fucked me?" He whispered seductively. A shiver went down Hermione's spine. "Probably, yes."

"Fuck." Her grumbled, leaning his forehead to hers. "Why would you say that?"

"I have high-demand sexual needs" Hermione smirked.

His thumb ghosted her bottom lip and her smile fell as his eyes dropped to her mouth. Draco's hand pulled her tighter on her ass and his breath fell on her lips. Hermione could barely breathe she wanted to kiss him so badly.

Leo banged on the door. "Mum! I have more poop!"

Hermione took Leo to a different bathroom and then changed into Princess Buttercup's famous red dress, then began helping the boys into theirs.

"Look Minnie, Narcissa, let me borrow a hat." Jean said as she entered the living room. "I am a real witch for Halloween." Jean twirled in her black dress and black witch's hat.

"Shhhh," Leo said. "Muggles can't know witches are real!"

Scorpius's furry rodent costume wobbled over his head as he turned. "Dad, did you know Hermione's real name is Minnie? Because I didn't. Is that inconceivable or what?"

Hermione's mouth fell open.

"You look perfect Draco!" Narcissa clapped. "What a perfect group costume!"

Draco Malfoy dressed up as the Dread Pirate Roberts was...he really was perfect. "Hermione had such a huge crush on that actor." Jean said. Hermione's jaw snapped shut.

"Picture time!" Narcissa sang.

Hermione had a stupid incessant blush that remained across her cheeks as they posed with the boys. Draco and Hermione awkwardly stood next to each other and for some reason she couldn't breathe again.

Twenty minutes later, they strolled behind their mothers and kids. Narcissa dressed as a fairy godmother, which was her normal witch robes, but with small fairy wings attached to the back and her real wand transfigured into a sparkling child's wand.

"So I hear you have a thing for pirates?" Draco hummed next to her. They'd been walking in a comfortable silence until then.

"It's the mask." Hermione sighed, "Something about the mask really does it for me."

Draco said, as he adjusted his mask, "That is very good to know." His hand fell to his side, fingers brushing against hers. Once. Twice. It had to be intentional. Hermione glanced at him as apprehension reared its head like a whip, whistling through her chest sharp and strong. It was one thing to pull her into a bathroom, but in public it was different. The kids were there. They had rules. They had-

"Dad you gotta see this!" Scorpius ran towards them. Hermione folded her hands together and moved towards Leo.

The group made their way through her mother's neighborhood and the boys took turns asking Hermione and Draco to walk with them. Leo held Draco's hand so long Hermione was getting her feelings hurt. Scorpius didn't seem to mind sharing Draco and was content being with her. At one point Leo and scorpious linked hands and all four of them walked down the street hand in hand. By the end of the night though, they were carrying the oversized rodents.

"Since when did you get so heavy?" She sighed as they made it back to the house.

"Can Scorpius spend the night?" Leo mumbled while rubbing his eye.

"Not tonight, but maybe another time." Hermione replied. "If it's okay with his dad." she quickly added.

Draco nodded with a yawn, "As you wish Princess."

They all said their goodbyes and that night as she fell asleep Hermione for a split second wished she wouldn't have stopped touching his hand. Would it have been so bad if her knuckles had brushed back against his....or worse what if he had pulled away because it wasn't intentional. She loved rules and hated not knowing what any of them were right now.

Saying It With Clothes On

Monday morning following Halloween, Hermione had never felt more nervous to enter the floo. She was more nervous than her interview with Narcissa and more nervous than her first day of tutoring Scorpius. More nervous than standing in lingerie for the first time in front of Draco Malfoy.

“Come on, mum.” Leo tugged on her hand. Hermione stared at the flames wondering what it meant that no flowers had come Sunday. Was he mad at her? Did Saturday freak him out? Hermione *should* be fine. They were only flowers and it didn’t mean anything. All good things come to an end and maybe the flowers were over now. That made perfect sense. It didn’t make any sense why it hurt though.

“Mum!” Leo stomped his foot. “Let’s go!”

“Alright,” Hermione shook her head. “Sorry.” She couldn’t let this interfere with her job. That was the whole point of the rules. Draco and Hermione couldn’t meet next weekend so he probably just didn’t send them because why would he if they weren’t going to be having sex.

When they arrived at breakfast Draco wasn’t there.

Narcissa gushed about how much she loved Hermione’s mom, including that they made plans to get lunch this week. Hermione wasn’t sure how she felt about that. They recapped their favorite halloween memories and half-way through breakfast the boys insisted on wearing their costumes again. They raced into the classroom to dress as rodents while Hermione finished her coffee.

Narcissa refilled it before it was empty. “Here dear, enjoy another cup while the boys are distracted.” Pilly popped into the dining room.

“Hi Pilly,” Narcissa said gently. “So nice to see you, you haven’t gotten to meet Hermione yet, have you?” Narcissa smiled lovingly.

The elf turned towards Hermione with wide glossy eyes and burst into tears. Loudly wailing, on top of the table.

“Granger, what did you do now?” Malfoy walked into the dining room and pulled the elf into his arms like a baby. “I’m so sorry, Pilly. You don’t have to be friends with her if you don’t wish to.”

Pilly continued crying into Malfoy’s shoulder and Hermione’s mouth dropped open. “Pilly, I’d love to-”

“Shhh,” Draco said with a glare, “Don’t force her to speak to you. You clearly scare her.”

"Draco." Narcissa rolled her eyes as she stood. "I have a luncheon to go prepare for. I am twenty centerpieces behind schedule. See you later, my dears."

Pilly kissed Draco on the cheek and disappeared as Narcissa left.

Hermione frowned. There was nothing more perplexing than an elf that didn't like her. She was loved by elves... "This is making me question my whole identity." Hermione pouted now, her bottom lip trembling slightly.

Draco found it hilarious, chuckling with a smug expression on his face.

Hermione glared at him. "This isn't funny, Malfoy."

After a few minutes of self pity Hermione cleared her throat determined to win the elf over with a semi-formed plan already concocted.

"If I call for Pilly would she come?" Hermione turned to Draco.

"Unlikely seeing as how much she cries around you." Draco hummed joyfully while reading the Daily Prophet.

Hermione's frown deepened, taking a sad sip of her coffee. "Well then what can I do? This doesn't make any sense." She set down her cup down harder than she meant to.

The boys ran into the room and raced towards Draco. "Dad!"

"Dragon!" Leo growled.

"You two are the cutest rodents I've ever seen and I've seen many." Draco said as both boys hugged him. Not even the sight of Draco hugging their rodent children could stop making Hermione frown. A horrible feeling sank in her stomach. Her bottom lip pushed out further.

"Oh stop being so dramatic." Draco said. The boys sat in their chairs.

"Easy for you to say." Hermione slumped a hand against her cheek.

Leo's eyes grew serious, "Mumma, are you still sad because you didn't have your flowers?"

Hermione stilled. "No, I uh-" She cleared her throat.

"Your mother canceled her flower delivery and got Pilly fired from the job. If she's sad, it's her own fault." He didn't look up from the paper.

"I did what?" Hermione's shock rippled through her like being splashed with cold water, banging her fist on the table.

"You canceled your flower delivery. " He finally dropped the paper, "You said, "I'd prefer if that didn't happen again. And it just so happens, Pilly's job was to deliver flowers. So she lost her job. No wonder she doesn't like you, Granger. You took money out of the poor elf's pockets." Draco shook his head, full of judgment.

"If you do not summon your elf right this instant and-"

"Pilly cannot be summoned she is a free elf." Scorpius wagged his finger at her.

Draco wrinkled his nose at her. "You should know that."

"Then explain to her that I didn't do anything wrong!" Hermione was beside herself with annoyance. "I was worried my wards were faulty or I'd forgotten to lock my door. I was worried about my security. I didn't want you-"

Pilly popped into the room.

"-to fire Pilly!" Hermione shrieked the words and Pilly burst into tears again.

"Pilly, wait!" Hermione was on her feet instantly, spilling coffee on herself in the process.

The elf disappeared with a howling cry.

"Wow Minnie, you shouldn't fire her so many times." Scorpius frowned.

Draco's eyes lingered on Hermione's skirt. "Granger, you've got coffee on your clothes, let me help you clean it off." Draco stood. "I believe I have the perfect stain removing potion in my office." He said it with a sincerity only six year olds would believe.

"Boys, head to the classroom and pick out a book to read. One each." Hermione did indeed want to talk to Malfoy. Hex him too. And punch him in the face for good measure.

Draco's office was spacious, but not as big as she imagined. A large leather chair sat behind a dark wood desk, a small leather sofa to one side, and a small fire stoked pleasantly. Built in shelves framed the fire place, lined with numerous books. A few framed pictures of Draco and Scorpius sat on his desk. Hermione stood in the middle of the room, trying to not be distracted by the look on his face as he locked the door.

The coffee stain disappeared easily with a flick of his wand.

Hermione put her hands on her hips. "You are on my shit list."

He prowled towards her with a hungry look in his eye. "Did you wear a skirt for me, Granger?" Draco's jaw worked as he grew near, a smug expression growing.

"No." Hermione folded her arms and lifted her chin. "I simply wanted to wear one."

"After you didn't receive flowers, you didn't deliberately wear a skirt just to remind me of how delicious your legs are?" Draco stood in front of her, so close but not touching her.

"I did no such thing." Hermione whispered.

"Go to my desk and bend over." He whispered back.

"We don't have time for that." Hermione replied, but she could be convinced....

"You pretty little slut, I only want a picture of your ass." Heat bloomed between her legs, but Hermione squared her shoulders. "Only if you tell Pilly it's not my fault you fired her. And that there is no valid reason for her to dislike me before even properly meeting me."

"You'll still get your flowers eventually." Draco said, tucking a stray hair behind her ear. His fingers dragged down her neck making a tingling sensation wind down her arms. "I had to switch back to muggle delivery and they're slow."

"Draco, give Pilly back her job right now." Hermione demanded, her hands balled into fists.

He stilled, blinking for a moment at her, his brows slowly furrowed. "Hearing you say my name with clothes on is quite strange."

"It felt strange." Hermione admitted. They stared at each other for a long moment.

One of the boys squealed loudly from down the hallway.

"Lean over on my desk right now. We are running out of time." Draco snapped his fingers.

Hermione's mouth opened to protest but he shoved a finger against her lips. "Ass. Desk. Now." He turned her around and she huffed her way over to his desk.

Once her face touched the cold wood, Draco came behind her, ghosting his hands over her hips and ass before lifting her skirt up. "Hold still." Draco backed away and took his photos.

"Can I move yet?" Hermione mumbled from the desk after a few quiet minutes passed.

"Almost," Draco answered with his face against her ass cheeks. Hermione squealed in shock. "How are you so damn sneaky!" Hermione pushed off the desk as Draco kissed her thigh.

"Oh come on." Draco scoffed as he stood.

"You have a serious problem." Hermione chastised him, fleeing towards the door, adjusting her skirt.

"Care to teach me a lesson, Miss Granger?" Draco leaned against his desk, "I need some extra credit lessons on spanking."

Hermione pursed her lips together and shook her head. "Go to work!" She opened the door to find Narcissa about to knock on it.

"Oh," Hermione's eyes grew wide, cheeks flushing hot. "Uh, sorry. We were just-I was just leaving." Hermione scurried away like she was caught by her mom stealing the good cookies from the pantry.

The rest of the week was spent trying, and failing, to convince Draco to give Pilly back her job. Hermione had five bouquets of red roses delivered to her house by the original delivery man Friday afternoon as she got ready for her shift.

Next time a muggle delivers me flowers I'm going to reject them. Hermione wrote slamming her phone down to brush her hair.

So you want a muggle to lose his job too... Muggles aren't good enough for you either... Wow... Draco replied.

I'm seriously annoyed with you.

You can't make everyone love you Granger. Sometimes Pilly just doesn't like certain people. You happen to be one of them.

Because you're manipulating the situation.

I could say the same things about Scorpius.

This is about your son?

Everything revolves around him. First he tells me I'm a weirdo and then kisses you so brazenly...

GIVE PILLY BACK HER JOB

Granger there is no need to be rude. Stop yelling at me. Maybe that's why she doesn't like you.

I'm going to work.

Text me when you get home.

No. Not until Pilly has her job back.

Fine. I'll consider finding her a new job.

Will that make her like me?

Probably not.

You're dreadful.

The Dread Pirate Roberts is at your service, princess.

Hermione sighed as she threw her phone into her bag and headed to work.

Saturday morning Ron's smile made Hermione uneasy. Sometimes a smile meant he was in a good mood and sometimes it meant he was in a horrible one.

"Hey buddy," Ron said.

Leo waved, "Hi."

"Ready to go?" Ron glanced at Hermione, "You look tired."

"Yeah, just got off my shift." Hermione replied, stifling a yawn.

"Well, let's let your mum sleep." Ron said, reaching for Leo's backpack.

"Bye mumma lion." Leo gave her a quick squeeze and they were off.

Hermione closed the door, leaning against it with gratitude. Maybe things would get easier from now on.

Lucky Stars

Hermione knew Draco would be at tonight's gala and even though she was prepared to see him, she wasn't prepared to see him with a date.

She chuckled at Hagrid's bewildered expression. "Hermione, I'm sorry, I didn't even recognize ya!" Hagrid had to do not one, but two double takes when she joined the group of guests in the ballroom about five minutes ago.

With her hair straightened for the gala, it fell all the way down her low back.

"Your hair is like a superhero's disguise." Padma said. "Suddenly no one can recognize you."

"I'll take that as a compliment." Hermione smiled. That's when she saw Draco Malfoy enter the room. Joined with a very thin, very tall, very beautiful witch.

Hermione grabbed a glass of champagne from a waiter passing by and drank half the glass.

Never had she been more grateful for Hagrid's size in her entire life. She crept closer to the giant, steadier her breath. It wasn't a big deal. And she wasn't jealous or upset or irritated. She was fine and everything was fine because she *really* didn't want any public appearances until they were both completely sure they were moving forward. Their names in the paper together would create a media shit storm And today was only six weeks together. Neither of them were certain of anything. It was the most logical thing to do. His mother required him to make social appearances and it also kept any gossip far away from them. It was all part of the plan. A plan she created. A plan she loved.

That settled it, Hermione loved that Draco had a date. Totally.

Really.

Mostly.

Draco's date wrapped a toned arm around his. A witch who clearly had never had children or actually, she was probably one of those women who bounced back after pregnancy without any stretch marks or spots of melasma or any sign of childbearing at all.

"Excuse me," Hermione mumbled as Draco and his date drew too close. She turned away, aimlessly walking somewhere Draco wasn't.

Hermione didn't want to see him yet.

Inevitably she would. Or maybe not. Perhaps she could avoid him entirely. Her rescue came in the form of Viktor Krum who walked across the room waving at her.

"Viktor!" Hermione greeted, as he leaned in with a peck at her cheek.

"Hermione, you look lovely. This color... it suits you well."

Hermione's cheeks flushed. It was green. Because of course it was.

"Thank you so much." Hermione glanced down at her gown, then chugged the rest of her drink handing it off the waiter. Another waiter arrived offering appetizers. Hermione snagged a piece of brie with a candied walnut on top and chewed with frustration as she looked at her dress and shoes. The minute she saw it at the shop, she knew she had to have it. And she purchased it before she'd ever stepped foot into the Malfoy manor. Thank. You. Very. Much.

It was one of her favorite the colors and it *did* suit her well. The sweetheart neckline connected to delicate offer the shoulder sleeves. The bodice swept around her torso, falling off her hips all the way to the floor. And with a generous slit up her leg she felt beautiful. The matte leather heels Draco sent mocked her though. She'd sell them. Tomorrow. She'd get rid of all of the clothes to save the money. It wasn't petty if it was a smart financial decision.

"Viktor!" Seamus Finnigan, joined them followed by Dean Thomas and Blaise Zabini. Making Hermione shake away all thoughts about anything or anyone else.

"Granger," Zabini nodded, as he stepped up to her.

"Zabini." Hermione smiled easily at the handsome wizard. Then snatched another glass of champagne from a waiter almost knocking the whole tray over. She grimaced her apologies to the waiter who looked at her like she was crazy. Zabini grabbed one too, chuckling at her eagerness.

"You're a healer at St. Mungo's?" Blaise asked.

"Yes, just a first year apprentice, but yes I am a healer." She grinned widely because it made her damn proud to be able to say it. Four years of healer's school and now finally working as a doctor.

"Blaise." Draco's voice felt like someone grabbed her stomach and twisted it sideways. Hermione was surprised she stayed upright.

"Draco, mate, good to see you." Zabini gave his glass a clink.

"Don't let Granger talk herself down over there." Dean Thomas said as they formed a small group. Hermione was intensely grateful that she didn't have any logical reason to look at Draco.

"She's the best one in her cohort." Thomas said, "I just wish I could get her at the hospital more often."

"Granger has always been very impressive." Zabini smirked at her. He was flirting. *Oh.* This was too perfect. Hermione smiled back at him, fluttering her eyelashes a little while she sipped her drink.

"Yeah, but she doesn't know how to brag about herself enough." Thomas laughed.

“She healed my bludger injury *very* well.” Viktor said, pointing to his head. “Hardly any scaring.”

“What kind of healer are you?” The American accented voice of Draco’s, wrapped-around-the-side-of-his-body-like-an-octopus, date said.

“Oh,” Hermione grinned sincerely. “Emergency medicine.” And then made a mental note to thank her mother for summer theater camps that made this conversation effortless and easy as hell to pull off. The ability to remain sincere, polite, unbothered, and perfectly calm is why she did so well in emergency medicine. And there was something deeply, deliciously fucking satisfying about the *not* unbothered face of Draco Malfoy.

“Oh wow,” his date bounced on her toes. “That must mean you’re like really smart.” Her bubbly voice was just the cutest.

“Oh that’s so kind of you.” Hermione batted her away cheekily. “I like you.” She could feel his gaze hot on her skin, like she’d been bathing in the sun too long.

The witch squeezed Draco’s arm with a giggle, then her face turned serious, “It must be quite stressful though.” Her brows furrowed together. “Like you must work well under pressure.”

Hermione nodded. “All kinds of pressure, yes. And I do believe that’s what makes me a great doctor.”

“Granger was the top of our class back in our Hogwarts days.” Seamus lifted his glass. “It makes sense.”

Hermione found herself delighted to finally make eye contact with Draco Malfoy, “And Draco you were our second right?” The group chuckled loudly. “Yep, that’s right.” Zabini laughed. “Always annoyed with you besting him.”

Draco’s eyes were bewildered. So was visibly uncomfortable with a date in front of her. Hermione ate it up. Softening her eyes just slightly, pulling her hair to the side as she revealed the side of her neck next to Blaise Zabini. He took the bait. Blaise’s eyes caught Hermione’s movement, glancing down her neck and chest.

Draco noticed it too.

“But you all graduated together? Didn’t you say you were her boss?” Draco’s date asked, pointing at Dean Thomas. “Did you decide later in life to be a doctor?”

“I’ve always wanted to be a healer,” Hermione’s smile turned softer now, but more sincere. “I have a six year old son. And he came first so I postponed school for a bit.”

“How is Leo these days?” Viktor asked from beside her. “Did he like the jokes I told you?”

“Leo and I laughed for at least an hour together when I told him those jokes. They were perfect for him. You should see him though. He’s growing like crazy, in my next letter I’ll send you an updated photo.”

“Better yet, you should bring him to a quidditch match. Can I send you some tickets?” Viktor grinned.

“Aye, Krum, where's my free tickets?” Seamus said, with a heatless glare. The group murmured in agreement.

“Yeah, Krum I'd like some too.” Zabini said.

Viktor arched his brow, taking on a serious expression. “There's this rule, you see, the quidditch players, well, we're only allowed to give free tickets to the most beautiful women, so,” Krum shrugged, gesturing to Hermione. “I'm sorry it's not my fault, it's just the rules.”

The whole group laughed even louder. Or almost everyone. One person in particular looked quite angry actually. It was quite odd, really.

Beautiful violins began to play and Seamus and Dean excused themselves to the dance floor at the same time an older wizard came up to Viktor pulling him aside.

“Did you come here with a date, Hermione?” Blaise asked, as they both handed empty champagne glasses to a waiter.

“No I did not.” Hermione replied.

Blaise offered her his hand. “Then, may I please escort you to the dance floor?”

Hermione smiled. “Yes, I'd be most grateful.” She took his hand and walked past Draco without a glance.

She was floating. Hermione couldn't have asked for a better experience. Her lucky stars were really on a roll tonight. She danced with Blaise twice, then Viktor twice.

Dinner was served where she sat with her cohort of apprentices. Hermione didn't realize how much she needed the fun of talking to them outside of work. They were all incredible healers and people. Their group was even asked to stand and be acknowledged by the whole room for the dedication and service to the hospital.

Her table sat diagonally from Malfoy's. When she allowed herself a quick glance in his direction he had a glass of firewhisky to his mouth.

More dancing ensued after dinner and before she could make her way over to the dance floor, Narcissa spotted her, waving her over. Draco and Narcissa were speaking to the head the Emergency Department as St. Mungo's. Hermione strode towards them. Any opportunity to speak to Dr. Markham was one she'd gladly accept.

“Hermione dear, you look absolutely stunning. Doesn't she just look gorgeous, Draco.” Narcissa cooed, pulling her into a hug. “Dr. Markham, this is Hermione Granger.” Narcissa introduced. He was closer to the same age as her mother, mid sixties if she had to guess. Still held a head of rich brown hair, making him very handsome. His deep blue eyes met hers as he extend his hand.

"Hi, Dr. Markham." Hermione shook his hand.

"I'm already very familiar with Dr. Granger." He grinned, "Your name comes up frequently in our leadership meetings."

Hermione wouldn't have been able to stop the smile on her face if she wanted to. "I have to confess, I'm huge fan of yours. Your work with disfigurement charms is some of my favorite research." Hermione gushed, feeling a faint blush work itself up her chest.

"Well, thank you, Dr. Granger. I am looking forward to working alongside you at St. Mungo's. Hopefully in the future we can collaborate on some research." Dr. Markham replied.

"That- that would be incredible." Hermione exhaled slowly.

"Dr. Thomas sings high praises of your skills. He also mentioned you're a single parent. Which is even more impressive. I'm divorced and I have three kids, I'm not sure if I could go through apprenticeship with kids by myself." He shook his head.

"Oh, I have loads of help. My mother is a saint." Hermione smiled, "She has my son all night tonight actually." A lie. But any chance Hermione could avoid bringing up Ron she did.

"Dr. Granger." Malfoy said abruptly. Hermione turned to him, his face a mask of coldness. He held out his hand. "Dance with me."

Hermione hesitated, a blush blooming harshly across her cheeks. "Uh, sure, Malfoy."

Draco's hand wrapped tightly around hers as he led her to the dance floor and her pulse skyrocketed as his hand went to her waist. He pulled her close. Too close.

"We shouldn't be dancing together." Hermione said, glancing at the people watching them. Already whispering about them. She did not need to give Ron any more reasons to force another custody meeting.

Draco huffed leaning close to her ear, "So I can fuck you until you can't breathe, but I can't fucking dance with you?" Hermione didn't respond.

"You've never come to a gala before." His voice was hard, but with an edge of something Hermione couldn't pin. Her bravado was wearing thin, making her less cheeky. Instead she slipped into subdued indifference, her preferred state when it felt too risky to feel anything else.

"Well I'm here for this one." She kept her eyes on anything but him.

"I have to go on the dates my mom sets. I have to. Okay, it's the rules." Draco replied.

"I don't care," she repeated dully. And she really didn't, even when she probably should. She probably should feel a little more ruffled and a little less numb. But that would probably require her to think about things and feel things that she didn't want to feel. So she forced herself to not care at all.

“Hermione,” he whispered into her ear. “Let’s leave, meet me.”

“You smell like your date’s perfume.”

He was quiet then and neither of them spoke. When the dance ended Hermione moved away immediately and she didn’t see Draco or his date for the rest of the evening. Afterwards she stuck close to her cohort or Hagrid or anyone else that kept her laughing. Viktor promised to owl her with quidditch tickets. Hagrid and her planned a visit for Leo and Scorpius. She danced with Blaise again who kissed her hand when he said goodbye for the evening.

It was a good night. A fun one.

And yet all she could wonder about was where Draco had gone.

Plagiarism

Hermione got to her empty, dark flat and stood in front of her floo for a few minutes unsure what to do with herself.

It had been a good night. There was nothing else she needed. Hermione bent down and turned her floo off like she did every night. Her stomach growled so she wandered around her kitchen, staring into the fridge for long time.

Finally she grabbed her brie and apples and began slicing them up. She poured herself a large glass of water and just as she placed her things on the table, a booming knock hit her door.

It was nearly midnight.

Grabbing her wand, with her heart thundering in her chest, she looked through security camera.

A hot huff of breath left her mouth, she opened the door, but kept the chain locked, “What do you want?”

Draco Malfoy leaned against the doorframe. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair disheveled. “It’s Saturday,” he whined. “I want to hold you.”

“Go home Malfoy. You’re drunk.”

“I can’t apparate. And your floo doesn’t work.” He whined louder. “I had to walk here like a slow muggle.”

“Fine I’ll turn my floo on so you can go home.” Hermione unlatched her door and Draco stumbled inside. When the door closed Hermione instantly regretted the decision.

All she could see was the mess around her. Dishes stacked in the sink, the laundry basket full of unfolded clothes on her couch, her textbooks scattered on the dining room table intermingled with Leo’s crayons and coloring books. Malfoy’s presence made everything feel smaller and duller. He didn’t belong anywhere near her cheap furniture and messy flat.

Draco stood there staring at her. She stared back forgetting what they were supposed to be doing.

He placed his hands on his hips, his eyes sliding around suspiciously. “So, uh, Zabini here?” He looked down her hallway towards Leo’s room. “Krum?” He looked back at her rocking on his feet. “Where are they, huh?”

She gave him a blank look and relocked her door. “Really?”

“You never come to the galas.” Draco snapped exasperated. “I see you all the time at the hospital. I see you occasionally at the courthouses.” He shook his head. “Never at the galas.

It's disorienting. I don't get disoriented!" He pointed to himself with an offended scoff, then his finger whipped to Hermione with accusation. "You are driving me insane. It wasn't supposed to be like this!"

He looked so unlike his normal self, so opposite of his serious, unbothered nature. Hermione couldn't help but bark a loud belly laugh. All his self control had evaporated and it was hilarious to see him so panicked by it. It made him more human. More relatable.

He tilted sideways, as he moved towards her. "You mock my pain!"

Hermione shook her head. "Life is pain, your highness. Anyone who says differently is selling something."

Draco wobbled in front of her. "Just let me kiss you."

And the sadness in his eyes made her annoyance soften.

"Not like this." She said, quietly.

"Why?" It was a desperate plea.

"Because it makes me feel used. And not in the way I like." Hermione replied honestly.

His face fell. "I'm sorry."

She sighed. He didn't need to feel guilty. "You don't have to apologize. I know what I signed up for."

"I haven't slept with anyone except you."

"Another thing that's clearly stated in our contract." Hermione replied.

He stared at her for a long moment and she wanted to hug him. "Can I just sleep here?" he whispered.

Hermione lifted her chin. "Only on the condition you rectify your wretched behavior with Pilly."

"As you wish."

She closed her eyes and shook her head. "I'm going to get a hangover potion for you."

Hermione grabbed the potion from her kitchen cupboard and handed it Draco, who choked on it as he drank. "Disgusting," he grimaced. "I might need two though. I've had a lot of alcohol." He swayed on his feet. Hermione wrapped an arm around his waist and led him to her bedroom.

Pausing in her doorway to flick on the light switch, Draco pulled out his wand before she could stop him. Her bed doubled in size smashing into her dresser and nightstand with a splintering crack.

“Oops.” Draco blinked as he pulled away from her, shrugging. “Bed was too small.” He walked into her room spinning around in a wobbling circle. Hermione’s bed was on one end and her desk on the other, a large closet of clothes was wide open and a few bras were on the floor.

Hermione pressed a hand to her mouth to hide her laugh as she leaned against the door frame. “You shouldn’t do magic drunk.”

“Don’t worry,” he turned around looking at the splintered dresser. “I’ll just buy you a new house.”

“Malfoy,” Hermione rolled her eyes.

He faced her. “What? I would. I’ll buy you whatever you want. So what do you want, huh? Quidditch team? I’ll buy you a fucking quidditch team.” He looked at her with a challenge in his eye. “You want a hospital? I’ll buy you a hospital.” He shrugged like he was offering her to buy her a new quill.

Draco frowned, looking stressed as he spoke. “It’s like I don’t wanna look at anyone else now that I saw you and I don’t wanna think of anyone else now that I thought of you.”

Hermione blinked at him. “Those are Taylor Swift lyrics.”

Draco shook his head defensively. “No they’re not.”

Hermione stared at him.

“Okay it is also possible that I had those original thoughts in my own head and she also had them separately?” He gestured wildly with his hands. “It’s not my fault both of us had the same damn thoughts. She might be the mind reader. Ever thought of that? Huh? What if she stole them from me!” Draco frowned suddenly. “Is there a reason there are three of you?” His brows knitted deeper.

Hermione pushed off the door frame and fixed her dresser, still managing to keep the extension charm on the bed.

“Oh look at you, the most talented witch of our generation!” Draco mocked.

Hermione shook her head. “What is wrong with you?”

“You. You are what’s wrong with me!” He said, his eyes wide. He pointed to her bed. “Now get in bed and hold me!”

Hermione turned around with a sigh. “Undo the zipper so I can get out of my dress.”

Draco sobered slightly. He tugged the zipper down slowly, his knuckle ghosting her spine.

“All done.” He swallowed. Hermione grabbed a t-shirt and leggings and changed in the bathroom. When she returned, Draco had his shoes and belt off, laying out like a starfish in the middle of her bed.

Hermione climbed next to him and he folded himself around her. “I’m sorry, I’m drunk. I promise it’s not a regular occurrence.”

“That potion will kick in in the next half an hour or so.”

“Maybe. I drank a lot of firewhisky.” He pulled away from her so they were laying on their sides, facing each other.

Draco’s eyes narrowed. “Did Zabini kiss you? Don’t lie.”

Hermione chuckled. “Why do you care? You don’t even kiss me.”

His jaw tightened. “If Zabini kissed you I’m going to break his fucking hands.”

“Gods you’re so dramatic.” Hermione said, reaching over to massage down his jawline, forcing his tight muscles to relax. He stared at her waiting for an answer.

“On my hand.” Hermione replied, pulling her hand back. “Oh and on my ass.”

Draco’s eyes flared briefly before he realized she was joking.

“I did not like that. At all.” His brows furrowed as he released a breath. “Not funny.”

“It’s pretty funny to me.” Hermione smirked.

Draco pulled her hand to his mouth and kissed her ring finger knuckle. Courting rituals were so weird. Streaks of moonlight made his signet ring glint in the dark room.

They watched each other for a long time. Then Draco said with an irritated sigh. “I have trust issues, okay. I’m sorry.”

“Same.” Hermione said, with an understanding frown.

“I couldn’t stop seeing all their fucking googly eyes and mouths hanging open watching you.”

Hermione arched a brow, “That’s not at all what happened.”

“More or less.” Draco fixed her with an incredulous stare. “I trust you, but...”

“I signed the same contract. Do you need me say out loud that I didn’t cheat on you? Is that why you came here?” Hermione was a little peeved about this.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry.” Draco groaned as he rolled his back, closing his eyes and scrubbing his face with both hands. “Astoria cheated on me all the time through our courtship and she signed a contract. When I found out she was cheating... I don’t know... I felt like I deserved it. And if I deserved with her, I definitely deserve it with you.” Hermione’s heart dropped and her face softened. “I thought drinking away the paranoia was a good idea, it only made it worse.”

He turned his head to towards her. “And now, I have a hard time trusting anyone. I don’t even want to trust anyone.” Draco confessed.

“I know how that feels too.” Hermione replied sadly. She grabbed his hand. “For the record, I did not enjoy seeing you with a date. And I did not cheat on you. Their fingers began playing together like they did at the hotel. Draco lazily running his fingers up and down her middle finger and her ring finger. His grey eyes bore into hers. “You’re so fucking beautiful Hermione.”

“Thank you.”

“I’m just a walking cliche.” He said with an eye-roll. “My mind healer says it’s not good to call myself that, but it feels that way. My ex-wife cheated on me and now I have trust issues. Probably some kind of mummy issues.”

“And daddy issues.” Hermione added.

“And don’t forget the control issues.” Draco sighed. “Should we keep a tally?”

Hermione stretched her legs out. “It’s understandable how you feel. You don’t have to feel badly about it.” She turned on her back, keeping their hands interlaced as they stared at the ceiling together. Silence stretched for so long that Hermione wondered if Draco fell asleep. When he spoke again, it was with such vulnerability that it made Hermione move closer to him. “Astoria started taking pain potions before we were married. She slipped on a wet floor, broke a few of her ribs. It started out as real pain.”

“It always does.” Hermione said. “It’s always real. That’s why it’s so hard to see them when they can’t tell the difference anymore.”

He turned his head towards her, she explained quickly. “My father. He had a similar issues. With muggle meds. It wasn’t as severe as Astoria’s and he got help, but it was really hard for a long time.” His thumb brushed along hers.

“By the time I noticed Astoria had a problem with them I tried to get her into rehab, but she refused to go, that’s when I found out she’d been cheating on me. I ended things with her and two weeks later she told me she was pregnant. I didn’t know if Scorpius was mine until he was three days old.”

Hermione waited silently for him to continue, sliding her other hand around his arm, curling next to his shoulder.

“I can’t claim an heir without being married so we immediately got married and I forced her to be admitted to rehab. I didn’t get to be there for her pregnancy, or feel him kick or anything really.” His voice was calm, but the depth of grief in it was tangible. Hermione could relate, although in a very different way.

“You married her without even knowing he was yours?”

"I couldn't risk it," Draco replied. "I wanted to ensure he was taken care of. Plus, it was a good thing because Astoria relapsed during her pregnancy and then I had her admitted to the hospital again. Scorp was born two months early and struggled for a really long time. I didn't get to hold him until he was almost three weeks old because he was so sick."

As his voice cracked, something in Hermione's chest did too.

"And then," he sighed, "Astoria disappeared. I couldn't find her anywhere. Eventually I stopped trying and brought home a two month old baby alone. He was so small. I just kept thinking I was going to screw everything up. My mom helped and Pilly too, but I was determined to figure it out. I was his father and that meant something." He took a deep breath. "I filed for divorce when he was a year old after seeing her for all of three weeks his entire first year of life. And it had only been to ask for money or to help her at the hospital."

"I'm really sorry," she said, then added. "I hope you know that you are a very good father."

His jaw feathered. "Thank you." Then glanced at the clock. "Do you work tomorrow?"

"Thankfully no." She sighed.

"Then in that case," Draco said, with a bashful glance. "Any chance we can bring back that brie?"

Thirty minutes later, after stuffing their faces with cheese and apples, they were laying with their feet up against her headboard.

"What is this supposed to do exactly?" Draco said, wiggling his socked feet.

"It's supposed to relieve stress and promote circulation." Hermione said, circling her ankles in a nice stretch. Both felt of them great. His foot moved around her ankle, rubbing his foot against hers. She chuckled. "Are you playing footsie with me?"

"I'm a weirdo, just ask my son."

"I've never been bothered by it." Hermione said, placing a foot on top of his.

"What exactly do you do for work?" she asked, turning her head towards him.

"If I tell you, " he faced her as their feet continued to fight for dominance. "You should know that I will arrest you, if you spread any rumors that the DMLE uses any form of Legilimency. Because they do not. Never have and never will." Draco's eyes narrowed on her.

Hermione bit her lip. "Hmm. Handcuffs you say?"

Draco's mouth tightened. "Don't you tempt me like that, witch."

She smirked. "So if they don't do that, what do you do?" She wasn't sure who decided they were done, but it felt synchronized as they turned to face each other, tangling their legs together on the bed.

"I'm an interrogator," Draco replied. "I do some field work too. I look at a lot of crime scenes to piece things together."

"And you're extra special because you're a legilimens."

"Purely coincidental." Draco winked. "I love my job. I'm good at it. It's helpful. It's a good challenge," he said. "It's everything else that's difficult."

"Like what?" Hermione asked as their fingertips brushed together on the bed, like magnets that couldn't stop reaching for the other.

"Like life. The future. It's all just overwhelming. I have trust issues with everyone including myself. Which makes me second guess all of my decisions."

"Welcome to the club." Hermione huffed.

"Take that Scorpius." He whispered as he wrapped an arm around her waist. Hermione closed her eyes chuckling as she moved closer into him. They laid there in a comforting silence until Draco whispered, "You have bewitched me, body and soul."

Hermione shook with laughter. "Once again, not original."

"It is."

"It is not. I can't take you seriously when you're plagiarizing."

Draco said in slightly resentful tone, "You were supposed to be average and adequate and boring."

"I don't think I've ever been called average or adequate in my entire life. Boring? Of course, but certainly not the others."

He sighed sleepily. "Anyone who has called you boring has not read your list of sexual fantasies."

"I didn't say they were correct." Hermione chuckled, snuggling closer into him, breathing in his scent without a trace of his date's perfume.

Draco's hand randomly stroked her back as they laid in bed, soon she was in that sweet place of not being completely asleep, but feeling so relaxed and content that it didn't matter.

"HERMIONE!"

Hermione's adrenaline spiked sharp as Ron's bellowing voice jolted both of them out of bed. He banged on her door again and her stomach churned violently.

She turned to Draco who'd grabbed his wand, his face fiercely focused. "It's only Ron." She said, raising a hand to him, "just stay here for a moment, please. It's probably Leo."

Hermione ran to the front door where Ron's tired face twisted in anger as he handed off a sleepy Leo. "He's sick." Ron tossed his backpack inside her house with a loud thud. "Why the hell would you give me a sick kid? The twins are very susceptible to illnesses, they can't even get their black cat flu shot until they're one!"

Hermione held Leo to her chest as he yawned.

"What's wrong with him?" Her mind raced, placing her hand on his forehead.

"He has a fever." Ron hissed at her. He showed her his wand's scan.

"It's very mild Ron, it's not—"

"Don't talk to me like I'm an idiot, you fucking—"

"Is there a problem here, Weasley?" Draco said from behind Hermione.

Draco's entire demeanor had changed. His voice was hard, commanding, and cold. His hand moved to the small of her back and she released a breath she didn't know she'd been holding.

Ron's face dropped into an ugly sneer, his hands going to his hips as he puffed out his chest. "What are you doing here, Malfoy. It's three in the fucking morning."

Draco reached an arm over Hermione's shoulder, holding up his badge. "I'm here under DMLE business. Dr. Granger is helping consult on a case." Draco said without any defensiveness. As if Ron had just been asking a curious question. Yet the look at Draco's face was anything but welcoming.

Leo lifted his head groggily pointing towards Draco. "He beats up bad guys."

Ron's mouth clamped shut and Hermione worried what the future repercussions would be for this. "Well," Ron said, trying to regain composure. "I'll see you next weekend Leo."

"Bye Ron." Leo said. Ron's jaw feathered and he shot another glare in Hermione's direction before leaving.

Draco closed the door. Then Hermione reached over and locked it.

Leo leapt towards Draco, kicking Hermione in the chin in the process. "Dragon!" Leo said with a congested snort. Hermione rubbed her chin, that would probably bruise.

Draco caught him precariously at the arm and waist. "Hi Leo." Draco rubbed his hand over his face. "How are you feeling?"

"I feel fine. Those crying babies just kept waking me up and Ron was getting mad, but I couldn't breathe through my nose and then I'd be asleep, but then I'd wake up again." Leo

shrugged innocently, then his face brightened. “Is Scorpius here? Are we having a sleepover?”

Hermione watched the interaction with tenderness and something loosened in her chest. Draco chuckled. “Scorpius is asleep at my house. I was just hanging out with your mum.” He shrugged casually as he glanced at Hermione with a soft smile. And in that moment she realized Draco Malfoy would be the death of her. It was absolutely terrifying.

Curse courting season and it's false promises of emotion free sex!

Leo frowned, “Oh, okay. That’s fine I guess.” It was adorable watching him try to hide his disappointment.

“And it’s the middle of the night.” Hermione said, “You need to get back in bed. I’ll grab a decongestant potion first though.” Hermione ducked into the kitchen and came back with the medicine.

“Yuck. That one is disgusting.” Leo screwed up his face in protest.

Draco looked at Leo with understanding. “Medicine is the worst, but your mum is very smart and she’s a doctor, so we have to listen to her.”

Leo shook his head again, “Uh huh.”

“Leo, I’m tired, you need to take this so we can all go to sleep.” Hermione’s patience was thinning and exhaustion was setting in. Ron’s voice was like acid inside her body. “What will it take for you to swallow it?”

“A sleepover with Scorpius!” Leo shouted so loudly Malfoy leaned away, briefly closing his eyes. “Dr. Granger, I may need a consultation for ear damage.” Then he looked back at Leo, “We can schedule a sleepover.”

“Yes!” Leo said in a hushed tone. “Sorry if I broked your ear, Mum says I struggle with volume control.”

Draco huffed a laugh. “It’s okay, but you have to take the medicine right now.”

“Fine.” Leo’s shoulders sagged, before he chugged it. “Hmm. That was not so bad actually.”

Hermione held out her hands. “I’ll tuck you into bed now” Leo leaned into Draco. “No, I want him to put me to bed.”

“What?” Hermione scoffed as her hands dropped to her hips.

Draco turned to Hermione with a smug smile. “Sucks doesn’t it?”

He began walking then turned towards Hermione, “I actually don’t know where I’m going.”

Hermione led the way to Leo’s room and watched from the doorway as Draco tucked him in. He bent down on the floor and Leo began speaking in a whisper. Draco looked back at Hermione and then whispered a response to Leo.

Once Leo's door was closed, Hermione folded her arms against her chest. "Looks like your hangover potion has worked."

Draco pressed a finger to his temple, rubbing slightly. "Yeah I'll probably grab another one honestly. How long will Leo sleep for?"

"If I'm lucky, hopefully still seven." Hermione, grabbed a potion for him, yawning as she handed to him. Which made Draco yawn, before he gulped it down.

"Back to bed then." Draco nodded towards her room. Hermione shook her head. "You should go home." Draco rolled his eyes and brushed past her.

As soon as he got into her room, he searched through her drawers and pulled out a pair of black sweats, tapped them with his wand resizing them. Hermione crawled into bed and enjoyed the unexpected pleasure of watching Draco taking off his clothes.

"I've only ever seen you this nude on a video."

Draco rolled his eyes, "yeah, add that to the list of my issues too." He moved under the blankets with her, shirtless and in her sweats, pulling her close to him. She placed her hands tentatively on his bare chest relishing in the feel of his skin for the first time. Then she felt the small scars only associated with Sectumsempra. He shivered as her fingers traced a scar.
"Being naked is vulnerable."

"That's why I like it." Hermione whispered, closing her eyes.

He sighed, kissing the top of her head. "And it's why I don't."

Doing Hard Things Is Hard

Leo shook the handle on Hermione's door a handful of hours later, swinging it open with a loud thud.

"Go back to bed or I fire Pilly again." Draco said to her as he got out of bed.

Hermione fell back asleep and didn't wake back up till noon.

When she walked into the living room she found Draco Malfoy in her resized black sweats and a resized Gryffindor t-shirt. He was relaxed on the couch with his eyes closed. Leo sat on his shoulders, running tiny hands through his scalp. Scorpius sat on the floor massaging Draco's socked feet. Cereal and toys were scattered everywhere. A stack of books were on the other end of the couch and *The Princess Bride* played on the T.V.

"Inconcievable!" Scorpius said along with the character.

A weird emotion wiggled inside of Hermione, tugging on her insides. *Fucked*. She was so fucked. And she hadn't even been fucked in two weeks.

"Quite the setup you've got here."

"I'm just supporting their entrepreneurial pursuits." Draco said slowly, opening his eyes. "I offered them a job and they took it."

"He says I'm really good at massaging, mum." Leo said, moving to Draco's shoulders. "And he's going to pay us like a thousand galleons."

"Dad broke your machine over there." Scorpius said without looking away from the tv.

"Scorpius you traitor." Draco lifted Leo off his shoulders and walked over to Hermione, "I'll buy you a new one. The damned thing refused to cooperate with me."

Hermione narrowed her eyes, "If you broke my coffee maker I'll be suing you for emotional damages."

"I'll buy you an entire coffee shop." He said, with a grimace.

Hermione walked into a cleaned kitchen. There were no more dishes in the sink and her countertops were cleaned, all the dishes were put away and her mail was stacked in a nice little pile. On the table sat a vase of new roses.

"Please don't clean my kitchen." Hermione sighed. "Thank you but this was unnecessary."

"Fine, have it your way." He threw up his hands revealing a strip of bare abdomen, his resizing on his Gryffindor t-shirt was a little more like a crop top. "I guess I'm not allowed to be nice to you ever again." Hermione looked at the espresso maker her mother got her for her Christmas last year.

"Did you even turn it on?" She pressed the ON button and Draco scratched his head. "Oh, well I didn't see that button."

"I like your outfit." Hermione smirked as she began grabbing the coffee beans. "Do you want some?" she nodded towards the coffee maker as it vibrated to life. "I've also got a cupboard full of pepper up potions as well." She opened the cupboard above her head.

Draco leaned against the counter. "I'll take a coffee." With his eyes still on the cupboard, a crease formed between his brows. "Are those things...addictive?"

"No," She gave him a soft smile, closing the cupboard. "They're not."

Draco inhaled and closed his eyes, "Sorry that was—"

"I'm not offended." Hermione understood his concern. If anything she respected him for it. She made them coffees and they made their way back to the couch.

Hermione shuffled books to the floor and sat down as Draco said, "You're turning them into black holes for books. They are never satisfied with just one. They had me read like twelve of them."

"You are allowed to say no, you realize?" Hermione replied, sitting to face him on the couch. She sipped her coffee. He turned towards her, lifting a leg on the couch.

"I can't actually. That's the problem." Draco said, looking at the kids briefly. They were laying on the ground coloring. "They are too damned cute when they ask. Their big eyes are like—"

"Kryptonite." Hermione said and Draco's brow furrowed.

"I'm not familiar with that potion."

"A muggle reference. A movie and comic book. Sorry." Hermione sighed.

"Don't apologize. We'll have to watch it. So we can get some new material for our little parrots to memorize." Draco slid his leg towards her, his foot brushed up against her thigh.

"It's a little bit too much for them at six." Hermione said, extending her own legs towards him.

His hand fell to her foot, his thumb rubbing softly against her ankle. "So just us then. We'll watch it without them," he replied. They stared at each other for a long moment and Hermione's stomach tumbled.

"Oh gross." Leo said, "Scorpius just threw up."

Draco's head dropped, "Alright. Both of our kids are sick."

Malfoy changed back into his own clothes, but failed to resize hers and when Hermione tried to return them back to their original sizes they wouldn't budge.

They'd decided to keep the kids out of school for the week so they could rest and heal from the cold they had. Both boys were very upset with the news, but were reminded of a future pending sleepover for good attitudes.

There was a brief awkward moment saying goodbye between them. Draco stepped towards her and Hermione held out her hand for a high five. Draco shook it awkwardly as she held it up in the air. Both of them blushing like idiots, awkwardly laughing while the boys watched them in confusion.

"I think your dad made my mum a weirdo." Leo whispered.

That night while Hermione and Leo were eating dinner, she asked, "What were you and Malfoy talking about when he tucked you in?"

"Oh, I was telling him that even though I chose him for tuck in, I still love you."

Hermione chuckled softly bringing a bite of pasta into her mouth.

"Then I asked him if he loves you too."

Hermione choked. "And what did he say?" Hermione's heart raced as she reached for her water.

"He said, he loves your freckles. And then I said, so does that mean you love mine too?" Leo pointed to the bridge of his nose; he had even more freckles than Hermione.

"And he said, of course he does." Leo grinned. Hermione found herself blinking back tears.

It was bitter sweet not having to work all week. Hermione was so used to being busy she felt her anxiety spike more frequently without anything to distract her. Especially since she found herself with more downtime than she'd had in months, maybe even years. On the bright side she got a lot of great sleep and she really needed it.

On Wednesday afternoon she had her mum come over to watch Leo so she could visit Scorpius and check to see how he was feeling.

"Granger?" Draco's head popped up from the couch, where a sleeping Scorpius laid against his chest. It was fucking adorable. Draco set down the book he was reading and sat up, slowly shifting Scorpius off of him.

"Hi," Hermione blushed for no fathomable reason. "I just wanted to check on Scorp. I coordinated with your mother, but I'm assuming she didn't mention it."

"No, she did not."

"It feels intentional at this point." Hermione chuckled awkwardly. Scorpius cheeks were slightly flushed. "How is he feeling?"

"Only threw up once more on Sunday. Just extra tired and cranky, but today has been good. By tomorrow he'll be fine." Draco stood, clearing his throat. "Can I talk to you for a moment?"

Hermione swallowed, twisting her fingers together. "Uh, sure."

Draco walked to his desk, "This is for Leo." Draco handed her a framed photo. Their two boys had their arms slung over each other's shoulders, big grins, and crinkling eyes under furry rodent heads.

"I don't think I've ever been so in love with rodents before." Hermione pursed her lips, "Thank you. Leo will be thrilled." Hermione placed the photo into her bag, before setting her bag down on the couch. Then regretted it because that was presumptuous. Hermione negotiated back and forth with herself if she should pick up her bag again. Her chest squeezed with a rush of anxiety. Draco leaned on the front of his desk, something lining his expression that made Hermione very uneasy.

"Is everything alright?"

He looked up at the ceiling. "It's hard sometimes...hard to communicate...words."

"Okay," Hermione inhaled, preparing herself for bad news. Contract termination. He cheated on her with the American. No. He wouldn't. He's dying. Or maybe he's already dead. A ghost. She's actually hallucinating and all of this has been a dream. Maybe she's dead?

"Kissing feels extremely...fuck." Draco said, running a hand over his hair. He pushed off his desk and moved in front of her. When he spoke his words were rushed. "It feels like I'm running naked through the Great Hall and every person I've ever met is there. Mind you I hate being naked. Every Hogwarts house is watching and I don't know if I'm running the right way to my dorm so I turn around in circles and I get lost on the moving stairs and somehow everyone's following me-"

"Are you trying to say you're a bad kisser?" She furrowed her brows.

Draco shook his head, a small tug at the corner of his lips. "No, I'm saying it feels extremely vulnerable to kiss you. But it's not you. It's me. I don't want you to take it personally. I can fuck without emotions." He inhaled. "I don't know....if....if I can kiss without them."

Hermione's breath hitched as he moved closer towards her, his fingers brushing hers. "And I want to kiss you." Oh....Oh.

"It wasn't supposed to be like this." Hermione whispered, frowning as her fingers brushed back against his. Draco inhaled sharply as their palms slid together, their fingers intertwining, the coldness of his signet ring making her shiver and flush with heat all at once.

Draco's knuckles ran against her cheek bone. "Thanking those lucky stars of mine." Her stomach swooshed, multiple giant fucking birds taking flight at once.

He cupped her face, "I just wanted you to know, outside of the hotel."

"That's very considerate of you." Hermione breathed. They were both stalling, they could have kissed already. Hell they could have kissed so many times, in so many circumstances. Is that why she hadn't pushed it? Because she knew it...felt different with him. *Gods that's so cliche.*

Draco's jaw clenched and unclenched, "Do you..." he swallowed and bit on his lip. "Do your kisses mean something? I'd like to know how to interpret them."

Hermione was not unprepared for a conversation like this.

"Yes, sometimes." Her voice rose high, as did her brows.

Draco unclasped their hands, wrapping his arm around her waist, tugging her flush to him, this thumb brushed her cheek as he frowned, "That is not helpful at all."

Hermione frowned, sliding her hands up his chest. "Well, you were supposed to be rude, and cold, and mediocre."

"Two of those things are true." Draco's eyes dropped to her mouth.

"Malfoy, I- well, I am- "

"It's fine." His brows knitted together. "I didn't mean to put any pressure on you. I'm sorry." Hermione groaned. "I am equally struggling to use my words."

Draco began to let her waist go, but she wrapped her arms around his neck and tugged him to her mouth. They both stared at each other, wide eyes with their mouths smashed together. Neither of them moved. "Kiss me," Hermione spoke against his mouth. Where every other point of contact was soft between them, both of their mouths were stiff.

"I'm scared." Draco said against her lips. "You are scary. Kissing you is fucking scary."

"You are equally fucking scary." She hissed with accusation. They were talking against each other's mouths like idiots. "This certainly has to count as some form of kissing." She said. "Stop holding back."

Draco's chuckle sent a zinging twisting sensation along her spine. "Give me a break, I just told you I was nervous trying to kiss someone I have crush on."

Hermione's breathing went choppy and she scraped his lip with her teeth as she spoke. "That is not at all what you said."

"Should we have all of our conversations like this?" Draco asked, his tongue swiped against her bottom lip.

"Only the most important ones." Hermione opened her mouth wider and his grip tightened around her face, pulling their mouths firmly together. His lips were soft and full. It was so innocent how they stared at each other, kissing so hesitantly, like they were testing to see if they were walking on thin ice about to break on a large frozen lake. Their tongues met briefly and it felt like she had stuck her finger in an electrical outlet. She gasped slightly as Draco moaned, just as Scorpius burst into the room.

All three of them froze.

Hermione and Draco were wrapped around each other, their cheeks pressed together staring at Scorpius, like two teenagers caught in a backseat by a cop. Except they were adults.

Specifically, adult parents who could hardly kiss each other.

"Can I cuddle too?" Scorpius grinned, skipping up to them.

Draco and Hermione let out loud, awkward laughs as they both took large steps far away from each other. "Well—" Draco cleared his throat.

"I should—" Hermione grabbed her bag, slinging it on her shoulder.

"Is Leee-ohh here?" Scorpius sang, wrapping his arms around her legs.

"No," Hermione turned around trying to focus on anything but Draco's blushing face which somehow made him more attractive. Her eyes snagged on his desk. A group photo from Halloween framed. Two rodents, a princess, a pirate, sandwiched between two grandmothers. It made her chest feel hollow and full all at the same time. Hermione pulled her eyes away, back to Scorpius, "I just wanted to check on you."

Scorpius scrunched his nose. "But you were cuddling my dad?"

"How are you feeling Scorpius?" Hermione asked.

"Fine." Scorpius shrugged. "I'd feel even better if you snuggled me with a book?" He held his hands clasped near face, his eyes growing wider with every second that passed. And with perfect timing his bottom lip popped out. "Please."

Hermione's heart swelled. "I think I have to." She glanced at Draco, who was staring at her with one of his unreadable expressions. "Go grab a book. Maybe your dad can join us."

"Dad?" Scorpius bounced.

"I'd love to join." Draco came up next to Hermione his hand ghosting the small of her back.

"This feels strange without Leo." Draco said as they walked into the school room. Hermione smiled. "He's probably painting my mom's face or glueing cereal to my walls." She pulled out her phone and sent her mom a text. *Staying a bit longer.* To which Jean immediately

replied. *Stay as long as you want. Stay the night even!* Hermione shoved her phone back into her bag, shaking her head.

Five minutes later the three of them laid on the pile of colorful pillows Hermione in the middle, Scorpius tucked on her right side, and Draco on her left.

“Snuggle in close.” Scorpius instructed Draco.

“Only if you insist.” He replied, intertwining his hand with Hermione’s, Draco’s thumb brushing over hers. That’s when she felt her feet beginning to slip off a very steep, terrifyingly high cliff.

“One more!” Scorpius begged thirty minutes later, his face morphing into Hermione’s Kryptonite again. She turned to Draco, whose leg had draped over Hermione’s half way through the first book. “Do you think they go to some training seminar to learn how to make that face?”

“I’m almost certain they do.” Draco sighed. His breath tickled her face.

“Alright, alright. Only one more.” Hermione said needing to look away from Draco’s mouth. This would now be the fourth book. Scorpius leapt up and ran to the book shelves. Draco’s thumb brushed over hers. “When is your next exam?” he said, both of them staring at the ceiling.

Hermione didn’t know how he was able to keep track of her schedule without having access to it, but she was secretly impressed.

“Three weeks from now.” She sighed. “I am so nervous. They say each one gets harder.”

Draco chuckled. “Good thing you like it hard.”

A burst of laughter came from Hermione as she turned, hitting him in the shoulder. He snatched her hand, starring at her as he kissed her fourth knuckle. “You’re going to be perfect.”

Scorpius landed next to Hermione and Draco dropped her hand. “Dad are you so very jealous that Minnie is my best friend and so is Leo?”

Draco’s brows shot up. “Um, yes. Very jealous.”

“I thought so.” Scorpius sighed. “Must be rough to be so weird. But not me. You don’t have to worry Minnie. I probably won’t even be a Slytherin.” Scorpius grinned at Hermione. And something deep inside made her want to cry at his expression. There was an intense yearning for her approval in his eyes. Letting go of Draco’s hand, Hermione turned to face Scorpius. Propping herself up on her elbow.

“Scorpius,” Hermione swallowed. The boy eagerly looked at her. She could feel Draco shift beside her, mirroring her position.

"Yes, Minnie-teacher-grandmum-bestest-friend-in-the-whole-wide-world?" Scorpius grinned wider, blinking. Hermione's throat ached, his desire to be accepted by her would also be the death of her.

"I want you to know that, I like you no matter what," she said slowly. "That means, even if you're weird, or if you're a Slytherin. I'll still be your friend. I like your dad and he's both." Hermione smiled. "But, even if you're a Hufflepuff or a Ravenclaw, or hairy rodent, or if you grow up and go through an emo phase, or if you become vegan or if you—"

"What's vegan?" Scorpius wrinkled his nose.

"Nothing. She's lying about that part." Draco said, as his hand gently rested against her hip, his chest pressed against her back. Scorpius' eyes dropped to his hand and Hermione ignored the itchy urge to push Draco's hand away.

"I'm serious." She continued, "You don't have to be anybody else, except yourself. I like you just the way you."

He smiled softly, whispering "Does that mean you love me?"

Draco stilled behind her, "Scorp, buddy, um—" Before either of them could offer a response an airy, feminine voice rang through the halls. "Scorpius!"

The child's eyes went wide, snapping to Draco's. He was already on his feet, wand out, headed towards the door. Hermione sat up, wrapping an arm around Scorpius who was stiff as stone.

"Scorpius!" Astoria appeared in the doorway just as Draco reached it.

Scorpius crawled behind Hermione's back. "Don't let her see me."

Hermione whispered a notice me not charm. "She can't see you anymore, just stay right there alright, I've got you."

"What are you doing here Astoria?" Draco said, carefully.

"I want to see my son." She ginned lazily at Draco. "You look so good Draco. Wow." She tried to paw at him, but Draco moved his shoulder away. Astoria saw Hermione sitting on the floor a book in her lap. Scorpius wrapped his arms around Hermione's waist.

"Dr. Grangerrrrrr." Astoria growled the words, and tried to move towards her. Draco held an arm up stopping her. "You are not allowed to be here. How did you get in the house?"

"I floo'd obviously." Astoria shook her head. "My sister said Scorpius was sick. And I wanted to see if he was okay. That's a mother's job. I am going to do that job!" Her eyes were wide and distant, her words were slurred. She was so high. Astoria's bone thin arm hung around Draco's shoulder, "Unless you want to make another baby?"

Draco peeled her arm off him. "I'm going to take you back to your group home Astoria."

Her eyes flashed, “I want to see Scorpius!” The boy flinched behind Hermione and she placed her hands on his hands, he was shaking.

“You’ll see him on the next visit.” Draco said firmly. “You’re not going to see him today.”

“I am his mother!” Astoria screamed, tears began running down her face.

Draco sighed, looking back at Hermione, she nodded at him understanding passing through both of them easily.

Astoria huffed. “Oh I see what’s happening here. Screwing the nanny are you? The little mudblood bitch-” Draco and Astoria apparated away.

Hermione waited several long moments before undoing the charm and turning to a whimpering Scorpius. She pulled him into his arms, moving to the couch to hold him while he cried.

“I’m so sorry you were scared.” Hermione whispered. “You’re safe.”

Scorpius sniffled. “Sometimes when she’s nice, I like that she’s my mum. But sometimes when she’s crazy, I don’t like it.”

“That’s very understandable.” Hermione rubbed his back. “You’re a good kid, Scorp. Her behavior has nothing to do with you.”

“That’s what dad says too.” Scorpius gave a shuddering breath.

Draco reappeared in the room. “Scorp,” he moved to them and Hermione handed the boy over, standing.

“Are you alright?”

Scorpius curled into his shoulder. “Yeah, Minnie made me invisible.”

“Thank you,” Draco said to Hermione, but he couldn’t quite meet her eye.

“Of course.” Hermione inhaled steadily. “You should turn off your floo at night.” She turned, grabbing her bag, her chest tightened painfully hard.

“What?”

“Your floo. Um, sometimes black market floo channels-” Hermione wiped her sweaty palms against her jeans.

“Our floo is incredibly secure.”

“Sometimes they can be hacked, even with security wards.” Hermione’s hands curled into fists. “They can be hacked and get access otherwise that might be denied. Like just now.” Hermione nodded to the doorway.

Draco shook his head, “She used the Greengrass' floo Granger, it's not-.”

“Alright. I still think you should-”

“What's a mudblood?” Scorpius's innocent face made Hermione smile softly. “I'm going to go.”

Hermione didn't look back as she left, her hands shook violently all the way to the floo room.

The emotional afternoon got worse when she arrived home to another emergency summons for a custody hearing in one week.

Draco is Dying, There is No Other Explanation

Draco Malfoy sat in his office Wednesday night writing and rewriting a text to Hermione. He tossed the phone down, his head falling into his hands.

Pilly appeared in front of his desk. "All the floos have been turned off."

"Thank you." Draco sighed.

Pilly's smile turned shy, a foot turning. "Shall I go clean Miss Granger's kitchen?"

Draco huffed in annoyance. "No, she declined it."

"Mister," Pilly's bottom lip quivered. "This is not fair!"

"Yeah, well you're on my side Pilly. Scorpius and my mother are team Granger." Draco rolled his eyes. Pilly's shoulders sagged as she disappeared.

This whole thing was making him feel childish. Stupid strange kiss-talking made his stomach fill with tiny fluttering sensations. He must be ill. Had his mother been spiking his tea?

"It wasn't supposed to be like this!" Draco exclaimed loudly to the empty room. "I was not even supposed to talk to her that much!" Then let out a loud incoherent noise when he realized he was talking to himself.

He leaned back in his chair, blindly feeling for his phone and pressed the button before he could talk himself out of it.

She didn't answer until the fifth ring. "Hello?" Hermione's apprehension made his eyes narrow.

"We're you going to ignore my call?"

"No." She said too quickly.

"Well, thank you for answering." He replied, turning in his chair. "Are you studying?"

"Yes, would you like to study diverticulitis with me? Or irritable bowl syndrome. Oh! Or, bowel obstructions."

Draco hummed. "Hmmm. How about none of the above?"

Hermione's soft chuckle had his stomach tightening.

"Actually," He said, tracing a finger along the picture frame of them at Halloween. "I have a few weird symptoms coming up. What would you say the following symptoms are? A weird flushing feeling in my cheeks. An even weirder wiggling sensation in my stomach, and my

brain turns to mush in the middle of a sentence. I can't speak properly. My heart races and then sometimes it slows. It's truly concerning. Sometimes I feel like I'm dying. Other times it's the opposite."

"The opposite as in you feel like you're alive?" Her confusion was laced with curiosity. He could practically see the wheels turning. He was a bastard.

"Are there any reoccurring circumstances in which this happens?" Hermione asked.

"Yes, it seems to most commonly occur whenever I'm with you. I don't know how that's relevant though. Perhaps it's your perfume or something..." Draco's voice trailed off slightly, feeling an airy swooshing feeling through his chest. Another stupid symptom to add.

"Ohhh. That makes sense."

"Does it? Because it doesn't make any sense to me." Draco huffed, running a hand through hair, slowing turning in his chair.

"Yes, it's a very common disease actually." Hermione sighed, "I can't actually diagnose you, because it's unethical, but—"

Draco snapped upright in his chair, "What? Do I actually have a disease?"

Hermione barked a laugh, "Yes, a very serious case of Weirdo-cinitus."

Draco slumped back with loud scoff. "You had me fearful I was truly dying, Dr. Granger."

"I can assure you that you are not dying."

A quiet lulled between them. He liked their quiet moments. Where they were content to stare at each other or just *be* together. Like they had this secret silent language. It's also what made this feel so damn complicated and mushy and—

"I'm sorry about today." Hermione said and Draco's eyes went wide.

"I have no idea why you'd be the one to apologize. I called you to do just that and somehow you beat me to it. Gods Granger leave room for the rest of us to be so good," Draco replied, feeling more inadequate for this conversation than ever.

"I am though." Her sincerity made his chest feel like someone wrapped a chain around it. So heavy it was claustrophobic but in a bizarre comforting way that made him want to keep it there. Keep *her* there. "I think the position you're in is incredibly difficult and you're doing such a great job trying to balance fairness and safety. Scorpius is so lucky to have you on his side." The chain wound around Draco's neck, his throat tightening so painfully he felt like he was choking. It was deeply unsettling. And scary. Yet somehow sexy?

He grabbed his water and chugged it. Even that didn't stop his voice from being rough. "I appreciate that more you know."

They were quiet again and Draco didn't want to talk about the next part. He didn't want to talk about it ever. Or even remind her of his connection to any of it. Not that she could forget. And as if the ghosts of his past wanted to emphasize the shame already flooding his body, the dark mark flared painfully.

"Shit." He slapped his hand over his wrist as the muscles cramped, sliding his phone uncomfortably against his shoulder and ear.

"Are you alright?" Hermione said, her concern made his guilt even heavier.

"I'm fine." He breathed slowly and forced the rest of the words out of his mouth, "Hermione, I'm incredibly sorry about what Astoria said to you. I spoke with Scorpius. I have spoken to him about the war and—"

"You don't have to—"

"Yes, I do." Draco inhaled a shaky breath, both from the pain twisting down his forearm making his fingers cramp and also because of the emotional tidal wave hitting his chest.

"I want you to know how incredibly sorry I am. I need you to know that I am deeply ashamed and still processing the events that happened during the war and before it.. But I need you to know I don't believe any thing like that. I don't know if I ever truly did, but I behaved as if I did. Which is just as awful. It's important to me for you to know that I value you so highly. Completely and wholly as my equal. Well, you're significantly better than me in almost every way, but in the barest of terms, I never what you to think, I'm, um, that I think of you as less." Draco cringed as he finished. Gods, was his brain just fucking puréed soup now? Finally his fingers relaxed and the spasms began dying down.

"Thank you," Like most things with her were, Hermione's voice was hard to interpret. Which made everything about her so difficult to navigate. How was he supposed to know what to do when he couldn't truly know what she was thinking or feeling?

"It makes me want to kiss you, actually." Hermione hummed and the claustrophobic chains eased as gratitude swept through him. He cleared his throat. "That was obviously my plan the whole time."

"Speaking of," This version of Hermione's tone was one of the more easier ones he'd been able to identify. She was nervous. He could almost see the blush spreading over the bridge of her nose blooming across her cheeks, blending into her freckles. "Are we still meeting this Saturday? There was no invitation with the flowers and I didn't want to assume...."

Draco smiled, "Well, I was a drunken fool last Saturday night, spilling my guts to a beautiful witch, and I didn't have time to send it. And honestly with Scorpius sick I've been lazy. Don't worry, I'll be sending you something." He had a very exciting plan for her. A sharp thrill ran through him as he thought of it.

"Oh, it's alright, I didn't mean to put any pressure on you if you didn't want to. I just was looking at my calendar and Viktor Krum sent tickets to—"

"You're busy." Draco's smile fell away. Then he remembered the most disappointing part of his laziness. "Actually, I was going to ask for a special request for Saturday night. A celebration or sorts, if you will."

"To celebrate what?"

"Eight weeks of courting you." Draco's thumb circled his forefinger. *Stupid nervous tick.*

"It's gone by faster than I thought it would." Hermione replied. "How exactly did you want to celebrate?" Her voice rose slightly, her breath hitching and it made Draco more nervous to say what he wanted out loud. Saying things out loud fucking sucked. He knew she didn't work this Sunday. Occasionally Draco abused his privileges as a detective to check the hospital's schedule. It's not like he was stalking her or something, he just had to get details where he could, since she was so tight lipped about it. So if she lied about working he'd know. And if she rejected him for any other reason, well, it was probably sign of something bad, which would really fucking suck because she occupied so much of his mind.

Fuuuuck he hated feeling like this. Gods damn it.

He sucked in a slow breath. "Spend the night with me." A rush of violent fluttering went through his chest. He felt like he was standing naked in front of every employee at the DMLE. "Properly, this time. I want a do over for my drunkenness."

Hermione was quiet for longer than he could stand.

"The boys could have a sleepover here." He offered, quickly thinking of every possible reason she might have to say no.

"I...pickup Leo at six on Saturday...from Ron's house." Her voice was very quiet. Everything about Ron made her uncomfortable. He was clearly a difficult part of her life. A part she kept Draco firmly out of. And he did not like that at all. He'd weasel his way into it though. And no, the irony was not lost on him. "How about," Draco's confidence began to build. "We meet at the hotel, at our normal time. Then at six, you and I can grab Leo. We'll all apparate to the manor, where we'll surprise the boys with their sleepover. My mother would be thrilled to have them. And then I'll take you to dinner." Hermione sucked in a breath. "In the muggle world." He clarified quickly. "And then I'll take you back to my bed."

"Are there any plans to kiss me?" Hermione's cheeky tone made Draco chuckle and close his eyes with a feeling that felt bigger than relief. She'd come. "I do think we need some practice."

"Alright."

"Alright." Draco repeated softly.

"Goodnight Draco."

He couldn't help himself. "Goodnight, dream of my mouth on your sweet cunt."

"Every day since the first time your lips touched mine." Hermione hung up as Draco let out a loud moan.

Just a Whore With Anxiety

Chapter Notes

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

Hermione grinned brightly at Ron as she opened the door Saturday morning.

“Good morning,” she assessed his demeanor. Mostly neutral today.

“Hi,” he looked at her skeptically.

“Leo’s just using the potty.” She cleared her throat, speaking in a hushed tone, “Do you have any plans today?”

“Why do you wanna know?” Ron’s brows furrowed.

Hermione lifted the tickets in her hand, “I have these tickets to today’s quidditch match, if you’d like them. I can’t use them, but I figure if you and Lavender wanted them, Leo would love it too.”

Ron’s brows furrowed deeper, “What’s the catch? I’m not cancelling the next custody hearing.”

“I know. There’s no catch. Just don’t want them to go to waste.” Hermione held her breath. Ron nodded slowly, his expression softening. “Yeah, alright. That’s really great.”

Hermione handed the tickets to him as Leo walked in, his backpack slung on his shoulders. “What are we doing today, Ron?”

Ron smiled softly at Leo, “We’re gonna go watch a quidditch game.”

“Oh for real life?” Leo’s eyes went wide. “Did you know my mum knows Viktor Krum!”

Ron chuckled, “Yeah, I did know that.” He tousled Leo’s hair.

“Thanks Mione.” Ron gave her a genuine smile. Hermione’s chest loosened and she smiled back.

“I hope you have the best time, and I’ll pick you up later tonight afterwards alright?” Hermione bent down, covering Leo in kisses.

“I love you the mostest in the world.” Leo sang. “Bye!” He skipped with excitement over to Ron.

After the door was closed, she locked the door with a deep breath and thanked her lucky stars.

Right after Ron left, Draco’s package arrived.

Draco's outfit choice today was...unusual. She set the package on her desk trying to decode its theme. Maybe he was just getting weirder. Hermione climbed into bed. She'd need some good sleep before meeting with him. Excitement ran through her as she thought of their plans for tonight. Their eighth Saturday together. In reality it was no time at all, but it also felt like their first Saturday was a lifetime ago. Draco had become her friend, a real one. A sexy friend who knew how to touch all her pleasure points. A friend who she was absurdly attracted to. A friend that was a good father and funny and smart and.... It wasn't supposed to be like this at all.

When she originally signed the contract for a twelve-week courtship she assumed it would be robotic and distant. That their interactions would have no heat to them outside of their bedroom duties. But now, every time she looked at him there was something that grew hotter and stronger. A part of her desperately wanted to cancel tonight. It felt like too big of a step. Another part of her was screaming that it was too soon to be feeling the way she did and to slow the fuck down before all her feelings were uncontrollable. Were they even controllable at this point? And then there were the other parts of her that were completely obsessed with him. Those parts of her craved him desperately. A little more everyday. Every text. Every glance. Every brush of his hand. It grew the craving. It was terrible. Terrifying. Ridiculous. Wonderful.

Cold anxiety slithered through her. She grabbed a pillow and threw it over face and screamed.

On days like today she was incredibly grateful to be a witch. Mid November was a dreary time in London. The cloud choked skies and icy winds made it extremely unpleasant to be outside. The walk from the alleyway to the lobby was enough to want to book a port-key to a warm island. She couldn't remember how she ever survived traveling without magic. And avoiding airplanes was an obvious bonus.

Hermione wore a heavy peacoat as she walked through the beautiful lobby of the luxury hotel. Sometimes she giggled about the fact that this place had become her weekend hangout spot. It was gorgeous inside with all the cream, sage green, and gold accents. Hermione passed the service desk beginning to fill with early arrivals. The lifts were situated on the sides of a winding marble staircase. The straight path from the entrance was a little bit of a walk, which felt extra far today in the shoes Malfoy chose for her. The right side of the wide lobby transitioned to an upscale dining room and bar. Many heads turned her way as she practically tiptoed over the plush carpets across the room.

"Can I help you, miss?" A young hotel employee, stopped her halfway to her destination. Giving a judgmental glance at her shoes. Stripper heels to be exact. A twist of heat went down her back wondering if there was a stripper pole in their penthouse. The shoes were nonsensically high. All the shoes he sent made the walk up to the room feel extra sexy. When she put these on just fifteen minutes ago, that's how it felt too. And slightly absurd, but it was playful.

Now, she just felt like a walking joke.

"No, I'm heading towards the lift." Hermione tried to move, but the employee moved faster, because her shoes were a practical, but ugly black loafer.

The woman frowned. "Can I see your keycard? What floor are you heading to? I don't remember you checking in." The woman spoke so loudly guests were staring.

Hermione's palms began to sweat. "I'm heading to the penthouse." It wasn't said with any confidence. Too many people were staring at them. Hermione would have been skeptical too. "I haven't checked in because, my-my...." Her what? Her courtship partner? Her part time employer? Her sexy friend?

"Look," The woman lowered her voice just slightly, "I don't judge you. But you can't hang out here scoping out jobs. This is a respectable establishment and—"

"What?" Hermione snapped, jerking away from the woman. More heads turned, watching the spectacle. Her pulse thudded loudly in her neck. This woman thought Hermione was a whore. She wasn't necessarily wrong that she'd come to be treated exactly like that, but the woman was judging her. And there was nothing wrong with being a sex worker anyway. Hermione did not like this woman at all.

"You need to leave." The woman's softness fell away like the charade it was, replaced by an over inflated sense of authority.

Hermione held her head high, staring the woman down as she fished her phone out of her bag.

"You better be outside—"

"They won't let me come up." Hermione said tersely.

"Who?"

Hermione leaned forward reading the woman's gold name placard. "A hotel employee, named Brenda."

The woman huffed a laugh, looking down her large nose at Hermione. "If you think calling your john is going to change my mind. I'll call security."

"I'm on my way."

Hermione smiled pleasantly at the woman as she place her phone back in her bag. Brenda stepped a few feet away, grabbed a phone off her hip and spoke in a hushed tone. Oh so she could talk quietly.

Hermione stood there staring at the woman. Relishing in the fact that she'd get to see Brenda's face fall when she found out that Hermione was indeed going to the penthouse, stripper shoes and all. Perhaps she'd wear these every Saturday just to rub it in Big-Nose-Brenda's face. The woman turned her back to Hermione, the first to break eye contact.

That's right B.N.B you will submit to my dominant stare.

“Darling,” Draco approached her in black denim and a black long sleeved shirt. *Darling*. It made her blush like a school girl. Hermione smiled up at him as his hand went to her waist.

“She’s not looking now, let’s hurry.”

Draco let out a laugh so genuine Hermione questioned if she had actually told a joke. He grabbed her left hand, slipping his signet ring over her ring finger.

Hermione glanced down as the ring sized immediately to hers. “What are you doing?” She whispered down at her hand as weird rush went up her arm, but Draco was already moving towards B.N.B.

The woman turned around giving Draco a double take as he approached. Her eyes roamed brazenly over him, taking in his broad shoulders and muscular arms, outlined indecently by his wool long sleeves. Tom Ford if Hermione had to guess.

“Hello,” Draco purred. Big-Nose-Brenda blushed like an idiot.

“How can I help you sir?” She preened at him. Hermione rolled her eyes as she hobbled towards them. These damn shoes made her so slow.

As Hermione approached, Brenda’s face turned overly confident, stepping in front of Draco like some kind of security guard. “I apologize sir, I’ll be with you in just one minute.” B.N.B gave her a condescending smile, surely aiming to impress him.

Gods damn it, when did Hermione become such a jealous psycho?

“My manager is on the way with security. I hope you choose to cooperate so you don’t embarrass yourself anymore.” Brenda held her stare, then looked over Hermione’s shoulder. “In fact there they are now.” Hermione glanced behind her, across the busy room as two other employees wove between the guests in the lobby.

Hermione gave Draco an exasperated look. Her feet were hurting, the cushioning charm had worn off already. Usually she was off her feet by now. Draco on the other hand looked giddy. Like this was fun for him. He flicked an eyebrow at her, giving her a look that said, *just play long with me please*. Hermione rolled her eyes in agreement. Fine. If it meant B.N.B.’s shit eating grin would fall away.

“Brenda was it?” Draco’s purr was starting to become annoying.

B.N.B. turned smugly towards him with a flirty smile. “Yes, sir, *Miss Brenda Capwell*.”

“Oh, I just wanted to let you know this is my wife.” Draco gestured towards Hermione. Brenda’s head jerked towards her.

“Oh and his whore.” Hermione smiled. Draco’s brows shot up in satisfaction, “Oh that too. And she’s a brilliant doctor.” Brenda’s face twitched, then as if in actual slow motion, morphed through all the stages of grief. That had been worth the wait.

“Brenda.” An older, willowy blonde woman spoke as she approached with a large mustachioed man. They carefully glanced between the three of them. “What seems to be the problem?”

“Oh, I was just about to introducing Miss Brenda Capwell to my wife.” Draco said, offering a charming smile towards the tall woman.

“Mr. Malfoy, I had no idea you got married.” She looked at Hermione with sincerity. “Congratulations.”

Draco moved then, wrapping an arm around Hermione’s waist, kissing her temple, as if he did it everyday. “Thank you Mary, it’s not widely publicized, I appreciate your discretion.”

“Of course. I’m so sorry for the confusion.” Mary looked at Brenda pointedly.

Hermione grinned widely at Brenda, leaning into Draco’s arm, slipping her own around his waist. While B.N.B. was still working on forming a sentence, her facial muscles struggling to decide on an expression.

“I-uh, I-uh apologize.” Brenda’s eyes narrowed on Hermione before softening towards Draco. “Your wife,” She said the word as if it was a lie. *Rude.* “Must have been confused, she said she was going to the penthouse which is on permanent reserve for-”

“Sorry, Mr. Malfoy.” The mustachioed man chuckled awkwardly. “Brenda I believe is new here. Only on a few weeks.”

“Mistakes are bound to happen.” Draco nodded. “Would you add my wife permanently to my account. Ensure every employee is familiar with her face. Give her all the same privileges I have. It will help avoid future mishaps like this.” Draco gestured towards Brenda who’s confusion matched Hermione’s. Not to mention the continued use of calling Hermione his wife was making her fall into tachycardia.

“Absolutely.” Mary nodded eagerly. “I’ll send confirmation as soon as it’s done. Any other requests?”

“Darling, do you have any requests?” Draco glanced down at her.

Hermione chuckled, momentarily considering what Draco might do if she requested a stripper pole in front of all of them. “No, not at this time.”

“Alright then, we’ll be on our way.” Draco nodded politely keeping Hermione tucked to his side. He matched her stride, which was like walking with a child learning how to walk. “Sorry I’m so slow.” Hermione sighed.

“I’m perfectly content to leisurely stroll with you.” Draco hummed. Hermione looked back at Brenda and Mary. The mustachioed man’s face was drawn in a serious expression. Mary looked embarrassed. “Aright never mind this is too slow and Brenda wasted too much of our time as it is.” Draco said, stopping.

Only half paying attention, Hermione nodded. Her eyes still on the lecture Brenda was receiving. "You seem to be really familiar with the staff." She said, just as Draco swept his arm underneath her legs. Hermione gasped and all three of the employees turned their direction.

Mary quickly smiled. Brenda's eyes were wide as Hermione's children's got, but not even remotely as cute.

As they stepped into the lift, turning to face B.N.B who's face had drained of color, Malfoy said, "That's because I own the hotel, darling."

Now, *that* was worth it.

When they approached the suite's door, Draco set her down. "I like when you come in after I'm already in there."

"Is that some kind of innuendo?" Hermione said, wiping her sweaty palms on her coat.

Draco considered it. "Not at this moment." He let out a breath. "I just like to begin the evening with our normal routine. I'm going to go in there and I want you to wait five minutes before entering.

Hermione nodded. Draco lifted her chin and pressed a kiss to her mouth. A quick soft one. Hermione's brows rose high.

"I have to practice. What did Scorpius say on Halloween? Something about practicing being brave and learning to work through discomfort." Draco smiled down at her and Hermione's breath hitched. This was not helping her current state. "Five minutes." Draco turned and entered the room.

Exactly five minutes later, because Hermione spent the time counting hoping it would calm her down, she opened the door. It did not help calm her down at all.

"Stay there." Draco stood across the dim room in front of the floor to ceiling windows. All of the curtains were drawn giving a perfect view of the rainy London skyline. The door closed behind her with a soft click. She tossed her bag beside her.

They held each other's stare. Hermione counted to twenty before he spoke, his eyes narrowing. "What's wrong?"

"I'm fine."

"Don't lie to me. You've looked off since I saw you in the lobby." Draco said tensely.

"I'm just sad. I don't like saying goodbye to Leo." Partially true. She was simply an anxious wreck. Draco took a step forward.

"Oh I have some rules to add." Hermione said quickly shifting on her heels. She'd redone the cushioning charm at a least.

Draco didn't try to hide his annoyance. "Alright," he sighed.

"First, stop sending Leo obscene amounts of money."

"No. Next."

"You can't send a six year old a thousand galleons for a fake massage."

"I can and I did." Draco stared her down. "Next."

"You also cannot send me money for a fake ear exam."

"You looked at my ears a lot that night."

"Draco, you transferred me fifty thousand galleons!"

"Not interested in discussing what I can and can't do with my money anymore. Next."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "The flowers. I like them a lot and I'm grateful for them."

He stared at her.

"I don't want to sound ungrateful."

He arched his brow, his expression saying, *Get to the fucking point.*

"I feel little bit like Pavlov's dog, is all. If, or when, or if, things don't work out... I don't want it to be abrupt. I'd like to have some kind of warning that things are stopping. So when you're done... just stop sending the flowers first...like it's a winding down period. So I'll, uh, know then." She wrung her fingers together.

He glared at her. "You really know how to set the mood."

"You stop sending them and I'll know you've given your two weeks notice."

"Fine. And what will your signal be?"

"What?"

"Your two week's notice." He hissed. "When you give me your two weeks notice, what will you do so I know you're done." He was really annoyed with her.

"I'm not sure. Maybe I'll just say, I'm giving my two weeks notice..." Her voice trailed off.

"Okay." He rolled his eyes. "Anything else, Princess?" He spoke with dramatic irritation

So she couldn't help the next question. "Are you mad at me?"

“No, next.” Draco said exasperated, grabbing something from his back pocket.

“I think... I think that’s it.”

He narrowed his eyes. “You’re going to spend the night with me tonight.”

Hermione nodded. “Of course.”

“Take off your coat.” His demand sent a shiver down her spine. They stared at each other as every button came undone. The coat dropped to the floor. Hermione was in a red push up bra, a tiny, tight as fuck black skirt, black sheer pantyhose, no panties, and stripper heels.

Draco pulled on a ski mask. “Now run.”

Chapter End Notes

I think this is one of my favorite chapters I've ever written. So many microtropes in one place, every time I read it I end it with a big grin. What was your reaction?

How Convenient That Hermione Cannot Run

Chapter Summary

Check notes at the bottom for TWs possible spoiler for the next scene.

Chapter Notes

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

Hermione tried to run, but the skirt and shoes made it impossible. If Draco was the predator, she was the already wounded prey. Prancing on her toes towards the kitchen, her breasts bounced dramatically. “This is so unfair!” she yelled. Glancing behind her back, Draco hadn’t moved. Which was more intimidating than if he had. His masked face and large stature next to the drizzling rain with his wand out, sent her pulse skyrocketing.

Scary and sexy all at once, dear gods.

Hermione dropped to the floor, hiding behind a couch. Fuck these shoes. Working quickly, while thanking her lucky stars for nimble fingers, she pulled them off. She crouched on her feet, searching for a route away from him.

“I hope you realize you can’t hide from me.” She did not know where his voice was coming from. Hermione bolted behind the other couch. Draco was by the door now, his head tilting creepily to the side. Hermione took a step backwards and he took a step forwards. She screamed and jumped on top the couch, cushions loosening under feet. “Where are you going to go, darling?” His seductive purr made her skin hot, and the menacing tone under it made her bounce with adrenaline.

Hermione did the only thing she could do without her wand. She apparated across the room to his original spot next to the windows.

Draco’s cold laugh echoed through the room as all the lights went off.

Lightening flashed. Streaks of bright light bathed the room for several seconds, which only magnified the darkness of the room when it was over. Thunder boomed, vibrating through the room. Hermione flinched.

Draco tisked from somewhere. “You’re so pretty when you’re scared.” She bounced on her stocking feet, looking around the room for him. Where should she go...where should she go. The bathroom. She’d hide inside. Lock him out. Take a long bath while he begged for her outside the door. She’d send him a video of her masturbating with the signet ring still on her finger. Perfect plan.

Hermione took an exploratory step forward, watching for any shadows along the walls.

Another step. Then another. Nothing happened. Her heart erratically raced in her chest, like a runaway train.

Hopping on top of the coffee table, slowly she turned in a circle. *Nothing*. With a quick glance around, she jumped to one of the large arm chairs, gripping the back of it as she landed.

She screamed as Draco appeared behind the chair directly in front of her. Handcuffs slammed around her wrists.

Hermione jerked her arms away, leaping off the chair. Her feet slipped on the fabric. Before she could fall face first into the coffee table, Draco's arm snaked tightly around her waist. She fought him hard, kicking and jerking her arms to get away from him. It didn't matter. His arms were an iron band around her, completely immovable. It made her fight harder. Arching and squirming against his chest, as he dragged her towards the rain slicked windows. "Keep fighting me, I love it." He breathed into her ear, warmed from his mask. "You can't get away from me, but I really wanna see you try." His tone was equally patronizing as it was turned on. Hermione let out a feral groan-shriek, half in pleasure and half in fear. She shoved hard, slamming her wrists into his arms. His grunt turned into a laughing hiss. "That's my girl. Fight me. Keep trying." He said it as if he didn't believe she could. It spurred her on, making her sweat from shoving him with all her strength, kicking his shins, now wishing she still had heels to hit him with.

"Oh my gods!" She screamed, glancing down on the street below. *Very, very far below*.

The striking difference of the ice cold hotel window against her bare skin felt like she was burning. Draco shoved her hands up against the glass. Lifting his mask just so his mouth was out.

"You're never going to get away from me." He spoke directly in front of her mouth. Like they had in his office. His wand dragged down one side of her body. Hermione pushed her hips away, he pressed her harder into the glass window. It was so far down. A fearful whimper broke through her.

His wand ran up her inner thigh and traced the slit of her pussy. Only covered by the thin fabric of the pantyhose.

"I'm going to fuck you against this window so every one knows who you belong to." Draco murmured against her mouth, "I'm going to make sure everyone knows I own you." His wand slowly tore the fabric of her pantyhose in a loud sizzling rip. "And you're going to—" Hermione bit down hard on his lip, drawing blood. He jerked away just enough for her to tear from his grasp. She charged forward, jumping over the mess of cushions heading towards the hallway.

"There she is." Draco clapped behind her. "So she does have some bite in her after all. Keep showing me your teeth Hermione!"

The soft carpet against her silky stockings gave her no traction. She slipped as she turned the corner, barely catching herself with restrained hands, she stumbled forward down the hallway

towards their bedroom. Hermione glanced back as she straightened. Draco stalked down the hallway, tall and powerful. Fuck. He so was hot.

“I’m going to fuck you in the ass tonight. And you’re going to be begging for it.”

Hermione picked up her speed. Draco apparated in front of their bedroom’s door. “Fuck you!” She gritted out as she turned around, slightly slipping again as she ran the other direction. Hermione only made it a few steps before Draco appeared on the other side of the hallway again.

“Fuck!” Hermione snapped, turning abruptly again. Being trapped made her skin tight, full of rushing anger.

“Where are you going to go, baby?” Draco crooned, directly behind her. An arm snaked out towards her waist. Hermione kicked him hard in his thigh making him miss her, but it forced Hermione to the ground.

“Even better.” Draco hummed as he grabbed her by the ankles, dragging her down the hallway. Her nails clawed at the floor, searching for purchase. Once they turned the corner, Draco snatched her up, roughly pulling her against his chest and then shoved her face first against the freezing glass window. Hermione felt the first rush of exhaustion from the rollercoaster of adrenaline hit her as she froze against the glass.

Draco’s mouth pressed against her ear, licking it, kissing just below her jaw. Heat flooded between her legs and just as his hips rolled against her. He was rock hard. She twisted against him, but it barely did anything. He had her pinned tightly to the window with his heavy body leaning against hers. Draco didn’t seem to be worn out at all, not even his breathing was as worked up as Hermione’s. “Look at all those people down there,” he chuckled darkly against her neck. Her cheek was pressed firmly against the window, a fog blooming from her breath. She couldn’t see a damn thing and he knew it. It worked though. Fear was like a dark London cloud hanging over her, suffocating her.

“Hello London, this is my whore. Whore, this is London.” He licked his lips.

Hermione kicked backwards, and his knee slid between her legs. “Yes, good idea, let’s spread these legs open for all to see. Don’t get jealous London, she’s mine and mine alone. You can have a look though. Look at how beautiful my whore’s pussy is.” He ripped her skirt down, pushing it around her ankles, creating another restraint with it as it tightened around her legs, keeping her spread wide. *Fuck magic. Fuck him.* She elbowed him, loosening his grip on her handcuffs. The moment of reprieve ended before it even began. Draco grabbed the handcuffs, they unlinked instantly. He forced her hands to the side of her thighs, a sticking charm immediately wrapped around them. “It’s okay.” He said it mockingly and somehow soothingly. “Keep fighting baby. Show me where I need to restrain you. I’ll tie your whole damn body down so you cooperate. There’s no way you’re getting out of this.” A shuddering breath went through her chest. Just as a large flash of lightening burned through the sky. Draco’s eyes glowed in the reflection of window and she let out a strangled cry.

“I do love to see your makeup run down your face.” He whispered as he rubbed his hard length against her ass. Rain pelted against the window and a cold chill flooded her body. He

had one hand against the glass, as Draco unclasped her bra, breathing into her ear. “Are you ready see to the absolute best pair of tits, London?” Hermione wiggled against the glass, a surge of panic racing through her veins. “No,” she croaked.

He stilled, pressing her harder against the window. “What was that? I couldn’t hear you.”

“No.” She shivered against his body, but a bead of sweat ran down her spine. The warmth of him and the cold of the window making her body confused.

“Louder, please.” Draco sounded impatient, while Hermione was still trying to catch her breath. Every inhale was sharp and cold. His hand slid between her body and the window. Rubbing in slow circles up her torso to her breasts, before his fingers dug against her skin as they wrapped around the small centerpiece of her bra.

“No.” It was a raw rasp.

“That’s what I thought you said.” He chuckled menacingly, before pausing speaking in a more sinister hiss, “Are you in charge?”

Her eyes watered as the hand on her hip dug into her pantyhose. She didn’t know which article of clothing was going to go first. “Who’s in charge baby?” He jerked hard. It burned as the panty hose scraped down to her thighs. And when he couldn’t reach anymore, he used a booted foot to slowly drive them down to her ankles. He wrapped his hand around the ponytail he requested. “Do you feel like you’re in charge right now?” He slid her bra slowly down her body, her nipples hardened painfully against the glass.

She was completely bare and trembling. Every part of her body under his control. He could do anything he wanted.

She loved it. She hated it. She loved him for doing it. She loved- “Tell me who you belong to.” He tugged her face away from the glass. Twisting her face towards him. Her chest was numb, flashing with a spiky rush of warmth. His grey eyes locked on hers and he licked his lips.

Hermione spit at his mouth.

Draco smirked, licking it off, then he opened his mouth wide, as if asking for more. Her nipples grew harder. His hand slid up her torso, warming her body.

“I hate you.”

He smiled wider.

“I hate you!” She yelled in his face.

He leaned towards her whispering, “Do you think that’s going to stop me?”

The difference in his volume control only reinforced her complete loss of any control at all.

"No matter what you do, no matter what you say. You are mine." He said it, as he rotated her, like he'd been cooking her. She shivered loudly as her ass pressed against the cold window. Thunder boomed distantly behind her. Draco leaned in gradually, pressing his lips against hers. His zipper came undone.

"Shhh," he murmured against her lips. And gods dammed did it make her wet. There was a part of him that didn't want to kiss her or at least was afraid of it. A part of him was losing consent too in a way. She roughly shoved her tongue in his mouth. Draco's hand's shot to her hips, shaking slightly as he kissed her back. His tongue slid against hers and he moaned loudly, widening for her.

Their eyes were wide open as their mouths hovered over one another's, Hermione whimpered as Draco shoved his pants down desperately. His hands slid up her neck cupping her face. He leaned against her as their mouths shared, scared, shaky breathes. She'd never felt his legs against her legs like this. Warm thighs against chilly ones, it send goosebumps over her entire body. His lips brushed against hers again and her chest started to heave. Wetness flooded between her legs as he rolled his body against hers, his cock rubbing against her core.

It felt so good, she felt like she was choking. He licked her mouth, messily, sloppily. He was getting everything he wanted and it made her angry. It embarrassed her as she licked him back. Their tongues slid up down one another's. She began to cry at how good it felt and how helpless she felt about it. Hot tears streamed down her face, realizing he was gonna force her to enjoy it. He sucked her tongue and grinned the words into her mouth, "I can't wait to hear you come." That's when he kissed her. For real.

He tugged her face to him. Kissing her slowly, like they were taking in deep breathes with every movement of their mouths. Kissing him was devastating. Addictive. Several minutes passed as they made out for the first time. He jerked away. "I'm going to take care of that dripping wet pussy now." His hands dropped to her hips and he pressed his cock in too easily. Hermione's shoulder's heaved regardless of how turned on she was. The adrenaline came crashing down around her as he began fucking her against the window. Crying and moaning at the same time.

"Perfect." Draco purred. He pulled out abruptly, shoving three of his fingers inside. Hermione gasped. He pulled them out and replaced them with three fingers from his other hand. His cock was back inside her and his hands came to both breasts running his wet fingers against her nipples. "So fucking perfect."

Hermione panted, her skin running so hot she was sweating. "London thinks you're perfect too baby." Draco dragged his fingers delicately over her stomach. His voice was so soft and gentle, it grated against her skin. "I'll breed you until you're useless to me. I'll use you at whim. I'll fuck you anytime I please because I'll keep you chained to my bed." Heat bloomed inside her belly, intense waves building higher than she could comprehend. "You're never going to be in charge again."

Hermione groaned. The mixture of shame and pleasure whipped through her violently. "Yeah, keep telling me how much you love being my fuck toy. You love it, huh?" His hand

slid to her thigh lifting it around his hip, pushing him deeper, he fucked her harder as her body moved with his.

“Do you wanna come, Hermione?” She shook her head vigorously. He leaned against it stopping her.

“Who is in charge of your orgasms?” He didn’t wait for her to respond. “It’s not you, that’s for sure.” Draco’s tongue slid against her throat, her leg tightening around his hip. He kissed her neck, along her jaw, and she struggled to breathe when his lips were back on hers. “Tell me how much you love this right now.”

“No.”

Draco laughed against her mouth. “Oh you fucking liar, you love it so much. As soon as you come, I’m pushing you on the floor to fuck you in the ass. We are going to show London, just how much you love my cock.” Hermione sucked in loud breath as the wave built higher.

“You’re going to come exactly when I tell you to.”

“No!” Hermione said, but she panted it. Hard and rough because she was gasping for breath as the wave of heavenly pleasure began to build higher. Building like something freezing over, and it would shatter at any moment. “That’s it.” He licked her bottom lip. “You’re so closer to coming baby.” “No, no, no,” Hermione whined, shaking against him. “Shhhh, it’s okay. I’m going to count you through it.”

His voice was sickeningly sweet, but it did not make the smug look on his face any easier to bare. He watched with her pure arrogance. Pure dominance. Full control. He was a conductor playing her like a trained orchestra, because she was fucking him back hard, meeting him thrust for thrust. “Let’s count to three, so that every time our eyes meet and you count in your head, you’ll think of this moment and remember who is in charge of you, who you belong to, and who owns you.” He kissed her. “There’s no one else. No one who can touch you like I do, no one who knows your body like I do. No one will make you come like I do.”

His eyes closed as he lifted her arms around his neck. “I love when you come Hermione. I love it so much. It makes me so fucking happy.” That was such a low blow. Hermione squeezed her arms around his neck. “You’re completely unrestrained. You have been for a while. That’s how much I control you. You have to be told what to do. You have to be forced to do it. So that’s why you’re going to come, ready?” Draco spoke against her ear. “1-” Hermione couldn’t believe what was happening to her. The tidal wave of pleasure kept getting higher, too high. “It’s too much.” She cried. “2-” Her hands gripped into his hair. Draco whispered, “Say my name.”

“DRACO.” It tore from her throat so loud it hurt. Sharp jolts of pleasure rushed through her as another wave immediately swelled behind it.

Draco’s voice shook as he said, “I’m in love with your sounds, Hermione, so fucking in love.”

She came again, moaning so loudly for him as it consumed her entire body, pounding through her like she was being trampled by it. “Such a good girl,” he purred. “Like a trained little pet.”

Hermione was on the floor within a minute of coming. Her arms tied behind her back and warm liquid squirted against her ass. Draco’s cock was at the entrance of her asshole. Hermione squirmed frantically against the carpet, burning her skin.

“Who wanted it like this, huh?” Draco’s cock pressed harder against her asshole, pressure building at her entrance. Her pussy still throbbed from the most insane orgasm she’d ever experienced.

“Say it,” he hissed. “Tell me how you want me to fuck you against your will.”

Hermione’s shoulders shuddered, her hips pushing back involuntarily. He gripped her hips, and her arms hurt as she tried to move them.

“If you’re going to be a whore you need to be an honest one.” Draco rubbed his wet cock against her ass and throbbing pussy. Teasing her. “Who wanted to be fucked in the ass like this?”

“I did!” She was loud. So loud she shocked herself. It echoed through the room. He pressed into her asshole again, deeper this time.

“Why?” his voice was almost a whisper.

“Because that’s what I deserve.” Tears fled down her cheeks.

“But only from me.” His hands spread over her ass.

Hermione let out a shaky sob, “Only from you.”

“Good girl.” Draco stroked down her spine, pressing deeper inside her. Her body froze. “Beg me.” He demanded. “Beg me to do this.”

“Please.” She whimpered. “Please fuck me.”

“Do you want it?”

Hermione shook her head. “Yes.”

“Good, because so do I.” His cock pressed inside her, filling her to a point, she felt internally claustrophobic. She breathed through the pain, clenching her eyes shut.

“Shhhh,” his hand stoked her back. “I’m already in now.”

“Okay, okay.” Hermione’s panic swelled inside of her chest.

Draco moved slowly and they both hissed. It hurt, but it also felt good. A rich intense pleasure built through her. Then the signet ring began running over her already sensitive clit.

It was lightly vibrating. A welcome distraction that allowed her to relax. "That's it baby, give in to me. Let yourself enjoy this."

The resentment of giving in faded away as she leaned into all the sensations she was experiencing. Pleasure. Shame. The dirty feeling against her skin. The most surprising however was the overwhelming amount of trust she felt for Draco. He continued going slow, until she was moving with him. Rolling her hips against his cock. It didn't take long for them to come. Hermione could barely breathe while hearing him come. His cock tightened and it sent a spiraling cascade of pleasure through her ass and clit. Her core pulsed, sharp and spiky as her whole body surged with complicated emotions. She sobbed as she came. It was so gods damned cathartic. Her orgasm felt like it lasted forever.

When they were both still, Draco pulled out of her carefully and Hermione slid to the floor.

Her whole body was pulsing with warm heat. Draco took off her restraints, her limbs fell heavily beside her. A lazy smile spilled on her face as Draco's eyes met hers. He tore off his mask and whatever he saw on her face gave him visible relief.

"Talk to me." He still said. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm great." Hermione said, her words breathless. Draco laid next to her on the floor

"Promise?" Draco's eyes searched hers.

"Pinky promise." Hermione whispered.

He stroked cheek once before getting up and healing her sore asshole. After which he carried her to the shower, where he watched her intently the whole time. He'd even remembered to snatch up her bag on the way to the room. Hermione was in a space she'd only dreamt of. A deep sense of satisfaction bloomed through her as she stood under the shower. The ghost of a smile staying on her face the entire time. The shower turned off and Draco wrapped her in a towel. He took his time drying her off. Then wrapped her in a robe and carried her back to the bed.

Hermione glanced at the clock as Draco returned to the bathroom.

They needed to pick up Leo in thirty minutes. Damn that was a long one.

A deep satisfying inhale and exhale left her lips. Slipping off the bed, Hermione grabbed her purse and began looking for her clothes in the sea of shit in her bag.

"What are you doing?" Draco asked from the bathroom door. Hermione already had her leggings on, failing to find her shirt.

Hermione smiled at him, then flinched as she touched slimy. Okay it was seriously time to clean her bag out. "We need to get Leo in thirty minutes." Hermione's tongue slipped out as she recommitted to her efforts. Quill. Phone. Other phone. Potion. Bra. Bra! That was useful.

"Hermione." Draco's voice was tired. They needed to hurry.

"We don't need to go to dinner." She said as she pulled her bra out of the bag. She dropped it next to her and stuck her arm back in.

"What?" Draco moved to her. She had one eye closed in concentration as she sifted through a few textbooks... a receipt...tooth brush.

"Dinner. If you're too tired. It's okay." Hermione's fingers brushed her shirt and then she lost it. "Merlin!"

"I want to go to dinner with you." Draco let out a slow breath. "Can you stop for second?"

"No. I'm almost there. It's so close." Hermione scrunched her nose, pushing her shoulder deeper.

Draco swallowed, drawing her attention. His eyes looked distant, he was drained. "I don't think we should go." Hermione said, taking a frustrating break, but she did not take her arm out because that felt like her bag was winning.

"Can we just sit down on the bed for a few minutes?" Draco breath's came in short pants.

"We have to leave." Hermione returned to her search party.

"Hermione!" Draco huffed. It caught her off guard. It wasn't even that loud. Fear twisted through her quick and scathing. Her chest squeezed, and she inhaled a shuddering breath. Her bag fell to the floor as she froze.

A pained expression spread across his face. "I'm so sorry." The fear in his eyes matched her own. Draco. Her Draco. She was fine. She was safe. He was safe. It was over as soon as it began.

"I'm sorry." Hermione shook her head moving towards him.

"Why are you apologizing? I'm sorry." Draco's breathing was still short. His face lined with something...

"What's wrong?" Her hands went to his face and it softened and also sort of crumbled in front of her in way that made her heart drop.

"I just," Draco inhaled deeper this time. "I just need to hold you."

Hermione nodded. "Okay." They didn't have a lot of time...

"It's important to me." Draco's sad face was possibly the worst thing to ever happen to her.

"I know you do it so well for me." Hermione reassured him.

Draco shook his head slowly, "No, it's not for you. It's for me. I have needs too."

As if glass shattered inside her, it all came crashing into clarity.

"I'm so sorry." Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck and his arms wound around her waist. They'd just done something incredible, something that required trust and understanding and she'd assumed he had spent so much time holding her for her sake. Hermione had never felt so selfish. "Let's sit."

Draco lifted her off the floor and sat in a chair, pulling her close to him, wrapping his arms around her legs. His heart beat rapidly underneath her.

"It's okay." She whispered. "Everything's okay." She ran a hand over his chest. He closed his eyes bringing her knuckles to his mouth, holding it there. They stayed like that for five minutes as Draco's breathing calmed. His grip on her loosened slightly before he began speaking, bringing their hands to his chest. He spoke in her hair as she laid against him. "I meant to write this down or say it to you before we started. I just couldn't figure out how to make it not sound super emotional and make it weird."

"Okay."

Draco cleared his throat. "I need you to know, that I'd never, ever, ever take away your choices. Please, know, I take your consent seriously. I don't- I don't ever want you to get confused about it. And holding you afterwards grounds me. It helps me, um, feel like there is an end to the game. To the role. So you know the real me." His voice was so soft and sincere, Hermione's lip trembled. She lifted her head, facing him.

"I don't think I have ever felt more safe than when I'm with you."

His eyes fluttered closed and he pulled her into a hug. They held each other for as long as they could. Before they ended, Draco tugged her chin and kissed her softly, lingering against her lips. A smile unfurled on her mouth.

"Something funny about my kiss?" He arched his brow.

"I'm just grateful for you."

The corner of Draco's lip tugged up and Hermione's chest swelled seeing him return to his normal self. "You're alright?" She asked again as they stood.

"Yes, thank you."

They finished getting ready. Hermione found her shirt on the first try and they were three minutes early for Leo. Her lucky stars might be going too well at this point. She tried not to worry what the unlucky ones would bring.

This scene contains consensual non-consent.

Sleep Talking

Hermione walked with Draco under an umbrella as a drizzling rain fell down Ron's sidewalk. Their arms were linked having apparated several blocks away because Draco insisted they walk together. It felt strange, touching him in a magical, public place, but not a bad strange.

"This is a nice neighborhood." Draco said.

"It is." Much nicer than Hermione's. Not that she lived in a shack, but Ron's joke shop did well.

Draco stayed on the sidewalk as Hermione knocked on the door. She took in a deep breath. *Draco is right behind you.* That didn't stop her from walking down the three front porch steps to wait.

Ron's face dropped as he saw Draco, opening the door to a boisterous Leo.

"Mumma lion!" Hermione sighed deeply as he hugged her legs.

"What's he doing here? Another consult for the DMLE?" Ron used air quotes as he leaned against the door frame.

Leo peeked around Hermione's legs. "Dragon?"

Draco waved. "Dragon!" Leo barreled towards him. Draco scooped him up with ease and a big grin.

Ron's frown deepened to disgust.

"Draco's son and Leo are friends." Hermione said, tearing her eyes away from Draco and Leo's conversation. "They're having a sleepover tonight."

Ron huffed. "Whatever."

"Alright, well, bye." Hermione offered a polite wave.

Draco held Leo, and when Hermione approached he slipped his hand into hers and walked away. Hermione could feel Ron's eyes on her the entire time.

And for once, she didn't care at all.

Leo and Scorpius were thrilled to finally have their sleepover. Narcissa transformed the school room into a sleepover dream with two little beds inside a tent, and a table filled with snacks, and games.

"Enjoy yourselves. Don't worry about a single thing." Narcissa winked at Hermione.

They changed at the manor. Draco handed her a formal black dress beforehand and didn't tell her where they were going. When they arrived at a muggle charity gala held in a library Hermione couldn't stop the ridiculous grin on her face.

"I told you I wanted a do over." Draco squeezed her hand as they walked up rain slicked steps. The rain was mostly gone now and the air smelled so good. Fresh and that little undescribable part after rain ends.

"We don't have to stay the whole time. I just want to dance with you. And if the food is rubbish, which is the case at most galas, we'll just grab something on the way home."

And so that's what they did.

Hermione and Draco danced for over an hour. "Just one more." He'd say.

"You're just like the boys." Hermione would say, leaning in closer to him. It was much less formal than a wizarding gala and it was perfect.

They ordered a large pizza with extra cheese and Draco kissed her before they apparated away.

She was getting much too used to his kisses.

When they landed back in the manor, in Draco's bedroom no less, she was shocked.

"I thought we were going back to the hotel." She said, taking in his room for the first time. It was a large room filled with rich blues, greys, and greens. A sitting area with two large chairs and a sofa, a small desk space, all framed around his large bed. The curtains drawn, to the gardens and sprawling property.

"I don't know. I just thought we'd both feel more relaxed if we knew our kids were down the hallway." Draco shrugged as he pulled his bow tie off. "But don't worry, my mother is fully in charge of them. The kids don't know we are here and she's taking them to some park in the morning, I guess she's taken Scorpius there before."

"The new magical park that opened this summer?" Hermione said taking off her earrings and slipping off her shoes. "I don't know. I think?" Draco tossed his jacket to the side, grabbed the box of pizza, and her hand, and then opened a door Hermione hadn't noticed.

"I love that park. My mum and I have taken Leo. He loves it." Hermione said as they stepped out on a balcony to a cool evening breeze. It smelled like the end of rain, wet grass, and fresh roses.

They sat on a swinging covered bench, the stars shined bright as the clouds cleared. "Does your mom think it's weird I'm sleeping here, in your room?" Hermione opened the box of pizza, sucking in rogue cheese string. Pizza had never tasted so good.

"If she had it her way you'd be living here already." Draco said after finishing his bite. "So she's probably okay."

They showered separately and as Hermione walked into the bedroom in search of her clothes, she found Draco laying on his bed with the dinosaur plushie she thought she lost.

Hermione gasped, running over to him. “Where did you find that?”

“Oh you mean the stuffed animal you threw at me?” Draco clutched it to his bare chest, rolling to the center of the wide bed.

“I did no such thing.” Hermione tucked her towel tighter. “I thought I lost it. I use it at work as a pillow during my nap breaks.”

“Well, I vividly remember you tossing it at my head when you frantically ran away after napping with me on our second date.”

With a thick eye roll she replied, “And I remember you getting very angry that you even took a nap.” Hermione stretched out her hand. “Give it.”

“Finders keepers.”

“You’re going to steal from a child?”

“You are trying to kidnap what I have rightly stolen.” Draco sniffed it slightly, “Plus it smells like you.”

“Don’t do that.” Hermione sighed, moving to get clothes.

“What?”

“Be cute so I don’t argue with you.”

Draco teased, “Do you think I’m cute Granger?” She glanced behind her shoulder.

“You know I do.” His face however wasn’t a teasing one. He looked...uncertain. He was genuinely curious. Had she been such an asshole this whole time?

Hermione moved back to him, sitting on the edge of the bed. His eyes narrowed at her, “you’re not getting this back.” He pulled it closer to his chest.

“I don’t think you’re cute.” She said, testing him. Draco scoffed, “I don’t care.” *Fuck.* She really needed to be better at this whole thing. She had no clue what she was doing.

“I think you’re fucking hot.” Hermione crawled forward, her towel slipping off.

“I think you’re absurdly handsome.” Draco held her stare as she laid on her stomach, perching on her elbows. “Sometimes when I look at you, I think it should be illegal to be so perfect.” She traced his jawline with her fingertips.

“Say what you want, you’re still not getting it back.”

Hermione sighed. He didn't believe her. This was inconceivable. "But I have a request..." His eyes trailed over her body. "I need you to sleep naked tonight."

"I'm happy to." Hermione chuckled, sliding under the blankets. Draco made the stuffy disappear and pulled her next to him.

"I love sleepovers." he hummed, running his hand down her spine and over her bum. "We should have sleepovers every weekend." Hermione's body went all tingling, but she held his chin like he always did to her. "Ask me."

It took a moment, but when he understood, he looked away from her. "Ask me and I'll kiss you." She pulled his chin closer. He wouldn't look at her when he asked, "Do you find me attractive?"

"The very first time I vividly remember thinking that you were attractive was..." She bit on her lip as a deep blush rolled across her cheeks, making her want to laugh. "The Yule Ball."

"You're so lying." Draco laughed deeply.

"I'm not!" Hermione cupped his face as laughter held them both hostage. "I'm laughing because it's a secret I've kept until just now. But if you would like a more recent example. Today was pretty fucking hot. And last week you were a very handsome drunk. And then the weekend before that you were a very sexy pirate."

He arched a brow. "I see, you only find me attractive on the weekends. Makes perfect sense."

"I find you attractive every time I look at your face, but the weekends are when I'm allowed to enjoy it."

Draco's nose brushed against hers. "We should remedy that."

"Okay, when I look at you on Monday, I'll give myself permission to enjoy your smile and your eyes and your hands."

"My hands?"

"They are extremely attractive Malfoy."

"Huh...." Draco said. After a few moments of quiet Hermione asked, "Can we talk about today?"

"Of course," Draco pulled away slightly, propping himself up on an elbow. "I've... I've never done that before. Not like that. Not to that extent."

"Would you do it again?" Hermione said, sliding her foot against his bare one.

"Would you?" Draco rubbed her foot back.

"You're barefoot." Hermione whispered.

Draco smirked, whispering back, “Is it a secret we need to hide?”

“No, I just....it’s nice. And it’s new,” Hermione said, “And yes I’d do it again.”

“What feeling do you have during it or after that makes you like it?” Draco’s fingers tugged on hers, running down her ring finger. She tried unsuccessfully not to overthink it.

“I like the fear. It turns me on, but it’s the trust and consent and respect that really makes me feel empowered. By the end I was floating in another dimension.” Hermione sighed at the memory.

He smiled, “That strokes my ego very nicely.”

“You should feel amazing. You were wonderful. I can’t believe you played me like a fiddle.”

“I think that was my favorite part.” He groaned, tilting his head back slightly. “Making you come on command will live in my mind for the rest of my life.”

“What do you like about it?” Hermione asked as his eyes met hers again.

“The challenge of it. The ability to exercise complete control with it being consensual is unbelievably arousing. Knowing you want me to have it and knowing you trust me to do it, is powerful and sexy?” he arched his brow.

“So sexy,” Hermione replied, then blurted, “You kissed me.” She was back to whispering.

“I want to kiss you again,” he said. “In fact, I think I want to fall asleep kissing you.”

Hermione swallowed, “Maybe you should slow down. I don’t want to overwhelm you.”

“I’m not overwhelmed.” He kissed her lightly. “I think these small tiny ones are my favorites.”

“I’m serious. I don’t want you to do this just for me. I don’t want you to do anything you don’t want to do. I don’t-”

Draco pulled away. “I don’t think I’ve explained it right,” he sighed. “Kissing for me is like, being naked. I don’t do it for just anyone. Honestly, I have struggled with how much I want to kiss you...it’s intimate to me. It’s an expression of how I feel.”

“You really are perfect Draco.” Hermione kissed him.

He kissed her. “It’s funny how I had the same exact thought about you.” He kissed her again. “Two people having separate original thoughts is completely possible.” Hermione chuckled as they continued to pass tiny kisses back and forth until they were barely moving at all. After a while Hermione turned her back to him. When he didn’t put his arm around her, she reached for it and tucked herself against him.

Another ten minutes passed and Hermione’s tiredness was warring with her racing thoughts. Her feelings were making her claustrophobic. Plus the ghost of his fingers running against

her ring finger made her finger twitchy.

“What if we have a sleepover every night?” Draco murmured.

“I knew you weren’t asleep.” Hermione hissed.

“I’m sleep talking.”

“Me too.”

“Your heart is beating pretty fast....” He whispered. “So is mine. Are we dying?”

“That’s the only conclusion I can think of.” Hermione’s throat ached.

“I think I had the original diagnosis correct.”

Hermione’s heart banged against her chest like drum in a battle cry. “Which is what?”

“Classic case of being bewitched.” He intertwined his leg with hers and they were quiet for a long time. “Goodnight, darling.” He pressed a kiss to her temple.

Hermione stayed awake for very a long time, feeling like she was hanging off that cliff by her fingers and one of them twitched all night long.

Letting Go

Hermione and Draco slept late into Sunday morning only being awoken by Draco's wand, prompting him to return to work.

As she watched him get ready, she noticed a picture frame on his nightstand that she hadn't noticed last night. Now that she looked at it, she could see the fuzzy magic of the notice me not charm around it.

"You can't be serious." Hermione laughed, picking up the frame. It was the photo of her on the hotel bed with him between her legs.

"It brings me joy." Draco said as he combed his hair. "And I take my happiness very seriously."

Hermione's stomach bottomed out. Happy. Was she happy? It hardly felt like the right word at all. She felt crazy. She felt like the tornado about to tear down Dorothy's house apart.

"Stay as long as you want in my bed." Draco said as he bent down to kiss her. Yes, she was much too used to his kisses now. "In fact, if you were here when I got back I'd be extremely pleased."

Hermione rolled her eyes at him. He aparatated away and she pressed a pillow to her face and screamed a little. Maybe she was bewitched. It was awful.

A minute later Pilly popped into the room. Hermione froze, peeking underneath the pillow. The elf hadn't seen her yet. Pilly moved around the room dusting, picking up their clothes from last night. She came up right next to the bed, dusting his night stand. When they made eye contact. Pilly froze too. They stared at each other. This was her chance. "Hi Pilly." Hermione said cautiously, pulling the pillow away. Pilly's eyes grew bigger, before a fat tear rolled down her cheek. "Pilly, I'd like to be friends." Hermione said quickly. Then realizing she was completely nude underneath the blankets pulled them tightly against her chest.

Pilly burst into tears and disappeared. Hermione fell back into the bed groaning.

She floo'd home cleaned up a bit and then floo'd back to the manor at the same time Narcissa brought the boys back. Shortly after Hermione and Leo went back home.

"Can we have a sleepover next weekend?" Leo asked as they sat down for dinner that evening.

"Did Draco tell you to say that?" Hermione rolled her eyes. Everything was happening so fast. The tornado of feelings, the fears, the implied commitment Draco was asking for. It twisted through her violently, ricocheting off her internal organs and through her chest. Draco was right, she really was dying.

"Who's Draco?" Leo frowned.

"Draco the dragon?" Hermione replied

"Ooooh. Right." Leo nodded. "No, why would he tell me that?"

"Never mind." Hermione shook her head. There was a knock at her door. Flower delivery man.

The card that came with the flowers made all of her symptoms of dying much worse.

He quoted Pride and Prejudice: "*I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look or the words, which laid the foundation. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I had begun.*"

She must have nerve damage from him touching her so much, her ring finger twitched all night again.

Hermione was grateful Draco wasn't at the manor all week. She wouldn't have known what to do with him. She might have pretend he didn't exist. Or worse she might have reached across the table and kissed him. Or maybe strangled him. But thankfully no one had to find out what crazy, unhinged shit she'd do. He was so busy with work he hardly texted her, which was probably good too. They needed space to cool down. Hermione's body temperature hadn't been the same since Saturday night. She was most certainly, officially dying.

Friday morning Hermione sat in a small family courtroom at the DMLE courthouses.

Ron's face was calm, but his voice was full of vitriol. Hermione briefly wondered if he was trying to mimic Draco's demeanor. He failed miserably, but that didn't stop the judge from looking at Hermione like she was the scum of the earth. Purebloods didn't always have to call you a mudblood to make it known they didn't like you. Sometimes you could just tell by the way they looked at you.

"She shows up inconsistently, your honor, she's disheveled and confused. Her house is a mess. And she has the nerve to try refuse weekend visits with me, when the last one would

have been fine, but she didn't tell me Leo was sick." Ron stated. "I want full weekends. Friday to Sunday. Actually I want full custody."

Hermione cleared her throat, "Our son has only known him for a few months. In addition Ron continues to yell at me every pick up or drop off, often in front of our son. He's disrespectful, unkind, and always—"

"Miss Granger, you work night shifts at St. Mungo's Hospital, yes?" The judge peered down from his spectacles.

"Yes, I'm an emergency room doctor there." Hermione replied, she stood strong, her face calm and focused. She wasn't a pushover, as much as Ron wanted to believe.

"An apprentice, you mean." The judge stared at her blankly.

"Yes, but I've graduated from healer's school and I am a practicing physician. You may refer to me as Dr. Granger." She stated as politely as possible.

The judge sighed, "Well Dr. Granger." He emphasized condescendingly. "If you're working most weekends, is there any reason, why Mr. Weasley shouldn't have his son on the weekends?"

"Precisely." The judge nodded when she remained silent and then banged a gavel, "I'm ordering Mr. Weasley get every weekend in the case of Leo Robert Granger." He shuffled the files in front of him, "Head to the mediation room so you can sign the corresponding documents. And schedule another hearing on the matter of full custody."

Hermione didn't look at Ron or her shitty lawyer who she fired immediately after signing the document. The mediator gave her a sad smile as she left the room.

Ron wore a victorious grin as he walked out of the courthouse. "See you this evening to pick up Leo." His voice was saccharine sweet, but it felt dirty and she craved a shower.

As soon as the room emptied Hermione leaned against the table and cried into her hands. She cried for a long time. The feeling of failure was a tidal wave pulling her under an ocean of pain. She hated Ron. She hated him so thoroughly. Another wave of shame cascaded through her and her shoulders shook as she cried.

The door opened abruptly, swinging wide and hitting the door with a loud bang.

Hermione jumped up and grabbed her purse, wiping her tears as discreetly as she could. She stopped in mid step when Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy stood awkwardly in the entryway.

Harry was the first to move. "Hermione?" He wrapped her in a big hug. She took a second to respond, staring at Malfoy whose eyes were drilling in to hers.

She patted Harry's back softly and pulled away, clearing her throat. Hermione readjusted the bag on her shoulder.

"Did something happen, Granger?" Malfoy's words were tight.

“Nope. Just about to leave, actually. Sorry.” Hermione moved to leave, but Harry grabbed her arm and Hermione went rigid. Harry didn’t notice.

“I’m off of work in just a half hour, we should go grab drinks, Ginny would love to see you.” Harry’s smile was sincere and she appreciated his offer, but couldn’t be around either of them.

“I can’t actually, I have a shift at the hospital.” Hermione said, pulling away from him, rubbing her forearm.

“Sunday then?” Harry offered, “Albus and Severus get along great with Leo. You should have seen them at the burrow chasing gnomes. They’re a riot!”

“Sorry, I work Sunday too.”

“Oh okay, Saturday?” Harry’s face softened and it made her stomach tighten.
“I really can’t.” Hermione shook her head.

“Just for lunch then on Sunday? I can meet you at the hospital. You have to eat lunch, only an hour-‘

“She said no, Potter.” Malfoy said, with more bite in his words than Harry might have expected. He glanced offended at Malfoy. “Fine.” Potter raised his hands, “Just send me an owl when you have some time.”

“I will.” Hermione nodded and walked out of the room without another glance.

A couple of hours later Hermione was explaining to Leo that she’d see him Sunday afternoon. His tears weren’t dramatic and loud, but quiet slow ones that really broke Hermione’s heart in pieces. He was being so brave. “I love you little lion.”

“I love you the mostest mumma lion.” Leo said as he grabbed ahold of Ron’s hand.

Ron’s eyes ran up and down her with a haughty look, “You think intimidating me with Malfoy would do something for ya huh?” He scoffed, “You’re brainwashing our son and everyone knows it.”

Hermione felt numb as she prepared for her night shift, she’d hardly gotten any rest after the courthouse. The sharp ache in her chest was like a pickaxe digging into her repeatedly. Her exhaustion made her slow and impatient at work. She’d made a dosing error and thank Merlin, a nurse caught it. She felt stupid and frazzled.

“Tough shift tonight.” Padma slumped across from her in the break room.

“Honestly.” Hermione sighed, her throat tight. “I feel so stupid about that Antidote to Common Poisons dosage. I’m going to get struck with a lawsuit before I’m a fully licensed healer.”

"It's been a wild night. Full moons always make it crazy." Padma yawned. "Don't beat yourself up, we all make mistakes. It really sucks when it happens to you, but I've been there and I promise it will be okay. Now you'll always double and triple check." Padma glanced down at her wand, "Sorry I'm getting paged, hang in there Dr. Granger, you're doing great."

Hermione waved goodbye and pulled out her phone. She'd ignored Draco's texts and started to feel guilty.

What happened?

Are you alright?

Should I be concerned with your lack of response?

Granger... Please.

Hermione finally replied.

I'm fine. I don't want to talk about it. See you tomorrow?

He responded immediately. *Of course. Text me when you get home.*

Hermione texted him Saturday morning before crawling into bed and he didn't respond. Hermione slept hard and was grateful for the reprieve. When she woke up she felt less numb, but wished she did because her body buzzed so wildly it was like an angry swarm of bees begining to build a new hive inside her chest. Finally seeing Draco again after not seeing him all week made her feel lightheaded. And also scared. So scared because of how much she missed him.

He'd sent her a dress, a silky green one with a heavier peacoat to wear with the colder weather. And new shoes that would be much easier to walk it.

As she got dressed she reigned in all her feelings, pushing them as far down as she could. She took extra time with her makeup, wore her most expensive perfume, and curled her hair into loose waves. By the time she was ready she felt confident she could face him. Everything was fine.

Every experience with Draco had been different. Every greeting so far had been unpredictable and Hermione had hoped that this time he'd finally repeat one of them and she'd get another round spanking. That kind of distraction was exactly what she needed, perhaps she would just ask for it.

Hermione waved to B.N.B. as she walked through the lobby, who gaped like a fish, flushing red.

She was thirty minutes early when she slid her keycard against the door, hoping to have some extra time alone in the penthouse, but Draco was in front of her the moment the door opened.

“Hi.” Draco said, as he began unbuttoning her coat, he watched her carefully.

“Hi.” Hermione smiled easily, her body relaxing instantly in his presence. He pulled off her coat, hanging it up on a nearby rack. Hermione turned to set her purse down.

When she turned to face him, his hands slipped over her face and his lips crushed into hers.

She was stiff. It took her by complete surprise, but Draco didn’t care. He held his mouth against hers in a patient, persistent manner, licking her lips, sucking on them. Kissing them again and again. His thumbs swept across her cheeks in a soothing motion. And slowly, as if finally coming back into her body, she kissed him back. Her mouth opened for him and his tongue found hers. Hesitantly she rested her hands on his chest. Touching him was still foreign in some ways, especially in the hotel. She was used to him telling her what to do, giving her specific instructions on how or where to touch him. But kissing was the most foreign thing until that moment. It had instantly stopped feeling like they were testing the waters and more like diving into them. Their mouths melted together. Her hands wrapped around his neck, holding him tight. It felt like they’d done this thousands of times.

Draco’s hands slid down her back and wrapped against her waist pulling her flush to him. Their kisses became more passionate, yet neither tried to remove any clothing or do anything other than press hard into the other’s body. His other hand dropped to the nape of her neck, threading through her hair, pressing her face closer, harder into his. Hermione stood on her tiptoes, calf muscles straining as her arms tightened around his neck. They held each other so tightly and kissed for so long she distantly wondered how they were even breathing.

Their kisses changed at some point, morphing into something slower, softer, more sensual somehow. Then Draco abruptly pulled away, he leaned his head against hers, both of them sucking in heavy breathes. Hermione began smiling so wide she was should have been embarrassed, but she wasn’t. She was just happy. So happy.

“Tell me what happened yesterday,” Draco whispered. She was expecting him to tease her about missing him. *Not that*. They didn’t talk about things like that here.

Her smile fell. Her throat instantly tightening as her eyes painfully pricked with unshed tears, threatening to break down the wall she erected to keep her feelings far away. They weren’t far away. Hermione didn’t trust the voice that might come out from her throat. She swallowed twice, only getting dryer with each one.

“Answer me.” Draco’s voice was soft, but there was a desperation to it. Hermione stared at him, panic swelling inside her. His eyes searched hers. “Tell me, please.” His please was edged with impatience. Or frustration. Or something else entirely. It didn’t matter. Hermione

couldn't speak. If she did, she'd cry. His thumb brushed her cheek and it sent her bottom lip trembling. Her breath began sawing in short hard breaths through her nose.

"Hermione." He whispered her name and she clenched her eyes closed. Her nose twitched, her bottom lip followed with another painful involuntary tremble.

"It was a bad day," she inhaled sharply on the words, gasping as the tears began to fall. She inhaled again and cried harder. Everything with Ron had gone so horribly. He'd keep winning now. She'd be deemed an unfit mother. They were going to take- they were going to take Leo from her. Her chest heaved as hard sobs erupted from her.

Draco's hand cradled her head against him. Shushing her like an overwhelmed child. He waited for a while, rubbing her back through her tears. "Tell me what you need." He murmured into her hair. "Tell me what you need. Please tell me," he said, rushing the words. "I feel helpless when I don't know." Hermione shook her head. She didn't know either.

"Tell me baby. Tell me how to make you feel better. What do you need?"

"I-I—" Hermione stuttered, trying and failing to get her breathing and crying under control.

"Anything you want. Anything."

"Hold me," she managed. "Just hold me,"

Draco immediately lifted her by her thighs. She hadn't meant like that, but his idea was better. Her thighs squeezed around his hips and she head rested on his shoulder. One of Draco's arms slid under her bum, the other around her back.

"It's okay. You're safe." He whispered to her, swaying slightly, like he was rocking her. It was wonderful. It was so soothing and she was overwhelmed with gratitude for him. She was starved for nurturing like this. Starved for comfort. Hermione let out a cleansing sigh. "Thank you."

"Will you tell me why it was so hard?"

Her head throbbed and her eyes were sore. "It was a custody meeting with Ron. He gets Leo every weekend now." Her voice trembled as she said it, "The judge is an asshole. Ron's an asshole. And I'm—" She inhaled sharply, "I'm failing Leo." Her tears were quiet ones. "And I'm bad at my job. I'm probably going to get fired."

Draco moved, setting her down on the cool tiled floor of the bathroom. He began filling the tub. Hermione was exhausted from the emotional rollercoaster of yesterday and drained from her own crying. Meetings with Ron were always rough. Always triggering. It made her feel weak and small. And lonely, she hadn't realized.

"I look like a raccoon." Hermione said, her lip trembling as she looked in the mirror, seeing a homeless raccoon with a very nice dress on.

Draco held her face, a soft chuckle on his lips. "A very beautiful raccoon though."

Hermione didn't want to laugh but she did, and then she cried at the same time. Draco's soft sad smile remained as he pulled off her dress. He didn't ask for more information. She wore no bra or underwear due to his instructions. Once she was in the bath Draco washed her body in soothing circles. He massaged her head as he shampooed her hair, even twisting the curls around his fingers as he applied conditioner. Then she noticed they were curly hair products too. It made her cry.

After he was finished, he sat with his chin propped against his forearms, on the rim of the bathtub. Hermione sat, hugging her knees feeling calm again.

He reached for her hand and kissed her fingertips.

"I'll have you know..." Draco said quietly. She realized this was his nervous voice. "I love kissing you."

"I'm very pleased to hear that," Hermione smiled. "As I love kissing too."

He scrunched up his nose. "No, you mean you love kissing *me*." He looked at her through his lashes with feigned intimidation, then Draco lifted his head, "Okay, for context. I've only kissed three women."

Hermione's brows rose in skepticism. She knew he'd slept with a lot of women, part of the appeal was the fact that he knew what he was doing.

Draco listed on his finger. "Astoria at Hogwarts. Astoria after Hogwarts." He held another finger, "Daphne Greengrass in between those two timelines." He waved his hand around vaguely. "And you." His eyes softened. "And you're the winner." She stared at him for a long moment.

"I love kissing you too," Hermione replied softly. She did, she really did.

Draco tilted his head, "Should we watch a movie about muggle Kryptonite?"

Hermione smiled, "Not tonight, but it would be nice to have fun with you."

"Alright, then let's have some fun," Draco hummed.

"Thank you for the bath."

"When Scorpius was younger and teething a bath helped. He'd get overwhelmed so I spent a lot of time sitting on the bathroom floor."

"Oh so I am a baby." Hermione laughed at herself.

Draco leaned over the edge of the tub to kiss her. "A very pretty baby." He grabbed her hands and helped her stand up from the tub. Water sloshing over with a crispy splash.

"My pretty baby." He kissed her again, confirming to Hermione she was already addicted to his lips. It shouldn't have happened that fast.

"Well we can add mummy issues to my list then. When I'm emotional I just need to be bathed apparently."

Draco scoffed as he handed her a towel. "How do you have mummy issues? Jean is a saint."

"You know, retired, grandmother Jean Granger. You don't know Dr. Jean Granger who I was raised by. She is a saint, I agree, but still—" Draco picked her up out of the tub, carried her to the bedroom and plopped her on the bed.

"They really do change when they become grandparents, don't they?" Draco grabbed Hermione's dress. "Arm's up."

"I can get myself dressed."

Draco arched his brow. "Do I need to spank you?"

"Add daddy issues to the list."

"Copy cat." He replied.

"And yes you do need to spank me." Hermione replied, "Daddy Dragon."

Draco's lips curved, "Well not right now, I'll save a few for another time."

Hermione begrudgingly lifted her hands and he slid her dress over her.

They turned on music in the living room, drinking a glass of champagne with a seriously large cheese plate from room service. Hermione spun around barefoot in the penthouse living room, her dress fluttering delicately beneath her. Draco shimmied and hip thrusted his way across their makeshift dance floor to Queen's *Don't stop me now*. They'd been dancing for an hour at least, maybe longer. She was floating. Her body was swirling with a blissful feeling she didn't know if she had ever felt before. Because Draco made her feel so taken care of and loved.

Draco moved behind her wrapping his arms around her waist, she wrapped her arms around his neck, grinding against him. He kissed up her neck before twisting her to face him, kissing her as he dipped her. Then he spun her and pulled her in close. They lifted their hands above their heads, sliding down each other's arms. Draco's laugh was contagious. Hermione grinned as they began spinning, hands gripping each other's crisscrossed. The longer they spun the more serious they looked at each other. Hermione could feel the shift. She could feel each of her fingers slipping off that cliff.

They spun around faster, the background of the hotel room blurring into smeared shapes and streaks of color.

"I'm really scared," Hermione said.

"Me too," Draco said.

"If you let me go, I'll be very upset," Hermione yelled over the loud music. Thank goodness for silencing spells.

"I promise I'm not letting you go," he called back.

"It will hurt both of us. Which also has other consequences."

Draco gripped her tighter, though their spinning slowed. "That's what contracts and rules are for."

They were both out of breath, panting as they came to a stop. Hermione looked at him like he was an idiot. "We haven't been following the rules."

Draco smirked like he was proud of himself. "We can make new ones, better ones."

The music changed, and a slow piano began to play.

Draco placed her hands around his neck, "We'll go slow."

"Slow." Hermione confirmed as they swayed. Adele's crooning voice began to sing.

"Just like this song." Draco said, his knuckles brushed against her cheek bone.

"Are you even listening to these lyrics?" Hermione's brow furrowed as she whispered, "This is not slow." Adele's *Make You Feel My Love* played louder. How was he controlling the music?

"The melody is. And the words are very kind." Draco looked like he almost believed his own exaggeration. They teetered back and forth holding onto each other as she slid her fingertips against the back of his neck, running along the soft silky strands of his hair. He twirled her out and pulled her back, "Stop overthinking it." Her head leaned against his shoulder as Draco sang the last few lines of lyrics in her ear. And that moment was forever burned into her mind as his whispered words wrapped around her. Once the song ended, Hermione couldn't stop fidgeting. She slid her hands against his chest, fiddling with his collar, then ran her fingers down the buttons. "Fine." She conceded, looking at the single button undone on his shirt.

Draco arched a brow, lifting her chin, unimpressed. "Fine?"

"I'm scared...because I've never been so happy in my life." Hermione whispered it, it felt too fragile to speak it any louder. "But you make me want to be brave."

Draco didn't speak, he just stared at her. Hermione inhaled, "Are you ever going to take this dress off of me?"

"Yeah, I am." Draco smiled, lifting her up. Hermione kissed him as he walked down the hall to their bedroom and was surprised when he didn't throw her on the bed. Instead, he slid her down his body and when her hands landed on his chest, he said, "Will you help me unbutton my shirt?"

A riot of feelings swept over her as he looked at her. Genuine fear ran through his eyes. Fear and hope. And other things.

Hermione swallowed. Everything about this was freaking her out. Like she was holding a ticking bomb and it was all going to explode. But still, her fingers began unbuttoning his shirt. He felt safe. If there was a bomb in her hands, he'd be the one to help her carry it. And that almost felt more dangerous, because two little boys would be in the middle of it.

Draco's gaze stayed on her, his breathing a little short as she unbuttoned the shirt. She worked leisurely and when she was halfway done he started taking off his belt. Just as she finished the last button, he dropped his pants. Then his underwear. Semi-hard, he stroked himself and Hermione bit her lip as she looked him over. "Your turn." Draco said, as he bent down and lifted her dress over her head, tossing it somewhere behind him.

"On the bed." His serious nature started to return, but it was a different version, there was a tenderness to Draco's face that was hard to take in.

Hermione laid on her side and patted the spot next to her.

"I don't take orders from you, you should know it just so happens I planned to go to this exact spot." Draco said as he moved next to her.

"I'll let you take full control from this second forward." Hermione said, rubbing her hand over his face.

"Good girl." Draco's hand slid down her thigh, pulling it over his hip, his cock brushed up against her in the process. "Why does it feel like it's been so long." Hermione whispered with joy.

"So fucking long." Draco sighed, running his hand slowly up and down her leg and over her ass. "We need a rule for more sex."

"Yeah, I agree." Hermione replied, running her hand over his arms. He was naked with her and it was marvelous. Neither of them were rushing. Maybe because they both knew what they were doing would devastate both of them. Later that night Hermione would feel the devastation of his touch so deeply she'd cry when she thought Draco was asleep. Draco would lay there, mostly awake all night with his mind racing, trying to make contingency plans for everything he could fuck up.

Neither of them would regret it though.

"I will warn you," Draco leaned in, "I am requiring you to kiss me until you're sick of it."

"I'm up for the challenge. We got pretty good at kissing fairly quickly." Hermione replied as their lips came together. They kissed and kissed. Running their hands over each other's bodies. Hermione waited for that urgency to come, forcing them to rush through it, but it never came. Just deep waves of rushing pleasure as they took their time.

Draco moved on top of Hermione as he slid inside her and they briefly parted to hiss in satisfaction. “How have we only been fucking once a week?” Hermione sighed as his hips rolled, pushing himself deeper inside her.

“Fuck if I know.” Draco kissed down her neck, across her chest and his tongue ran up the other side. He sucked hard there and Hermione dug her fingers into his back.

They rolled onto their sides again. Tangling their limbs tightly, they began moving hard and deep.

“Draco,” Hermione whispered in between the kisses.

“I know.” He breathed, “I know.” He was so passionately tender. He pulled Hermione on top of him and their hands clasped together. His hips thrusted in a perfect rolling motion with hers as she rode him, their breathing short and choppy. As they stared at each other she finally let go of the cliff, nodding to him. His eyes widened and he flipped them over, kissing her deeply, framing her face with his forearms, “I’m in charge of you.” he said into her neck.

“I know.” Hermione panted as they moved faster.

“You’re mine.” Draco breathed, “All of you.”

“Okay,” Her eyes watered.

He lifted up hovering over her lips. “You’re perfect for me and I’m not letting go.” It sounded like a threat.

Their mouths crashed together again and the amount of euphoria Hermione experienced had no words close enough to describe it. Rapid bursts of pleasure shot through her, like she was made of light. Draco buried his face in her neck as he came chanting *all mine, all mine, all mine*.

BFFs With Viktor Krum

They laid together in the aftermath, subdued by ecstasy. Draco's was draped over her, laying on her stomach as they watched each other. Hermione ran her hand lazily through the strands of his hair.

"Do you really think you're really getting fired?" He sucked on the tip of her ring finger.

"I may have been a little dramatic." Hermione sighed. "I'm not used to making mistakes at work. And last night I was just...off."

"Which is understandable considering the day you had." Draco slid his fingers down her ring finger.

She arched her brow, "That is not subtle."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Draco held her stare playfully and she rolled her eyes.

"I'm sorry, about Leo." Draco said after a few minutes passed.

"I fired my lawyer afterwards." Hermione sighed.

"I'll get you a new one." Draco replied, still playing with her finger. "And don't you dare refuse." He said with a hardness she didn't challenge. "Is Ron a decent father?" Draco moved next to her so that they faced each other.

"I don't like talking about Ron." Hermione's eyes fell to their hands.

"I've noticed." Draco waited for a response.

"Leo was... an accident." Hermione swallowed as her throat tightened on the words. "I didn't tell Ron for a long time. And when I finally did, he accused me of planning it to get money from him. I told him he didn't have to have anything to do with the baby if he didn't want to. And he readily agreed." Hermione watched as Draco's thumb ran up and down her ring finger.

"My mum was late to the delivery, so I was alone." Hermione felt her chest tighten at the memory of seeing Leo for the first time. "Leo was huge when he was born. Chubby and round and perfect." Hermione exhaled slowly. "It was really hard, but we made it work. I lived with my mum and I went to healer's school when he was two years old. A couple of months ago a picture of Leo and I was published in The Daily Prophet, illegally because we were in the muggle world. It forced speculation on Leo's paternity and even though I got the paper to retract the images on the wizard web, the damage was done. Within days I was sent a summons to a paternity hearing. And it all happened so fast I was in shock. I had to rush to find a lawyer I could afford and now...."

Draco lifted her chin, “And now you’re not doing it alone anymore.”

“It’s hard.” Hermione replied with a stubborn glare.

“Yeah. It is.” His eyes dropped to her mouth, then back to her. “But it will be okay.”

“How do you know?” Hermione whispered.

“We’ll figure it out together.” He kissed her knuckle, “I’m yours too Hermione.”

They found each other wrapped up in each other’s limbs again and didn’t come up for breath until they’d both came again. And then again and then again.

“Don’t you have to leave?” Hermione replied as she rested against his chest.

“Are you kicking me out?” Draco said flipping through the channels on the tv.

“I just feel bad taking you away from Scorpius.”

“My mother has him and occasionally she coordinates meetings with Astoria at the Greengrass’s. That’s where they are tonight.” Draco sighed and turned the tv off. “And you’re not allowed to leave because you’re staying the night.” Then he added. “I had Pilly gather your things for work.”

“Why do you keep making her do things for me?” Hermione sighed.

“Hermione, I pay her to do jobs. You fired her from flower delivery, you fired her from cleaning your kitchen, now-”

“You did what?” Hermione jerked her body around to face him. “You wretched wizard!”

“Did you really think I cleaned your kitchen?” He looked at her utter incredulity.

“You spoiled rich prat.” Hermione fell sideways in bed, covering her hands with her eyes.

“Why are you doing this to me?”

Draco murmured something against her thighs and Hermione forgot all about the elf.

As she got ready for work the following morning, Draco laid lazily in bed. “Quick question, if you had to choose between a kiss and an orgasm, what would you choose?”

“Can I choose both?” Hermione said slipping on her scrub top.

“I was hoping you would.”

She frowned at the look on his face.

Monday morning Hermione greeted everyone as casually as possible, but couldn't help continue glancing between the two Malfoy adults that wouldn't even look at each other. The air was tense. Draco held up his Daily Prophet that had a picture of Hermione on it. It was still unsettling to see herself in the news, even if it did happen regularly. She was swaying alone on the front page. A headline discussing the success of the gala's fundraiser.

"Mum, is that you?" Leo squealed with delight.

"It seems to be." Hermione frowned. Scorpius was staring at it wide eyed and glanced at Hermione, he whispered into Leo's ear.

"He says you're pretty, mumma." Leo said, beginning to chew on a piece of fruit.

A red hot blush crept over Scorpius' cheeks. Hermione smiled, "Thank you Scorp."

"Did you get a true love's kiss?" He giggled.

Hermione giggled too and Narcissa huffed. The witch was glaring at Draco.

"They're fighting." Scorpius shrugged.

"My mother is upset because I've declined the rest of this season's courting events." Draco said, folding the paper down. Hermione's stomach swooshed as they made eye contact. And as if he'd hypnotized her his voice rang inside her head.

"*I-2-say my name.*"

He mouthed his name to her, *Draco*, right on cue. Hermione choked, coughing hard.

"The deal was you keep attending until we can announce a formal courtship." Narcissa side-glanced at Hermione, who felt entirely awkward about this whole conversation being in front of the children.

"It has nothing to do with Granger, mother." Draco said. "Some things take time."

The doorknocker clanged abruptly interrupting Narcissa's glare. She sighed as she left the room. Draco and Hermione's eyes met again. *One. two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten.*

"You're breaking the rules." Hermione whisper hissed at him.

"I don't like that rule. Never have in fact." He replied, glancing at her mouth. "Wait, come look at this article the Prophet wrote about you." Draco lifted the paper up and Hermione leaned towards him. The paper covered their faces as he pressed a fast kiss on her lips.

Hermione's skin went hot as she stared at him.

"Draco Lucius Malfoy." Narcissa walked back into the room and Hermione jerked back into her seat. Narcissa held a bewildered expression and Hermione began focusing very intently on her muffin hoping they weren't just caught... *caught what exactly Hermione*... it was hot regardless.

"Why do I have two wizards at my door claiming they're here to consult you on buying a quidditch team?"

Hermione choked again.

"Oh," Draco grinned, "that's because I'm buying a quidditch team."

"Which team?" Narcissa exclaimed. "And when were you going to inform me?"

"I'm informing you now," Draco finished his tea and stood "And whichever team Viktor Krum is on."

Hermione shook her head. This was the most ridiculous thing in the entire world.

"Viktor Krum!" Leo jumped up on his chair, "Did you know my mom knows him! He's her best friend ever!"

"You don't say?" Draco glanced at Hermione with an eye roll, "Well, Scorpius, you should tell Leo the good news then."

Scorpius turned to Leo, jumping up as well, "Daddy bought us tickets to see Viktor's quidditch game!"

"Thanks Dragon daddy!" Leo jumped up and down. Hermione's shock turned into pure hysteria as she peeled over in laughter. Narcissa's face softened during the chaotic happiness.

Dragon daddy. Her lucky stars were really showing off now. How absolutely adorable for Leo, and hilarious for Hermione. She cleared her throat as she caught Draco giving her a look that said, "*are you done yet?*" He looked at Scorpius and said, "the other good news."

"Ooooh." Scorpius said, "I forgotten things sometimes. Dad says we get to be the owners of the team together, you and me! Because we're best buds." Scorpius grinned with a thumbs up.

Leo's eyes grew big, his hands went to his face slowly, "I don't know how to be an owner! Will we be flying the brooms?"

Hermione's laughter had turned quickly into tears. *Life changing*. That's what this was. Narcissa shared a tender glance with her. This would ensure Leo's future no matter what happened.

Draco walked behind Hermione and placed a hand on her shoulder, "Now we all get to be best friends with Viktor Krum." He gave her a little squeeze before leaving.

All morning long she kept staring at her godsdamned ring finger. It was a figment of her imagination, surely, but it felt weird. Like something was on it. Like a ring. A ghost of a ring sat on her finger. It wasn't the first time she'd felt something either. Nothing was there and yet something...

"Granger, I need you to sign some paperwork." Hermione was helping the boys cut patterns when Draco popped his head in.

"Alright." She cleared her throat. Every time she thought about what he was doing she'd become emotional again.

Once in his office, she signed a dozen different forms. It wasn't until half way through she realized she was also listed as an owner.

"Malfoy, this is..." Hermione shook her head as he came up behind her, his arms around her waist.

"He's mine too." Draco hummed against her skin like it wasn't the most beautiful thing she'd ever heard. She twisted around and cried into his shoulder.

"Thank you." She sniffled. "I don't know how to thank you."

"I have plenty of ways you can thank me. Starting by," He pressed her against the desk, slipping his hand into the waistband of her leggings. His signet ring already vibrating as it pressed against her clit.

"What!" Hermione panted.

"I want to see how fast I can have you coming." Draco said against her lips. "You better hurry, our kids have probably chopped off all of their hair by now."

"Dra-"

"Save my name for when you come." Draco kissed her as the vibrating intensified. "You chose both a kiss and an orgasm today."

"You're a-"

He hummed, lifting her leg. "Faster darling."

She was coming alright. Hermione burried her head against his chest as she moaned into him.

"I can't wait to top that record." He breathed.

Later that night she received her flowers. A card that read

What if I never stop sending you flowers?

She texted him *thank you* and he replied.

I have a serious problem.

Which is?

Now that I've started kissing you I won't be able to stop

That sounds like a personal problem

It's a dual problem. How am I supposed to greet you at breakfast without kissing you?

How have you managed this far?

Painfully

I am a doctor, I think I can help.

Would you need to see me in my office regularly?

Depends...

On?

Pain levels.

High. Extremely High.

You might be addicted.

She regretted the words as soon as she sent them, but he responded quickly.

Yes, I am. The only addiction I'll allow in fact.

Alright well I think everyday might be appropriate visits. To asses daily pain levels.

He began sitting next to her at breakfast. His hand on her leg through the meal when Narcissa wasn't around. He pulled her into his office before lunch for made up reasons to kiss her against his door. "Let me hear you." He whispered with his hand under her skirt. "Just a little."

"Draco." Hermione murmured.

“Good girl.”

On Friday he texted her,

What time is pick up for Leo?

6, why?

He didn’t respond but she wasn’t surprised when he showed up through her floo on Friday at 5:30pm.

“Another consult?” Ron huffed as Draco stood behind Hermione.

“No,” Draco smirked, his hand sliding against Hermione’s hip. “A personal visit this time.”

Ron’s face fell, before he let out an uncomfortable laugh. “Let’s go buddy.” Ron replied glaring at Hermione as he took Leo’s hand.

The following Saturday they were in the hotel’s bed.

“It doesn’t fit like that.”

“I think it can.”

“I’m telling you, my anatomy doesn’t stretch that far.”

“Draco, If I can do reverse cowgirl, certainly you can too, I don’t understand why it can’t be equal.”

“Is this some weird beginning to the start of a lecture about my internalized misogyny within our sex life?”

“No.” Hermione’s voice rose high.

“You dirty little liar.” Draco hissed looking at her through his legs.

Hermione’s knees were pressed up to her chest, where Draco sat perched upon them. He was half way leaning on his elbow, while his other hand fiddled with his cock, aiming for her pussy.

She traced around his asshole.

He stilled.

“Did you like that?” She said, pursing her lips.

"I think so. Do it again so we can find out."

Then the next morning, because sleepovers were becoming an unspoken thing. They argued.

"Get this ring off of me!" He'd put it on his signet ring this morning, making her touch herself until Draco came all over her face. When he finished he said, "Well fuck, now I'm addicted to this view." After which she couldn't take the fucking ring off her hand.

"I'm not in charge of it." He shrugged. "Signet rings have their own unique magic. Some say they're like mood rings, doing whatever the wearer desires, maybe it's you who doesn't want it off." They were getting ready to go collect their kids for dinner. "Get it off right now!"

"Maybe it will come off if you shower Monday morning using it." He shrugged as he walked past her, "I don't know, just a thought."

Hermione set a strong notice me not charm on it. Her ring finger felt extra heavy that week. Like there were two signet rings on her finger. And no it didn't come off in the shower. It didn't come off all week actually. He had her using it every day. Not until the following Saturday when he pulled it off easily did he say, "Hmm. Maybe it was just stuck?"

She smacked him. "You little-"

"Shut up and let me breed like the good whore you are." He shut her up with his mouth all over her body.

Teacher Awards

The morning of their tenth Saturday together while she was sleeping after her hospital shift, Draco crawled into her bed. "I needed a nap too." he said as he pulled her close to him. That evening after they'd ravaged each other and she'd finally got that damn ring off, they were lying on the hotel's floor.

"Shit." She snapped, throwing an arm across her face after another wrong answer.

"Stop moving." Draco sighed. "You're making me mess up." His finger brushed against her toe, swiping the nail polish away. He'd insisted on painting her toes while she studied.

"*Pretty paint for pretty toes.*"

"I am going to fail this exam." She huffed.

"No you're not. You're allowed to get things wrong and still pass the exam." Draco bit his lip in concentration as he painted her pinky toe.

The following Saturday Draco attempted to crawl into her bed again.

Hermione told him, still half asleep, "No, you're not allowed to sleep here until Pilly's my friend."

Draco pulled off his shirt at the same time he called Pilly on the phone he'd apparently gifted to her as an early Christmas present.

"Pilly she's crying, it probably means she really does feel bad." He said as he slid under the blankets with her.

Hermione started to actually cry from laughter and her overwhelming annoyance with this situation. He was joking. He had to be joking. "Stop this is torturous!"

"Pilly, please I don't know why she's like this." He wrapped his arm around her waist, pressing a kiss to her temple.

Hermione laughed and cried harder. "Pilly, you can clean my kitchen and guess what I need help with laundry too, and if you'd like, I'll pay you to go grocery shopping for me."

Draco shook his head at her.

"Pilly she's only allowed to pay you in muggle money which is useless to an elf. I don't know why she'd leave that out, but don't judge her for it. I'll be paying you. Don't let her trick you into taking any of her money." Draco said then paused, "Huh, alright weird request. I'll relay the negotiations." He arched a brow, "Pilly said she will only forgive you for making her lose not one but two jobs, is to agree to have sleepovers every weekend with our

kids.” Draco paused, “Wait what’s that? Oh and some weeknights too. Damn Pilly you’re an extremely generous negotiator.”

“Draco.” Hermione rolled her eyes.

“Oh fantastic, she said my name in a tone that mostly means she’s grateful. You’re the best Pilly.”

“I still don’t like her.” Pilly squealed through the phone.

“Wait, what? You’re not joking?” Hermione snapped up straight trying to grab the phone. Draco pulled her into him, tossing his phone across the room.

“Maybe she just needs you around more. Maybe that’s why she wants you to have sleepovers,” Draco lifted her face. “Even if it empties my vaults I’ll bribe that damn elf to love you.”

They stared at each other and it hit Hermione just how much she felt for him. As he stared back, his throat bobbed and she wondered if their silent staring games were communicating things they couldn’t say out loud yet. They kissed for a long moment before Draco pulled away and said, “Now go back to sleep so I can spank you later. I like my slut well rested.”

The next Saturday he was already in her bed when she got home from the hospital. He read while she slept. They didn’t even make it to the hotel that night, opting for a movie on her couch instead, where they finally watched Superman.

“Shit.” He twisted against her, his hand clutching the dark mark as the credits rolled.

Hermione sat up detangling herself from him. “What is it?” He shook his head, pulling away from her as his eyes clenched tightly. The muscles in his forearm trembled visibly underneath his skin, his fingers cramping at off angles.

“Let me see it.” Hermione tried to reach for him, but he pulled it away again.

“No,” he breathed. “It’ll pass.” He pressed his arm to his chest, breathing harshly.

“Let me see it right now.” Hermione snapped at him. His eyes popped open, dark and scared. “I don’t want you to touch it. I don’t want you to have to even look at it. I hate this thing.”

“Yeah well it’s part of you and I-” She paused awkwardly, a stupid, tingling blush running up her chest. She’d almost said more than she meant to…

He watched her as they both realized what she might have said.

“Just give me your arm, I’m a doctor!” She hissed. He reluctantly gave her his forearm.

She examined him for a brief moment before she began massaging the muscles. They were so tight and hard. He hissed and as she loosened them, deeply massaging his hand first and

moving up his forearm passed the mark. "How often does this happen?" She watched as the tremors finally slowed.

"It's inconsistent." Draco sighed in relief as she worked her way back down his arm again. "Sometimes it's gone for months, other times it can happen a few times a week."

"And what have you done for it?" Hermione continued rubbing his arm even after the tremors stopped. "A steroid could--"

"I've done them, but it's never prevented them."

"Do you want a--"

"No." Draco said firmly.

"You don't know what I was going to say." Hermione narrowed his eyes at him.

"Yes I do and no I don't want any pain potions."

"It's not a prescription, it's just over the counter--"

"No." Draco said firmly, "I don't do pain potions at all."

"That's--" Hermione sighed, but stopped arguing with him at the look on his face. "Please tell me when this happens again. I'm happy to massage it any time you need. In fact you should do it regularly."

"Fine." She knew he only conceded as a token of appreciation for dropping the topic of pain meds.

An owl pecked at her window drawing both their attention.

When she opened the letter she burst into tears. Ron had gotten the full custody hearing pushed up...to the day of her next exam.

Draco had a meeting with lawyers by Monday at lunch.

The boys played all day around the house. Lesson's thrown out the window. Hermione had a fleeting thought she wanted to hire a nanny. Then banished it, because she was supposed to be the nanny.

The two lawyers, a male and female, sat at the dining room table and peered over the last lawyer's information. Hermione's knee bounced underneath the table until Draco placed a hand over her leg.

"And you're sure you don't want to announce your courtship beforehand?" The male lawyer, Mark said.

"We're sure." Draco replied, squeezing her knee.

"It's fine." Sharon said. "This is plenty. We'll have Mr. Malfoy there as a character witness, we have your impeccable record from the hospital, and you tutoring Scorpius. Also why has it never come up that you hours of contributions to the community as a volunteer at Azkaban every summer of healer's school?"

Draco turned his head towards her. "Yes, why hasn't that come up yet?"

"Patient-doctor confidentiality." Hermione said. Truthfully she just didn't feel like discussing it. Draco's father had been a blip on her radar for one summer and then never saw him again while she volunteered. His injuries had been gruesome though. Not something she'd just casually bring up. *Did you know your father almost died from a rusty shank fight that the guards were betting on?*

"Well I'll bring this up too. It's another way to demonstrate your character, because so far that's all they've done is attack you." Sharon rolled her eyes. "What was your last lawyer even doing?"

"I don't know." Hermione said with tears in her eyes.

They continued working on her case most of the day and Draco slept in her bed every night that week. After putting the Scorpius to bed at the Manor, Draco would flop over after Hermione had put Leo to bed. Sleeping with him was the only way she got any sleep at all. They were also having sex every night which helped destress her, but created a new worry of becoming reliant on daily sex and sleepovers.

Friday morning she was still a bundle of nerves, the only solace was that after taking the exam later that afternoon she wouldn't be going into work. Draco insisted she take the day off. The empty courtroom felt ominous as her heels tapped against the floor. When Ron arrived he was full of cocky pride, laughing with his lawyers as they sat down.

"Detective Malfoy, what brings you to my courtroom today? Do you have a case being heard later?" The judge said upon seeing Draco arrive shortly after Ron did.

"I'm here with Dr. Granger." He said. Draco was in detective mode and the difference from when he was in her flat an hour prior was stark. His face cold, his voice holding a hard edge to it. It was also incredibly sexy, but that was besides the point.

"Ahh. Is she in some sort of trouble?" The judge frowned.

"Not at all. She's my son's tutor. I'm here as a character witness if her character is under question today."

The judge's mouth parted and then closed. "You're here defending her?"

"Yes. With all of my available resources." Malfoy replied.

"That's-" The judge cleared his throat stacking papers in front of him. "That's good for Miss Granger's sake then, because she certainly needs-"

"Dr. Granger, you mean?" Malfoy replied.

“I beg your pardon?” The judge looked genuinely confused.

Malfoy’s voice grew colder. “Hermione Granger is a practicing doctor, I hope grasping basic details like this aren’t a common struggle for you. It’s quite an obvious mistake. Her name is on all the paperwork in front of you.”

The judge’s jaw tightened. “Apologies. Dr. Granger.”

Ron’s confidence slipped away into barely contained anger as Hermione’s lawyers advocated for her. Then it was gone entirely when the judge denied Ron full custody and overturned his last ruling. Deciding that every other weekend visits were appropriate for now.

Hermione walked into her exam grinning and walked out exhausted, but still grinning. The official results would come in a week, but she’d done well. Draco was waiting at her flat with the boys. Where the boys were having their first official sleepover at Leo’s house.

Later that night, Hermione was in the kitchen when Draco came up behind her, “The boys are asleep.” His hands roamed over her breasts. “What do you say mummy and daddy take a shower?”

He had her up against the wall within seconds. The hot water sprayed against Draco’s back, as he licked her neck. “I think I need shower sex every night now.” Draco murmured. They’d been doing this weird thing the last few weeks. Draco would say things that ended in ‘I need this every day, every morning, every night.’

She moaned as he drove deeper inside her. “I might need some convincing.” Then Hermione would pretend to be stubborn about it. After that night in the hotel, she waited for him to ask her to move in or bring up marrying him or say he loved her, but when he didn’t, she wondered if he was waiting for her to bring it up first. The problem then became neither of them were saying any thing out loud.

“I’ll bribe you with whatever you want.” He kissed her deeply. “In fact let’s go jewelry shopping.” At least that’s what Hermione thought they were doing. On the off chance he was being literal kept her from being direct too. “What kind of jewelry?” Hermione kissed his shoulder.

His thumb rolled against her nipple. They were in a silent war to get the other person to say something direct first. To say what exactly she didn’t know. Both of them were being obtuse and stubborn.

“The only kind you want, obviously.” Draco palmed her breast. “All of it.”

The last few weeks they sort of just talked *around* topics. Both of them in a strange battle of wills. Which made her feel actually stubborn. Which would prompt Draco to act unbothered and nonchalant about everything.

Hermione began panting through her orgasm as Draco sucked deeply on her ring finger
“Godsdamn it, yes!” Hermione’s head fell back as he came, moaning how perfect she was for him.

It was only after that shower when they were both getting dressed that Hermione wondered if he’d just proposed and she just accepted it. It wouldn’t have surprised her in the least if that’s how he interpreted too. She would only know based on how Draco would act. But Draco would only behave based on how Hermione acted. Suddenly all of their good communication skills had exploded. As if they were both afraid of each other. Tiptoeing around the other, but still pushing the boundaries a little further every night to see if the other would say something. Waiting for the other to slow the other down. Hermione tried to be nonchalant too. Sort of. If she were too nonchalant he would win. She wasn’t sure what he would be winning, but she wanted to be winning. And somehow she’d be winning something if he was direct first and she wanted him to say something first just for that reason alone. It was becoming her favorite game, even if absolutely nothing about it made sense.

The oddest part being how they talked about announcing their courtship.

“We can do it whenever is best.” Draco said for the tenth time in the last few weeks as he got into her bed with a book.

“Exactly. There’s no rush to prepare for the future.” Hermione replied as she selected one of his shirts to wear, then placed a face mask on before sitting at her desk to study.

Truly, she secretly thought they both got a sexual high from all the sneaking around. They were becoming obscenely lazy about it in front of their kids though.

Draco found ways to touch her all the time. Even joining them for reading and cuddling time at school when he could, Hermione reached for his hand through the hedge maze as they walked with their kids through cold bitter winds of December. They’d yet to do anything with Narcissa present, which would delight her entirely, but the sneaking around bit was just too hot. He kissed her behind the newspaper, squeezed her bottom anytime she was near, and that signet ring was being used any chance Draco could find a reason to pull her into his office. But there was a very unique high she got from seeing him in public. She couldn’t explain it, but the thrill that ran through her when she would see him under a random circumstance made her extra horny.

A week ago, they both were randomly in Honeydukes shopping. They circled around each other, watching the other like prey. “*I-2-Say my name.*” replayed sinfully in her mind. Standing in line in front of him should not have been so damn sexy, but it mad her feral. All of it made this strange game they were playing even more fun.

And that’s why two hours later when Hermione finished studying and climbed into bed, Draco just pulled her close and said, “you look so good in my clothes.”

“And you look good in my bed.” Hermione replied.

And they didn’t talk about the fact that when Hermione arrived home Draco had practically moved into her closet. Half of his clothes were stuffed in beside hers. They also didn’t

acknowledge that he'd brought a suitcase for Scorpius too. And an extra bed for Leo's room. "For sleepovers to be easier." Draco said completely seriously as they stood in the kitchen room waiting for popcorn to be finished popping for their Friday movie night. He'd taken a step forward. So now he was winning or something. She didn't really know the rules exactly.

"Oh great idea." Hermione replied. "We should get one for the manor as well."

"Already did." Draco replied, smugly.

"Perfect." Hermione said.

"I know." Draco smiled.

"Good."

"Great."

They stared at each other a long time with suspicious glares.

"Can we watch the movie now you weirdos?" Leo said pulling on Draco's legs.

"Yes, sorry. It's his fault." Hermione stuck her tongue out at Draco and he pretended to bite it as he pulled the popcorn out of the microwave. Hermione insisted it tasted better than magical popped popcorn. They were laughing when Scorpius leapt towards Hermione, "I want to sit on Mum's lap."

Draco froze, his eyes going wide. But Hermione just scooped him up, hungrily kissing his face. "Only if you promise not to fart on me you little stinker."

"I can't control that. It's my digestible system's fault." He shrugged.

"True." Hermione grabbed the popcorn from a frozen Draco and headed out of the kitchen. Leo grabbed his hand. "Dragon you coming?"

"Yeah, Dragon Daddy you coming?" She'd moved them a step forward without even having to work for it. His eyes were locked on Hermione's in an expression that was a combination of acknowledging her move and warning her he'd be responding with his own. A silent battle of wills.

And so that's why as they fell asleep, neither brought up Draco responding by kissing her right there in the kitchen in front of the boys for the first time. Which moved them a step forward.

They also were not mentioning that Draco kept wearing her Gryffindor shirt to bed and Hermione had started wearing one of his Slytherin shirts. "For the kids." She'd said the first night she slipped it on.

"Of course. We don't want them think we have favorites."

"They'll probably end up in Ravenclaw anyway." Hermione said.

“Don’t say that.”

“Better than Hufflepuff.”

“True.” Draco sighed.

Then they’d begin the dance again in the morning. Hermione had never been happier.

Sunday’s shift was busy and short staffed due to other doctor’s taking exams. Hermione was ten minutes away from being able to take her lunch break when Astoria was admitted and Hermione was the only doctor available. She was passed out in the bed after the nurse had taken vitals and Hermione told her to call Draco. He was her only emergency contact number.

“Oh great.” Astoria stirred, sweat dripped down her forehead. Hermione looked over her chart. “You’re trying to steal my son aren’t you?” Hermione sighed. How many times would she hear that in one weekend...

“What are the main issues you’re having Astoria?”

Her eyes fluttered lazily as her body started to shake. “I’m in withdrawal-l-l-l.” Her teeth chattered. “You fucking id-d-d-iot.”

“I need to know what kinds of symptoms you’re experiencing to help you.” Hermione said, grabbing a chair and sitting beside her. “When was the last time you used?”

“Fuck you.” Astoria groaned and threw her head back. “Where is Draco!”

“The nurse has called him, but Astoria. You have the opportunity to stay clean and actually-”

“You think you understand me, but you don’t.” She spat. “You’re so high and mighty. It’s the Draco effect, he does that. He makes you feel sooo special doesn’t he? You’ll never be enough for him. He’ll never be satisfied by you.”

Hermione’s patience was thinning. “I want you to know that I’d take Scorpius to see you in rehab. If you chose to go. I’d bring him.” Astoria’s face dropped. “I’ll make sure he always knows who you are. But the thing is, if you keep doing this, he won’t *want* to visit you. He won’t remember you enough to care to visit you. And when you’re dead, he won’t mourn you. But you already know that don’t you? That’s why you don’t try at all because you think he’s better off with out you.” Astoria’s bottom lip trembled. “You can’t do it for Scorpius, Astoria. You have to do it for yourself. Do it because your life is worth living and you are worth fighting for.”

Astoria’s breathing had grown short. “You are an extremely pathetic, ugly thing!”

"If you want help, my number will be on your discharge paperwork." Hermione replied. "I'm happy to escort you to a rehab facility myself if you ever want someone that won't coddle you." That's what every one here did. Including Draco.

Astoria's face lined with fear. "No, you have to give me something. I'm dying-g-g-g."

"I'll give you anti-nausea medication and an opioid cravings suppressant."

"You're a dirty mud blood bitch who thinks they can do everything! You're not in charge!" Her arm snaked out, her dirty nails dug into Hermione's forearm.

Hermione held her stare, gripping her wand in her other hand.

"Astoria let her go." Draco's voice was a balm over her skin. Hermione wasn't scared, but it was always nice to feel him near. Astoria began sobbing, pulling away from Hermione and pressing her hands to her face, "She won't give me any pain meds. Tell her to give me something Draco. She's hor-r-r-rible."

Hermione stood, facing Draco. And for the first time in a long time Hermione couldn't read his expression. "The nurse is coming back with her medications. Do you have any questions for me?"

Draco stared at her for a moment, eyes locked on hers, "No."

"Alright, if you either of you do, have the nurse contact me." Hermione moved so she wouldn't touch him as she left. "Thank you, Dr. Granger." He said as she was almost gone. She looked back at him. That unreadable expression in his face made her all fluttery inside. "You're welcome." She nodded and left.

That evening, Hermione and Scorpius went to sleep at the manor.

He fucked her so hard that night, while whispering in her ear. "How did I ever live with out you?"

Hermione decided to take an exploratory step, tapping around with her metaphorical shoe. "What if?" She whispered into the dark room, her back against his chest. "We don't announce a courtship at all? What if it's a different announcement?"

"Hmmm." Draco hummed as he ran his fingers down her ring finger. "I'm unfamiliar with what other announcements that could be." That finger still felt like something was on it. Every day it felt heavier and stranger. She'd tried multiple revelio spells. Multiple charms. Nothing. It was driving her nuts. She had a feeling Draco was getting off on besting her.

"Obviously about my tutoring skills. Like the best teacher award or something." Hermione pressed his ring finger knuckle to her mouth for the first time. It made her all wobbly inside like she was not quite a solid or liquid, like the oobleck she'd made with the kids a few days

ago. She didn't know if she was supposed to do it, but she did it anyway because she wanted to give him something.

Draco was quiet for an unnervingly long time and Hermione started to regret it, wondering if it signaled the opposite of what she wanted to communicate. Or maybe she could just actually communicate with real words... *Ugh. No.*

"Would you dress up for the announcement?" he finally said.

"Maybe, probably." Hermione said quickly keeping it vague.

"And the boys would have to be in the photo." Draco replied. "Because they're your students."

"And then it'd be awkward if you weren't in the photo."

"Why would I need to be in it?" Draco said testing her. Pushing her to say what they weren't saying.

"Oh you'd win an award too. Best parent volunteer award. You didn't get the email I sent you? The boys and I had a vote."

Draco chuckled. "Okay, in that case I absolutely need to be in the photo. And I think we should all dress up for such a unique occasion. Who knows when the awards might come again."

"Definitely. Very formal."

"It would have to be if you're wearing all the jewelry I buy you."

"And you should wear jewelry too." Hermione said and then instantly realized her mistake. *Fuck.*

"I already wear my signet ring. Should I wear something other than that?" He kissed her shoulder.

"Only if you want to." She sighed nonchalantly. "You're in charge of your own clothing and accessories."

Draco sighed, slightly annoyed with her besting him. "If you have an opinion on what I should wear, I'd love to hear it."

Reverse uno was the easiest move to get out of this. "Do you have an opinion on what I'd wear? Earrings, no earrings? Necklace? Bracelets? Rings?"

"What if you wore a ring on every finger?" Draco countered.

She hummed. "I don't think that's my style."

"How many rings would be?" Draco sounded cocky with annoyed her.

"I haven't even thought about it. I don't wear any rings. Wearing even one ring would be quite strange." Hermione shrugged, she was back tracking and they both knew it.

"You've worn the signet ring. How did you like that?" Draco said pushing more than she expected. She wore that ring when he got her off and the night he called her his wife.... Always putting it on her ring finger...

"It's a bit lackluster for my tastes. I like... more feminine items." Hermione replied slowly. They were tiptoeing so close to something.

"Something sparklier?"

"And gold." Hermione replied, a smile ghosting her lips.

"Well when would this announcement take place?"

"Whenever is best." Hermione replied, taking a small step to the side. "Do you have any, um suggestions?"

"There's no rush necessarily." Draco said pressing a kiss to her temple. "So many people will want you as their tutor, I like the idea of having you all to myself."

"Happy to sign a long term contract." Hermione replied and then held her breath. That was... bold...

"Oh that's convenient. I was just looking over one today." Draco said softly.

"So we're on the same page." Hermione said, kissing his knuckle again.

"I think so pretty baby."

Hermione couldn't stop herself, "Some say only fools rush in though." Twelve weeks and that's all it took. Yesterday technically. Twelve weekends and she was so in love with him she didn't recognize herself most days. They hadn't even acknowledged it yesterday. Just carried on with life as usual. She didn't know how it happened so fast. She didn't know when it was exactly, or where it turned so quickly. But when she realized she loved him, she really was in the middle of it. As in the middle of the ocean and no land in sight.

"Like a river flows, surely to the sea, Darling so it goes, somethings are meant to be." Draco hummed back. "Doesn't Elvis officiate teacher awards?"

Hermione froze. "You mean in the United States?"

"Yes, I think an international award would be fun?" Draco's voice rose nervously and it made her burst into laughter and she turned to face him. They were being *so* ridiculous.

"You're my favorite person in the whole world Draco Malfoy."

Draco kissed her, "Funny I was thinking the same thing about you."

Hermione fell asleep dreaming about Christmas morning. It was only a few days away where they would spend it with their whole family, including her mother, at the manor. It was the most relaxed she'd been in years, maybe ever. How she ever lived with out Draco Malfoy she did not know...

Dr. Granger

Three weeks later

Hermione's wand buzzed. "I'm on my lunch break," she mumbled. It was a Friday night shift and her arm was thrown across her face as she tried to squeeze in a nap in one of the empty beds in the hospital's break room. Her wand buzzed again and within seconds a loud announcement rang through the room.

"Paging Dr. Hermione Granger." Hermione frowned as she sat up, rubbing a hand over her face, she grabbed her wand and headed back to the ED. Padma's face flooded with relief as she ran down the hall towards her. "This way, Granger."

"What's going on?" Hermione adjusted her coat, pulling her hair into a quick braid.

"It's Malfoy. He wants to speak with you." Padma replied, carefully.

"Is Astoria back in here?" Hermione sighed, the thought of it tugged on her heartstrings. She'd been hoping her absence here was a good sign.

Padma's face fell, "No, Hermione, he's just been admitted." Those words made Hermione start to run. "Why?" Hermione's heart beat hard against her chest.

"DMLE raid gone badly. A building collapsed, Malfoy got hit rescuing a group of trafficked magical creatures." Padma kept pace with Hermione showing her the room he was in.

Hermione held her head high, putting on her best professional expression. She was so grateful she'd had so much practice being indifferent around Draco, because seeing the right side of his body crushed and broken was a blow straight to her chest. "He needs to go into surgery as soon as possible." Padma spoke quickly in a hushed tone at the door. Draco hadn't seen them yet. He laid lifeless on the gurney, staring at the ceiling. His left arm twitched multiple times. Gods he must be in so much pain.

"Okay, why isn't he in surgery already?" Hermione's tone was just a bit anxious. She tried reigning it in.

"We've stabilized his injuries and placed a temporary stasis charm on them, but he's refusing to sign any documents. He won't take any pain medications. We've just called Narcissa."

Hermione's heart sank deeply inside her.

"He says he'll only speak to you. He's refusing to talk to any of us." The concern in Padma's eyes was genuine. Her compassion was something Hermione always admired about her.

“Thanks Patil.” Hermione inhaled and made her way through the crowded room. Four different doctors waited, several nurses. All waiting for him to go into surgery. A surgery he really needed be in already.

Dr. Markham was there reading a chart with another nurse.

“Hi,” Hermione said quietly as she approached the left side of Draco’s bed. The buzzing conversations turned to murmured whispers.

Relief flooded Draco’s pale face. “Dr. Granger.” His voice was weak and there was a sheen of sweat against his forehead. “I’ve tried to explain to these great doctors, that you can help fix me up without any pain meds. I know you can.” He spoke slowly, like it took a lot of focus to do so.

“Draco,” Hermione’s voice was soft and his face fell.

“Fine if you can’t do it. Find me someone who can.” His face became hard, but his throat bobbed, making a small tremor run through his jaw. *Gods he was so pale.*

Hermione pulled up a chair. “I am not a surgeon, but there are incredible surgeons here who can take care of you.” She said it calmly, even though her insides raged with fear.

Draco shook his head slightly as tears welled in his eyes. “I can’t.” His voice broke and Hermione’s throat tightened. His arm twitched again, and she placed a hand over it, gently running her fingers down the dark mark that caused so many painful tremors. She’d been massaging it almost nightly for weeks.

Her hand found his, he gripped it hard and closed his eyes. Tears ran down his cheeks. “I can’t. I can’t do it. I can’t risk it. The boys-” He sucked in a shaky breath.

“Yes, you can.” Hermione’s tone was confident. Because he could do it. “Everything is going to be okay.” He opened his eyes and they held each other’s stare.

“I’m scared.” His nose flared as he took a shaky breath. Hermione pressed a hand to his face, rubbing over his damp forehead, stroking his cheek bone. “I know.”

“We should give them some privacy.” Padma said. There was some shuffling around and the door opened and closed a few times.

“It’s okay to be scared.” Hermione swallowed the growing ache in her throat, tears pricking her eyes. “But you need surgery Draco. They need to put you under anesthesia and I promise I’ll be here when you get out of surgery. I’ll explain everything in your chart to you. We have excellent weaning protocols. I’ll monitor all of it. You’re not going to do it alone.” His bottom lip trembled and another tear rolled down his cheek.

“I promise.” Hermione said. Draco pulled their hands to his mouth kissing her knuckle.

“But, the boys-” His voice cracked.

Hermione lost control of professionalism. "They're going to be fine. Please, just do it for me." Hermione wasn't beneath begging him if it came to it. Or bribing him.

The look in his eyes was the worst thing she'd ever seen. His fear, his struggle as he nodded just slightly. "Only because you're so pretty." He kissed her knuckle again, letting out a shaky breath.

Hermione chuckled, a soft smile growing just as her own tears fell rapidly.

"If I die—" Draco began.

Hermione could not even consider thinking about that. "You are not going to die."

"He might if he doesn't get into surgery." Narcissa's tight voice drew their attention. Narcissa was dabbing her eyes with a tissue on the other side of the room.

Two nurses, Dr. Patil, and Dr. Markham all stood by the door watching them. Everyone would know after this. There was no way it didn't get out.

Draco cleared his throat, "Sorry Dr. Granger, I uh—" he tried to pull his hand away from hers. "We're courting." Hermione explained gripping his hand tighter. Padma smiled at them, so did Dr. Markham. The nurse's eyes went wide and Narcissa let out sobbing cry. Hermione turned back to Draco. "You'll be here after?" he said, pale lips trembling.

"I promise." Hermione said, kissing his fourth knuckle.

A group of nurses gawked at them as Draco shouted, "We're courting!" His lips were loose and his voice loud once those medications were in his system.

Hermione walked next to the bed as a nurse pushed it down the hall towards the surgery rooms. "We're courting!" Draco said again as they passed another group of doctors. Dean Thomas grinned, "Congrats!" Then looked at Hermione with an "*Uh, why haven't you told me this already,*" expression.

"We're courting!" Draco shouted to literally no one as they turned a corner. "You're so beautiful." His head turned to her with a flop. "My beautiful little buttercup slut." Hermione's cheeks were bright red and she chuckled, "Oh you're going to love hearing all about this when you get out of surgery."

"I won't remember." Draco gave her a lazy grin.

Hermione squeezed his hand as they came to a stop as the operation room doors came open slowly. "I'm not going to let you forget."

"I've got to leave now." Hermione didn't want to let go of him.

Draco's face tightened, "I'll see you later then." He swallowed and pulled his hand away. Narcissa came up beside him grabbing his hand. "We'll all be here. I love you, my second

favorite child.”

“Thanks Mother, that’s comforting. Love you too.” He said. Narcissa moved away but Hermione couldn’t. Now she was the one who needed help. They stared at each other. Goodbyes had never been their thing.

The words hung on her lips. They’d both have to be brave today.

Hermione bent over, pressing a soft small kiss to his lips. “I love you so much.” She whispered.

“Yeah you do.” Draco smirked, then his mouth had parted slightly, his eyes going wide.

“Wait, you do?” Hermione nodded and moved towards Narcissa, who wrapped an arm around Hermione’s shoulders as they both watched Draco get wheeled back.

Just as the doors closed they could hear Draco yell, “Wait, I love her too! Wait go back, I have to tell her! She just won! That’s so unfair, Granger!”

Hermione leaned into Narcissa’s shoulder laughing. She was certain she had just lost by saying that. The rules made no sense.

Dr. Markham pulled Hermione aside. “I’m sorry.” Hermione instantly said, “I should have-”

“Dr. Granger.” Dr. Markham smiled, “Clock out. Get some rest. I’ll have Dr. Patil keep you updated.”

Hermione sighed, “Thank you.”

“I’ve worked with Malfoy quite a bit. Never seen him smile like that.” Dr. Markham nodded and left.

Hermione clocked out, changed her clothes, and sat with Narcissa in the waiting room. Leo was at Ron’s for the weekend and Pilly had Scorpius.

Pilly had yet to speak to her. Hermione was so thoroughly lost about what to do with the elf she’d decided the only option was to kidnap and force her to tell her why she didn’t like her. Okay maybe that was a bit dramatic. But damn it if it didn’t claw at her skin. She was determined to find a way to at least be civil acquaintances. Hermione could not live at the manor part time if every time she saw the elf she sobbed her eyes out. It broke her heart every single time. And Draco always thought it was hilarious.

The last few weeks had been so wonderful she could hardly believe it. They’d been sleeping part time at both places. Manor on school nights, Hermione’s flat on the non school nights. They hadn’t acknowledged that they were living with each other, but Hermione was eighty percent certain they’d agreed to be married by Elvis Presley, soonish? But was one hundred percent certain her ring finger had a cursed ghost ring on it. A nonexistent ring that she found herself touching everyday like a nervous newlywed.

Two weeks ago over breakfast Draco said, “Something wrong with your finger?”

“Nope.” Hermione said, keeping her voice calm, “Just a bug bite.”

“Might want to get that checked out. You keep itching it. Wouldn’t want anything to happen to it. It’s such a pretty finger.”

Hermione arched a brow at him. “I have a pretty finger? Really?”

“That one in particular is my favorite. “ He grinned arrogantly, she glared at him. “What Granger? You can be attracted to my hands but I can’t be attracted to your finger?”

“What’s attracted?” Leo asked chewing on a waffle.

“It’s when your mother is so beautiful I can hardly stand it.” Draco replied quickly with a saccharine sweet smile. Hermione couldn’t look at him, because her finger was twitching again and she was trying and failing not to touch the rotating ghost ring on her finger.

“Are you okay? You look like you’re hallucinating.” Draco’s smug attitude was really pissing her off. “Really worrisome.” He’d fucking done this without her realizing it and now that she knew he’d done something, she couldn’t figure it out. It was making him unbearably arrogant. And because they weren’t talking about specific topics like the immature weirdos they were, she wouldn’t admit anything was wrong. He was winning and she hated it.

Hermione smiled at him, “Here’s another pretty finger for you to enjoy.”

She flipped him off and left the table in search of any spell ever made to do with charming rings, determined to find out what he’d done to her. She’d find a way to do the same to him, but worse somehow... maybe she’d secretly tattoo her name across his chest...

“Dad what’s this mean?” Scorpius asked flipping Draco off with both middle fingers.

“It means mummy thinks Daddy is very handsome and smart, but only mummy can do it so you cannot do that anymore.” Draco chuckled, grabbing Scorp’s hands, but his tone grew into serious whisper, as he looked around the room, “Especially, never to grandma.” Hermione had to bite her tongue to stop from laughing as she left the room.

And as if to mock her all the way from the surgery room her finger twitched and she nervously twisted the nonexistent ring. From her research there was a word or phrase one of them had to say to reveal what was on her finger, but for all she knew it was a some weird obscure word she’d never guess. It didn’t stop her from trying, *Draco’s whore, Slytherin’s the best, brie is a snack and not a meal. I love you. You’re better at potions than I am. Mrs. Malfoy....* Nothing worked. She’d tried dozens of words and phrases over the last two weeks and Draco’s ego grew by the day.

Hermione continued listing words or phrases as she waited, it was the only thing that kept her mind from spiraling.

Gold Digger

Seeing Draco back in his room was almost worse than before. Because now that she said she loved him, he wasn't even conscious to tease her about it. Or say it back.

The surgery had taken longer than even Hermione expected and he was still so pale. The extent of his injuries were severe. Seeing half his body bandaged up and swollen was dizzying.

Everything would be fine. She'd said that line to herself so many times she didn't know when she was lying anymore. But right now she had to believe he was okay.

Hermione had been sitting next to him in a chair for about an hour now. He could breathe on his own, which made this bearable, but she needed him to wake up and tell her the special word goddamn it. Tears fell down her face as she picked up his hand kissing it. She held it to her mouth for a long time wishing he would just wake up yelling about their courtship again. He was supposed to wake up already, but he just...wasn't. The doctors weren't necessarily worried, but it was unusual.

Narcissa left half an hour ago, saying she needed to write howlers threatening all Daily Prophet staff to hold off on their gossip so she could find a proper photo of Draco and Hermione to share. It was three in morning and she was completely serious.

Hermione finally let go of his hand and transitioned the chair into a bed, pushing it right next to his bed. She lowered the guard rail and his bed slightly so they were flush, grabbed his hand and pulled a blanket on her. "Would be really nice to have a dino plushy right now." She mumbled. Hermione didn't sleep, just rested with her eyes closed, dutifully ignoring all the nurses that checked on him through the remainder of the night. She didn't let go of his hand once.

Hermione sat there most of Saturday morning trying not freak out that he wasn't awake yet. The doctors were concerned now.

As multiple doctors went in and out of his room, they finally all convened to discuss what steps to take. Hermione was fiddling with her non-existent ring when she saw his eyes flutter and shot straight out of her seat.

"I think he's waking up." She said. They rushed over and Hermione took a step back as they adjusted the bed just slightly.

"Draco," Dr. Markham greeted softly, "Draco how are you feeling?"

"Like I was crushed by a building." He groaned. Hermione cried silently at the sound of his voice, pressing her hands to her face. Finally. Finally. Finally.

The doctor chuckled. "Yep, that's accurate." They checked his vitals and it took about ten minutes for him to keep his eyes open long enough to speak again.

When Draco's eyes fully opened for long enough that the doctors could ask him more questions, Hermione couldn't move for some reason. She felt frozen again.

"When can I go home?" Draco said grumpily.

"We'll need to keep you here a few days to monitor the progress of your bone healing. You broke a lot of tiny bones that are tricky to heal, but as long as everything goes well, you can leave and recover at home shortly, especially if you're under the watchful eye of Dr. Granger."

Dr. Markham motioned her over and Hermione finally moved her feet. Meeting Draco's eyes felt like an iron vice gripped her heart, squeezing tighter with every passing second.

"Alright, folks, let's leave." Dr. Padma said to the group gawking at them. News had spread fast. Hermione knew this would be a big deal, Hermione Granger and Draco Malfoy, but she didn't know how big until Padma warned her a hoard of paparazzi were camped outside waiting for her to leave the building.

Draco stared at her for a long time after the room was empty, Draco's furrowed his brow.
"Who are you again?"

Her stomach dropped and Hermione inhaled slowly, whispering, "Everyone thinks we're courting, but truthfully, I'm just your whore."

A laugh tumbled out of his mouth, then a cringe of pain crossed his face. "You can't make me laugh like that." He huffed. He reached for her hand, tugging her closer. "I love you so much." He said, before kissing her.

"Thank you," Hermione smiled.

"Say it again you little whore." Draco squeezed her hand.

Hermione sighed, frowning, "I have never said that before."

And for a moment she'd convinced him as panic flooded his face. Then she couldn't hold her giggle back.

"You're going to regret that." His voice was weak and groggy, but he was back.

"So it's really public?" Draco frowned as Hermione pulled up a chair next to his bed.

"Unfortunately." Hermione replied.

"We'll find other ways to sneak around." Draco winked.

Hermione's body filled with gratitude with every word he spoke. "We'll get plenty of practice with the publicity we're getting. Your mother is losing her mind with all the staff at the Daily Prophet. She's been here twice this morning to check on you."

"And when did you get here?" Draco asked brushing his thumb over hers. "You look haggard."

Hermione's scoffed, "I think that's rich coming from someone who broke his entire right arm, dislocated a shoulder, fractured his hip bone, snapped a tibia, and crushed all the tiny bones in his foot. You've been mostly dead all day."

"Have you slept at all?" Draco's worried eyes washed over her face.

"It's my job to take care of you, you're not allowed to be worried about me right now."

Draco gave her a wide grin. "Any chance you can get them to let me go?"

"No," she scoffed. "And even if I could, I wouldn't. You really do have a lot of healing to do."

Draco frowned. "What's the point of dating the most brilliant doctor alive if she can't get me out of here?"

"Beats me." Hermione shrugged. "I'm only dating you for your money."

He smirked, "What did I say about making me laugh, don't make me hard now too."

Just three days ago Draco had her between his legs, while he sat in a chair smoking a cigar, "You're only here because you like my money." Hermione nodded with her mouth on his cock as he passed her more money. "Perfect little whore." He gave her even more money, slipping it next to the other bills in her bra. "You're a gold digging whore here to drain my vaults." He sucked on his cigar as Hermione sucked him deeper, and Draco threw money over her like confetti. She had a very nice shopping trip planned because it was where she planned to buy a formal dress for her teacher award.

Now they were both reliving the memory.

"I asked several times about your dick to make sure nothing happened to it. I checked on it myself and it's still perfect." Hermione smiled.

"Stop it, you feral thing." Draco shifted his leg. "Seriously everything you say is turning me on. When was the last time we even had sex?"

"Right before we both left for work Friday evening." Hermione nodded. "You got called in, right as I was doing that thing with your balls you like."

"Stop talking right now." Draco said eyes narrowing on her, but it sounded like he wanted her to keep talking.

Narcissa walked in and Hermione handed Draco a pillow, pretending to arrange it on the bed to make him comfortable.

"Well, I hate the Daily Prophet, but I finally got everything worked out." Narcissa said. "So happy to finally see your eyes open, my sweet son." Narcissa pecked him on the forehead

before squeezing Hermione.

"I'm surprised you came at all, seeing as I'm only your second favorite." He arched a brow as Narcissa took a seat. "Well you're still my favorite son."

"So when's the article out?" Draco said.

Narcissa held up the Daily Prophet. "Now."

Draco and Hermione were swaying a dance floor. The title read: *Granger-Malfoy Courtship, Very Pleased and Preparing for the Future*.

Hermione and Draco looked at each other before bursting out in laughter. The title was so vague, almost exactly how they'd been speaking to each other the last few weeks.

The background had been blurred, but the only time Hermione had worn that black dress was to the muggle charity ball. It had long sleeves and a backless scoop that fell nearly to her bum.

"Wow my ass looks good." Hermione said, trying to suppress her giggle.

"That's exactly what I was going to say," Draco said, wincing from his laughter. "Stop stealing my thoughts, you plagiarizer."

"How did you get that photo?" Hermione said, running her thumb along Draco's.

"Your mother has been teaching me photoshop and with a few spells we had a perfect photo for a much delayed announcement." Narcissa watched them suspiciously, "Why are you two laughing?"

"Why is that your title?" Draco said inhaling deeply, he cringed a little as he did and Hermione started massaging his hand. It had nothing to do with his injuries, but it was something.

"What's wrong with it?" Narcissa frowned, "It's vague and polite."

"Sounds about right." Hermione yawned.

"You should go get some sleep." Draco said.

Hermione shook her head. "I'm fine."

"I'll stay with him dear. I won't leave until you return. At least take Dr. Patil up on her offer to sleep in the break room." Narcissa said softly.

A nurse stepped in then, "Time for new meds." Draco's hand tightened around hers, his eyes going wide. Hermione nodded, "It's alright. Right now this is necessary. I won't leave until you fall asleep."

Before she left, Harry Potter stopped in with a large bouquet of balloons.

“Potter, you dickhead. You shouldn’t have.” Draco said chuckling at the random as fuck collection of mylar balloons. It included a star, a happy birthday balloon, a good luck balloon, and a graduation cap. Hermione smiled politely between the two readying to make her exit. Before she left, Potter gave her a big hug. “Congratulations Hermione. Now I’ll finally get Malfoy to stop asking me so many fucking questions about you.”

“Oh. Uh, thank you.” Hermione said, nodding to him. “Malfoy’s a good partner, and a good detective. He’s way too lucky to have you though.”

“I heard that.’ Draco said.

“He’s about to fall asleep any minute now.” Hermione said. “Be quick.”

Harry squeezed her shoulder and nodded to Narcissa, before moving to the chair she just sat in. Bizarre. So bizarre that they somehow hadn’t talk about the very clear friendship between Draco and Harry.

Hermione finally left the hospital on Sunday evening to pick Leo up. She underestimated the paparazzi, the crowd hovered outside of the hospital like vultures. But they’d seriously underestimated her notice-me-not charms and walked right passed them.

Luckily there weren’t any at Ron’s house yet.

Hermione waited in the lightly fallen snow as Leo grabbed his things.

“Too bad you haven’t married Malfoy yet, you’d get a lot of money if he died.” Ron said, leaning against his door frame with a glass of firewhisky in his hand. She hated Ron the most when he drank. It always reminded her of that night. When she didn’t say anything, he continued with, “I always knew you were a gold digging whore.”

Hermione threw her head back in laughter.

Leo skipped up, “What’s so funny?”

“Ron, he’s just hilarious is all. Draco is going to think that was hilarious too.”

Ron scoffed, “Yeah, go tell your broken guard dog.”

Hermione shook her head still wheezing, “No, you misunderstand, he’ll seriously think you’re hilarious.”

When she apparated away Hermione was still laughing and Ron’s face was full ugly rage.

Draco closed his eyes every time they administered the I.V. medications during his four day stay at the hospital. The boys visited him on Monday evening.

Malfoy, unsurprisingly, was a difficult patient and Hermione found herself apologizing to all the nurses for his impatience.

“Everyone already thinks I’m an asshole.” Draco said, shrugging.

“Because you’re being an asshole.” Hermione replied.

“Exactly.” Draco sighed. “Too bad, so sad.”

“You know this isn’t like school, you’re not going to get kicked out of here for bad behavior.”

And as if on some weird cue, his dark mark started cramping. “Fuck!” he couldn’t clutch it with his other hand. Hermione spent half an hour making the cramping go away and that night is when she started researching how she might be able to get rid of it. She’d already been doing a long of reading on invisible tattoos. It should be in same realm.

Draco wasn’t sure about bringing the boys in, but as soon as he saw them Hermione knew it was the right thing to do. They were like a reset for Malfoy, helping him remember basic manners like please and thank you.

His mood finally improved when he was discharged and they could take him home.

He had two weeks before he could return to work. Which Hermione thought might make him stir crazy, but in reality he was just making *her* crazy. Their first day back at the manor, he told the kids over breakfast that school was canceled until he went back to work.

Everyday that passed with him home all day made him extra horny and Hermione couldn’t have a normal conversation with him.

Draco pulled her, gently and slowly due to the weakness in his right shoulder, into his office, kissing her neck and undoing her blouse. “I need to fuck you.” He said. “Right now.”

“No, the kids are in the middle of something and-”

“Please, I’ll be fast. I bet you’ll be fast too.” He kissed the top of her breasts. “Godsdamn I’ve missed these. When did they get so perfect?” He pressed his face against them.

“Draco.” Hermione huffed as he kissed back up her neck, “I’m just not in the mood.”

“What are you talking about you’re always in the mood.”

“I know, but I’m not right now. I think I’m stressed out and then Dr. Markham-”

Draco pulled away abruptly, “What did he do? I’ll get him fired.”

Hermione burst into tears. “No! Don’t fire him. Why would you even say that?”

Malfoy squared his shoulders, "What did he do to you?"

"He offered me a job!" Hermione sobbed into her hands.

"And you don't want it?" Draco arched a brow, pulling her face up to look at him

"School for the boys would have to change." Hermione sniffled, wiping away her tears. "He wants me to be his research assistant."

Draco smiled, "That's incredible, Hermione. I'm so proud of you." He kissed her and she felt like she could breathe again. "I'll be the boys teacher."

"No," Hermione shook her head, "All you do is sit around and play Mario Cart with them."

"That's the kind of school I offer. Don't judge my curriculum."

"I am judging it and it's stupid." Hermione tugged on her finger.

"Something still wrong with that pretty finger of yours?"

"No, just preparing it for when you gag on it."

"Hmmm." Draco licked his lips.

"Later." Hermione pushed him, gently, away. Before she left the office she quirked her brow, "Could you really fire Dr. Markham?"

Draco shrugged, "I would have tried my best."

Not a No

Draco Malfoy had never been so nervous in his life. Leo was just a six year old kid for crying out loud.

The child walked next to him on a brisk January afternoon, his cheeks still bright pink even though Draco had wrapped in a double warming charm.

“So,” he cleared his throat. “If I were to tell you secret, would you tell your mum?”

Leo curled his lip, “My mum says that only bad people want you to keep secrets, like sometimes tricky people try to touch your privates and-”

“Okay, okay not a secret. Absolutely not a secret.” Draco shook his head. “Uh, what if I had a surprise for her? Would you want to be part of the surprise?”

He shrugged as his little boots stomped over a muddy puddle. “Depends.”

Leo had finally lost both his front teeth, just as Scorpius had his grown in. It was adorable that they’d swapped faces.

“Alright, well I’d like to marry her.” Draco said and Leo gave him a grimace so much like Hermione’s it made him chuckle, “What do you do say, little Lion?”

Leo frowned, “No.”

Draco stopped as the kid kept skipped along. His mouth hung open. “Wait, what?” He caught up to him in a few strides. “Why not?”

“I don’t know.” Leo said.

“You’d be Scorpius’ brother though.” That should help seal the deal.

Leo wiped his nose on his sleeve. “But why do we need to be brothers if we’re best buds?”

Draco was quiet for a moment trying to figure out a different angle. This was not supposed to be so difficult. He’d imagined Leo leaping into his arms and calling him dad and cheering with joy.

“Does that mean you like love her and stuff?” Leo asked as they turned a corner of the hedge maze.

“More than I even know how to explain.” Draco said. The last week of recovering at home had made him filled with urgency about getting married. If he had died, Hermione wouldn’t have had anything. The quidditch team was nothing compared to what she should be entitled to. Narcissa would have ensured they were taken care of, but still he didn’t want to leave it to chance. He wanted her as his wife yesterday. Legally protected as his.

"That doesn't sound good. Maybe you should wait till you can use your words to explain it." Leo said. Draco sighed, Leo was Hermione's twin.

Draco stopped and stretched his arms as wide as he could. "I love her so much it feels this big."

"No way." Leo shook his head.

"Yes. I do."

Leo frowned and kept walking, "Well, I love her the most in the world."

"No, I can ensure you I love her more."

"Well I've loved her longer than you."

"Well I've known her longer than you."

"Did you love her then?"

Draco blinked at the child. Why on earth was he being so stubborn? Okay obvious answer... Hermione Granger was his mother...

"I was jealous of her back then, does that count?" Draco asked as they turned another corner, Leo led the way through the maze and it was impressive because Hermione still got lost in it.

"Not even a little bit." Leo shook his head.

Draco scoffed, "Okay, well why can't I marry your mum? Please I really want to." The real question was why was he making him beg?

"I don't know, maybe if you were like rich or something." Leo shrugged.

Draco scoffed, laughing, "I am rich! If it's money you're after you should have said that sooner."

"You're not rich. Where's all your gold?" Leo giggled with him.

"I keep it in my vaults, where it's safe." Draco said, "But if I marry your mum, you'd both become very rich too." They manor came back into view as they made their way towards the exit.

"I don't know. I might have to see it to believe it." Leo sighed.

"Why don't you think I'm rich, do you see this house?" He gestured towards the entire mansion before them.

"Ron says rich people keep gold in their houses. That's where all his gold is." Draco frowned. Odd.

"Well, Ron and I are very different." A quiet lulled between them. They'd never discussed Ron before and Draco didn't want to say something Hermione would be upset by. But who knows these days. Hermione was extremely stressed and emotional lately. She wasn't fucking him, which was annoying but truly he just felt confused. Which made him more anxious to marry her than ever before so she couldn't avoid him by saying things like, "*I need to go study at my flat today.*" He didn't care where they lived, but living in two places was getting old. In fact now that he thought about it, her flat was better. Less rooms to hide away from him in. It took him much too long to find her in the library last night.

"Yeah, but you say the same stuff sometimes." Leo said after a few minutes, picking up a rock. "Oh Scorp will love this one."

Draco smiled at him. He loved Leo like his own son. It was much easier than he imagined loving another child. It was like he had always been part of Draco's heart. And it was thinking shit like that that made him feel crazy. Leo also needed to be protected from his asshole father.

"What kinds of things?" Draco asked.

"Like, oh you're brainwashing my son!" Leo mimicked Ron's angry voice. It was loud. Draco's teeth clenched. "Does he yell at her like that a lot?"

"Not when you're around." Leo said as they made their way up the manor steps. "I'll think about the marrying thing now that I know you have money. Can you take me to your vaults so I can be sure?"

"After I marry her, yes." Draco said.

Leo shrugged and started walking away from him, "Hmmm, we'll see."

"Can you just tell me when you might know?" Draco ran a hand through his hair. "It would be helpful to plan a wedding and all!"

"Only if I can wear my ROUeseses costume to the wedding!" Leo said, "Oh and if you give me like a million thousand galleons, if you're so rich."

He shook his head as Leo bounded through the doors, "Scorpius! Look at this rock it's shaped like a butt!"

Draco was taking that as a yes.

Bad Guys

Chapter Summary

Check TW at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Notes

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

Hermione was not getting any studying done today.

Her mind kept wandering to the what ifs. Her body was swinging between every sensation she could imagine. Anxious wasn't even cutting it. She felt... she didn't know.

She felt everything and nothing.

Walking into her kitchen in search of snack, she could hardly recognize it. Everything was so clean lately. It was surprising every time she walked through her flat. She never got to see Pilly, but she started writing her little notes to find. Sticky notes with kind comments, questions, and expressions of gratitude. They were always missing and Pilly didn't leave any notes in return. Still, Hermione would write them until her hands fell off if it made that elf just say hello without a panic attack.

Hermione sighed as she set her wand down in the kitchen and opened a few cupboards. Everything sounded gross. She pulled down some plain crackers and ate them by the handful until they stopped tasting good. Then she moved onto cookies until she felt nauseous.

Gods. She wanted to run away to a remote island and lay there until her anxiety cleared so she could have a single thought without all the other feelings attacking her. She was overwhelmed. Mind, body, and soul. All of her was consumed by the little test in her bathroom. She didn't know if she wanted a baby. And that thought made her cry shamefully. And then thinking of having a baby with Draco made her cry with joy. And back and forth she went. She didn't want it. Maybe she did. No not really. But also she did. Nope definitely not.

It was the overwhelm that distracted her. Her life had become safe and easy and that made her not realize that her floo had not been shut off the night before.

She had no clue Ron was sitting in the corner of her flat watching her cry as she ate cookies.

Hermione made her way back to her desk, forgetting her wand in the process.

She didn't know he was even behind her until she was tackled, slammed painfully into the ground.

Ron grabbed her roughly by shoulders groping her breasts in the process. He flipped her over, drunk and enraged, he yelled, “Fucking holds still.”

Hermione’s anger outweighed everything instantly, she kicked him so hard in the balls he started crying. He stumbled backwards, then shot up and kicked her hard in her thigh. Then in the ribs. Pain erupted everywhere. Hermione jumped up, blocking the pain out by the rage swelling inside her. She swung, punching him square in the jaw. It felt good, but she also might have broken her hand. Hermione snatched her wand as she yelled in pain, body shaking violently at she pointed it towards him.

“Leave right now.” Hermione said, “You leave right now!”

“You think you’re better than me now, huh? Now that you’ve got that pureblood money!” He yelled, straightening his shoulders. “Well you’re not, you’re just a fucking bitch who broke my heart and never cared about anyone what yourself!”

“Ron you need to leave right now. Draco is heading over and if you’re not gone you will die!” It was a lie that he was coming, but he was here all the time, so it was believable enough.

“Right. He’ll kill me for what? For you inviting me here? For you asking me to fuck you? It’ll be really interesting when he hears my side of the story.”

“Fine.” Hermione said, breathing harshly, “I’ll call lavender then. Tell her my side of the story too. I have a really good one to tell her. We’ll see which one believe us.”

Ron’s face flared with anger, “If you even go near her, I’ll-”

“You’ll what?” Hermione’s chest heaved. “I’ll fucking kill you myself before you touch me again Ron. I’ve almost did it once and I’ve regretted everyday since.”

Ron’s nose twitched. “You’re a fucking drama queen.” Then he belched loudly.

“Apparate out of my house right now!” Hermione screamed so hard her throat hurt.

“I’ll fucking splinch you crazy bitch.” Ron shook his head, he stumbled sideways. He was so drunk it was pathetic.

“That’s a risk you’re going to have to take. Because other wise it’s Draco and me you’ll have to deal with.” Hermione stepped closer to him and he flinched. *That’s right motherfucker. I hope you piss yourself and then splinch your dick off.*

“Fine. I was just coming to see my son!” Ron bellowed, throwing his arms out. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Go!” Hermione snapped.

Ron stared at her a few moments before he apparated away.

Hermione ran to the floo, shutting it off so tightly her hand throbbed. She laid on the floor next to the fireplace and sobbed. As the adrenaline faded, her body slowly began allowing her to feel her injuries. After locking all the doors and all the windows, she rechecked her security wards. Then she peeled her clothes off and began healing the bruises on her body. She did not scan her stomach. Because everything about this made her question herself even more. She didn't want a baby. Not as all her memories of Ron flooded her. She should have killed him that night. She should have, but she didn't because Harry Potter was in the next room and she didn't think she could get away with murder.

Once her body looked normal Hermione stood in the shower and sobbed for an hour.

When she could finally stop crying she packed her things, threw away the pregnancy test and but then exploded it instead and then made all the bits disappear.

She was fine. She was fine. She was fine. Everything was fine.

"You're back earlier than I expected," Malfoy said, limping as he walked towards her as she came through the floo. He kissed her, "Must be those lucky stars of mine."

"I'm so tired." Hermione replied, leaning her head on his chest. Numbness spread over her body and Hermione welcomed it.

"Should we head back to your flat?" Draco asked. Technically they should return on their unwritten schedule.

"No, let's just stay here." Hermione said, "I'm tired of going back and forth."

"Are you okay?" Malfoy said, lifting up her chin.

"Yeah, just really tired." Hermione said. "The next exam is draining me."

His eyes searched hers. Things had been weird between them and neither of them knew what to say to the other. That fear they'd been dancing around was rearing its ugly head.

"Alright." He swallowed. "If there's anything I can do, I want to help."

"I know." Hermione replied, taking in a steady breath.

Two days later Hermione knew something was very wrong. Her body was hot and chills pebbled her skin.

Scorpius was with Narcissa at a dentist appointment that her mother was joining them on. Leo sat across from her arguing with Draco about something. She could barely pay attention to it. Painfully sharp cramps surged down her abdomen.

She gabbed a glass of water and guzzled half of it, taking a deep breath. Her stomached flipped making her feel sick.

“I need to go to the bathroom.” Hermione stood, grabbing the table to steady herself before moving to the hallway.

Every breath she took towards the bathroom was painful.

The warm gush of blood stopped her from making it there. She watched it seep into her jeans. Spreading down her legs. And for a brief moment she wanted the baby so desperately she began crying. *She was scum and filth and every horrible thing for being so flippant.* The next gush brought onslaught of grattitude. *Trash. Completely trash. She was a horrible scummy person for feeling grateful for the blood.*

The dizzy feeling got worse with every step she took back to the kitchen. She needed help. This was a lot of blood. As she approached the door way Leo said, “Ron’s a bad guy though.”

“Why do you say that?” Draco said picking up his tea cup, draining it.

“Because he’s unkind and tricky and hits mum.” Leo said with a sigh.

Draco dropped his tea cup and it shattered on the floor. His whole body was as rigid as stone. “Leo,” Draco’s voice had turned into a soft, buttery purr. “What does that mean, hit mum? Like does he tap her? Tickle her? Pull her hair? What kind of touching is it?”

“It’s not always.” Leo shrugs. “Well he mostly just yells and yells and blah, blah, blah.”

“When he does hit her though, what’s that like?” Draco replied, his eyes not leaving Leo. Taking in every minute detail from him.

“Well, I guess it’s not hitting. It’s like pushing or pulling. He pulls her close and says unkind things and sometimes he’s lets her go, but he pushes her instead sometimes too. So it’s an up and down pattern. “ Leo looked at him with a half heated glare, “That’s why you shouldn’t call her clumsy. It’s not her fault she gets hurt a lot.”

“I’m so sorry, Leo.” Draco’s voice took a serious turn, cracking slightly as he spoke. “You’re right. I should have never done that. I am so bloody sorry.”

Another painful cramp caused a rush of blood to flood Hermione’s pants, she tilted forward slightly, her vision speckling with black spots

“Draco.” Hermione tried to say, swallowing, but her mouth was so dry.

“Draco,” She managed a little louder. He looked at her and stood immediately, “I think-going-going into shock.”

He was in front of her cupping her face, “What do you need?”

“I’m losing a lot of blood. I need-“

His face turned ghastly when he glanced at her hands and the blood stained denim. He wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her into him.

“Pilly.” Draco called calmly. The elf appeared, “Take Leo to my mother, tell her I’m taking Hermione to the hospital. Don’t bring the kids there.”

Chapter End Notes

TW: Physical violence against a female and miscarriage

Fiancée

Chapter Summary

TWs at the end of the chapter

Chapter Notes

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

Hermione felt completely numb, her eyes glazed over as Padma scanned her stomach. She knew before she even spoke the words.

“I’m so sorry, Hermione.” Padma said, tears glistened her eyes. “There’s no heartbeat.”

Hermione felt nothing. Padma was crying and Hermione felt nothing. When would it come? Hermione wondered. That painful emotion. That rush that rolls into you like a freezing waterfall.

“What happens next?” Draco asked, his voice quiet and dull as he stared at the scan. The small clump that was their DNA mixed together, sitting in Hermione’s womb. She couldn’t look at it. She couldn’t do anything expect stare at the ceiling.

“We can perform a D.C. or you can let it continue naturally, let it run its course.” Padma said gently.

The waterfall hit. Vicious and cruel.

Hermione curled inward as the tidal wave twisted inside her body.

“Can we have some privacy?” Draco asked Padma. She made a silent exit.

Before Draco could reach for her, she snapped at him. “Don’t touch me.” She cried harder, her stomach tightening, cramping before finally being able suck in a breath again. She hugged herself. she knew the tears wouldn’t stop. Draco put a blanket over her at some point and pulled up a chair next to her bed with a hard thud. He was mad at her and it was so obvious it killed her inside.

He sat with elbows on his knees, hands clasped and his head hung, the sounds of Hermione crying and Draco sniffling were the only things happening for awhile.

When there was a long stretch of silence Draco asked, “How long?”

“Eight days.” Hermione replied.

Draco shook his head, “What?”

“I’ve known that I was pregnant for eight days.” Hermione said, her voice hollow and empty. She wanted to feel numb again. She hated how she felt.

“When were you going to tell me?” Draco asked it softly.

“I don’t know.” She answered honestly.

“Why don’t you know, Hermione?” Draco said. He sounded tired of her. She was tired of herself too. No one would should be around her. She was trash.

“I didn’t know if I wanted it.” The tears were fresh and hot as they rolled down her cheeks. It was a silent constant stream of tears, like the waterfall was being slowly drained through her tears.

“How long has he been hitting you?” Draco’s voice was raw, edged with rough emotion.

“Depends on how you count it.” She murmured. The shame that washed through her was thick and oily. Making her feel slimy and rotten. She deserved this. She was unworthy of happiness. Of love. Of anything good.

“Any number will do,” He breathed slowly.

“A few months,” she whispered. Draco’s chest rose and fell, as his knuckles turned white.

“Of all the things to lie about...” his voice trailed off as he sniffed.

She didn’t respond. It was her fault and she hated herself for it. She could have told someone, but she didn’t. Because she’s weak, messy, irresponsible, and a bad mum.

“And you didn’t want it?” Draco was crying now and it hurt Hermione’s heart in a way she couldn’t take. She’d done this to him. It was all her fault. None of this would have happened if it she hadn’t been so foolish with his heart. She should have never had it in the first place. She didn’t deserve him. He deserved better than her. Someone good.

“I’m putting in my two weeks notice.” She said flatly staring at the ceiling. She regretted it the moment she said it. It ripped through her jaggedly. The pain becoming unbearable to think about life without him, but she had to sacrifice for him. It was the only logical option. He deserved better and he wasn’t even on her side. He was upset with her and the numbness was creeping back in. Worming its way through her chest stopping her from feeling her own heart break.

“Answer me Hermione” Draco turned his head towards her, his eyes bloodshot as tears fell off his cheekbones and onto the floor. It was a desperate plea, but she couldn’t give him any answers.

“It’s complicated.”

"It's pretty fucking simple to me." Draco said. "You either want it and what comes along with it, or you don't. And if you don't see that pathway for us, I need to know....I need to know right now. You have to tell me." He inhaled suddenly. "Because I'm so fucking in love with you and if you don't feel-"

Hermione shook her head. "It's not that simple. If you can just let me have some more time-"

"I know what I'd choose." Draco said, clearing throat. "I know I'd be happy. I know I'd be willing to do whatever it took to make it work. I don't need more time to decide-"

"Leave the room." Hermione said, turning her back to him. Her tears had almost stopped now. She didn't want to hear anything else from him. It was done. He didn't care about how she felt or why she didn't know. And if that was the case. Then things were done. She didn't want to tell him. Not like this. It had to be her choice.

A long tense silence passed and she listened to Draco's shaky breathes behind her. Wishing he'd just leave her already.

"No." Draco said.

"What do you mean no?"

He sighed clearly annoyed with her. "I mean, I'm not leaving."

She gritted her teeth, "I'll call the nurse." Another long stretch of silence.

"I'll tell her I have to be here as a special agent." He said flatly.

"And I'll tell her that I'm tired and I need rest without any visitors."

"Which is great in my case since I'm not a visitor." Draco shot back.

Hermione turned on her back and crossed her arms, as her tears returned abruptly. "Why won't you just leave me already."

"I'll tell them I'm holding you as a wanted suspect for spreading lies that the DMLE uses legilimency and I'll be arresting you."

Hermione blinked at him as tears fell. "I'm in the middle a miscarriage. I can't believe you're behaving this way. Stop making this about you."

"*It is* about me." Draco said, "I'll tell them my fiancée just miscarried our child because my step son's father attacked her. I'll tell them while I chain myself to your bed, or better yet, while I handcuff myself to you. I am not leaving."

A dizzying number of sensations ran through her. They stared at each other, both of them crying and glaring. She didn't know what to do with him... or tell him. She didn't have any answers for him. The longer she stared the softer his face became. He held the same sad fear in his eyes when he was drunk in her living room, when he held her spinning around a hotel floor, when he took an accidental nap with her...

“Why are you pushing me away?” he whispered as his jaw feathered. “Darling, please...”

She looked away from him and pressed her hands into her eyes as she cried. “I just need a choice.” Her shoulders shook.

“I’d never force you to have a baby.” Draco said defensively, “I just need to know if we are at very different places. I need to know if I’m- If I’ve just been delusional or....” Draco closed his eyes pinching the bridge of his nose.

“You’re not listening to anything I’m saying,” Hermione said frustration burning through her, “I need a choice in whether or not to tell you why I don’t know.”

His brow furrowed, “What do you mean?”

“I mean if my answer for this specific pregnancy will always be I don’t know and that’s all the explanation you get. Would that be enough for you? If you don’t get to know everything.” Hermione felt like she was being forced into a corner and she hated it. Confusion deepened in his features, “Hermione, tell what is going on.”

“Would you vow it?” She thought of the single way she might feel okay. “That’s what I need. I need to know it’s my choice and you’ll love me anyway. You’ll love me if you don’t know anything else.”

“Yes.” Draco didn’t hesitate. “As long as there is a you and me in that vow, I’ll vow whatever you ask for. I just want-.”

There was a knock on her door. Padma walked in, “Hi, I just wanted to come back and check on you. Have you decided what you want to do?”

Hermione swiped angrily at her tears. She couldn’t help but ask, “You’re certain there was no heartbeat?”

“We can check again.” Padma said, “But it looked like it had happened about four, maybe five days ago. Sometimes it takes the body a little while to let go of the pregnancy. Like it wants try to fight against the miscarriage even though the fetus isn’t viable.”

Hermione turned to Draco, his eyes already on her. She reached for him then, a desperate need to touch him. He grabbed her hand with both of his, pressing his lips to her knuckle. His breath sawed as he opened his eyes, and he looked at her differently then. She didn’t know what to make of it.

“I think the D&C is the best option.” Hermione replied.

“Alright, I’ll go get everything started.” Padma replied.

After she left, Hermione had a hard time looking at Draco. He finally said, “Look at me.” He was still holding her hand, still pressing his mouth against her knuckle. When their eyes finally met, he said, “There is nothing that will make me leave you. Nothing.” Hermione nodded her head, her lips trembled, “I’m sorry. I-”

He inhaled shakily, “Why don’t you believe me?” Hermione shook her head, “I want to, I’m sorry. I panicked.”

Draco closed his eyes, kissing her hand. “I’m not letting go Hermione. Not now, not ever. I need you to believe me.” Draco was already standing up before she made space for him in her bed. Hermione inhaled slowly as she laid against his chest. He was exactly what she needed and regret twisted violently inside her. “I love you so much.” Fresh tears were forming again, she felt exhausted inside.

A few minutes later Draco made a quick floo call to update his mother while nurses came in to prep Hermione for the operation.

It was then that Hermione saw the ring for the first time. It flashed under the light and she gasped. The emerald cut diamond was huge, sparkling like starlight. Hermione felt overwhelmed with guilt and gratitude and so much love for him she didn’t know how it kept continuing to expand somehow. She whispered a notice me not and it slowly disappeared. A slow warmth of satisfaction rolled through her, she knew there was a fucking ring on her hand.

Hermione was taken for the operation within an hour and back at the manor by the afternoon.

Chapter End Notes

TW: Miscarriage and D&C

How Long

Draco Malfoy walked hand in hand with Leo into his bedroom at the manor, where Hermione was waiting for them in their bed. Leo had been especially anxious to see her after they left so suddenly in front of him. And Draco had never been more grateful for their mothers for taking care of the boys. He gave Leo some space as he walked up to her. Hermione laid comfortably in bed, a wide smile on her face. Draco hadn't told Hermione yet, but Pilly was packing her flat at the very moment. After he saw the security footage of Ron attacking her, they were done living there.

"Mumma lion." Leo said softly.

"Little lion." Hermione opened her arms.

"Dragon said to be gentle," Leo whispered while he tiptoed over to her. Hermione pulled him up and gave him a reassuring hug.

She held his face, "I'm so sorry mummy scared you like that."

"It wasn't her fault." Draco added, leaning against the wall. "We're both sorry you were scared. It's scary to see people we love hurt."

"Do you have a big owie?" Leo looked down at her body searching for a wound.

"Yeah, I do, on the inside." Hermione said softly, rubbing his face.

"I'm really sorry." Leo said so earnestly, Hermione begin to cry and Draco's throat ached.

She kissed his forehead. "Thank you, sweet boy. I love you."

Leo looked back at Draco when he said, "I love you the mostest you know."

Draco rolled his eyes, "No, Leo you lose. That's me."

"Nuh uh," Leo turned, "I've loved her longer."

"That doesn't matter, you lose, I'm the winner, I love your mum more."

"Are ties allowed?" Scorpius yelled a the door way "Can we do a three way tie?"

Hermione laughed and cried. "How did I get so lucky to have three boys fighting over me?"

All things considered she looked okay, but it was hard to tell. Her pain potions were minimal compared to the ones he was still on. By tomorrow the doctors said she'd be fine. There was never a day Draco wasn't grateful for magical recovery timelines. There was still a hint of fear in her eyes, something he didn't know how to make go away.

Hermione insisted on reading the boys at least one book. Draco laid across the end of the bed watching them, feeling grateful she was safe, and ready to do anything necessary to ensure it stayed that way.

Their mothers came in afterwards. Jean hugged Hermione for so long she started crying. They took the boys and it was just them again. There was a lot he needed to say. A lot Hermione needed to understand.

Draco sat down next to her, both of them leaning against the headboard, "Our mother's as friends is a formidable force. I think the next five years of vacations are planned."

"It feels too good to be true." Hermione smiled, turning to face him, "How quickly they got along is still impressive."

The glint of her ring caught the light and he wondered if she knew, that he knew, she'd been casting notice-not-charms on it. He also wondered if she knew he was actively trying to counter act them. "Do you need pain meds?"

"I'm okay." Hermione she said softly.

There was no need to draw this out.

"Did you think it was your fault?" Draco asked, "The miscarriage."

Hermione was quiet for a moment, "Yeah, it would have been if it was—"

"No it wouldn't have." Draco said. "I need you to know that I don't blame you for any scenario."

She chewed on her bottom lip, the guarded look in her eye growing as she spoke. "In the hospital you were upset that I didn't tell you about Ron because if I had then maybe the miscarriage wouldn't have happened." Hermione's voice trembled. "And I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I just couldn't—"

Draco's throat tightened, "Hermione I was not upset with you. I was upset with myself."

"Why? You haven't done anything wrong." Hermione used her sleeve to wipe her tears. "You're perfect."

"Ron's abuse is not your fault. You know that right? Anything that happens as a consequence from his actions are not your fault." Draco had to occlude as he spoke, his anger rising so sharply he could barely contain it.

Hermione couldn't look at him and every time he thought he couldn't hate Ron Weasley any more there was knew space that appeared. Draco grabbed her hand, kissed the ring that was completely visible to both of them, that they were still pretending wasn't there.

"I was never angry with you. Not even once did it occur to me to be angry with you about that." Draco said, "I was confused in the hospital because suddenly you were saying, I don't know...." He closed his eyes because they began stinging again. Apparently, crying was part

of this whole bewitched thing. “I was scared out of my fucking mind that everything was falling apart just when I thought it was just really beginning. I thought..I was planning a future with you and having a baby with you makes me deliriously happy.” He opened his eyes again when he believed he wouldn’t start crying like his kids when they dropped a lolly on the ground. “So all that I could think about was where I went wrong and what I should have done better. It terrified me that we weren’t on the same page.”

“It wasn’t you at all. I was overwhelmed, Draco. So many things were happening at once.” Hermione blinked rapidly.

“When Dr. Patil said 4-5 days,” Draco pursed his lips. Fuck he was losing this crying battle because now she was crying. “That’s when you touched me like I was finally your safe place again. I realized that you only pulled away from me when you thought I’d blame you for Ron hurting you. I feel like I’ve failed you for ever believing I might feel that way.”

“I don’t deserve you.” Hermione replied, with a shuddering breath.

“Don’t say stuff like that, please.” Draco shook his. “You deserve everything. And I want to give you everything. It’s just my ego and my honor feels shattered. I’m an interrogator Hermione. I do a really fucking good job at it and I always know how to read people. I know when people lie. But...” Draco swallowed as Hermione swiped a rogue tear from his cheek. “I see your face and it’s completely disorienting.“ He stared at the ceiling, quite literally to orient himself. “Half the time I am certain what you need and how to be what you need and then there’s this half you keep so carefully concealed I doubt all of my instincts. No. that’s not true, they’re just not fucking there.” Draco shrugged. “I simply don’t have them. I don’t know what to do and then I do something and only half the time I know if it was the right choice. How can I trust myself now? I completely failed you.” His lip trembled and he bit down on it until it stopped. “I should have known something was wrong. I knew there was something going on with Ron, I saw all the signs of abuse and I didn’t put it together. I am disgusted with myself. ”

“I’d never dream of blaming you. This is my problem not yours.”

“But that’s the thing it’s not. I am sad about the miscarriage Hermione, but not because I blamed you. I’m sad you thought you had to do it alone. No matter what you chose, I would have been there for you. No matter what.” He took a sharp breath. “Nothing will make me stop loving you and I will do better to show you that I mean that.”

“I don’t know why I said it.” Hermione blurted. “I’m an idiot. I thought you’d hate me for Ron. I thought you’d never want me. It was getting better with him. You made everything so much better. I blamed myself but I didn’t want to make things bad when they were so good. And I’m still not used to sharing a life with someone. I’m so sorry about the two weeks notice. I assumed you were about to say it any minute and-.”

“It’s okay.” Draco shook his head. “It’s okay. You were going through so many things at once and I was so scared I was losing you. I didn’t know why you were bleeding. I thought you were dying.”

"I'm not letting go. I'm so sorry." Hermione replied. He pulled her into a hug. "It's okay. I'm sorry too." It was silent for a long stretch as he held her against his chest.

"Now," He inhaled her scent, "I need you to give me a really good reason for why I shouldn't go kill Weasley." Draco said through barely gritted teeth. His devotion to Hermione was the only thing that stopped him. He wanted to break every bone in his fucking body for touching her.

"Leo." Hermione whispered.

"That sounds like more motivation to me. I'm serious I need a reason Hermione." He really did. Otherwise he was leaving tonight to smash his face in.

Hermione took a deep breath. "I don't want any connection to him. I don't want someone to see me and think of a scandal with Ron. I don't want anyone to say the name Ron Weasley and think of Hermione Granger or Draco Malfoy. I don't want anything to do with him."

Draco could work with that. "Alright. I'll have to be creative then."

"I'm serious, I don't want any connection. I don't want him to win." Hermione's anger was a beautiful sight.

"The last thing that's going to happen." Draco's mind was already turning over the possibilities. After a few minutes passed Hermione huffed and pulled her hand in front of their faces. "How long has this ring been on my finger?"

Draco's grin was deeply smug as he chuckled. "That I will never tell you."

Hermione's smile fell. "How long Draco?"

"Oh I'm really not going to tell you and you'll never guess correctly." He shrugged as he lifted her chin and kissed her. He shouldn't be so happy with himself for besting her, but he couldn't help the grin that spread on his face as Hermione's mouth dropped open. "How long? Five weeks?"

Draco shrugged, "who knows when a ring may have slipped upon your hand."

"Draco we've only been dating for like eighteen weeks." Hermione's eyes were so large it reminded him of Leo's. He kissed her again, relishing in the moment. "You will never guess."

"What word was it then?" She sighed.

His smile softened, "Fiancée"

Hermione frowned, "That's so sweet. I thought for sure it was Draco's whore."

He barked a laugh, which made his ribs ache. He was still so damn sore from his surgeries. "That would have been too easy, darling."

She turned her pretty eyes on him, narrowing, “What if neither of us would have said it?”

He brushed her jawline, “I would have changed the word to wife.”

And just as he thought it would, a blush bloomed deliciously across her cheeks, then she smirked. “We need to go to the hotel.”

Draco huffed, “I’m glad to see your sexual needs are coming back, but I’m certain Dr. Patil said no sex for a minimum of two weeks.”

“No, I want to rub it in Big Nose Brenda’s face.”

“Who?” He furrowed his brow.

“Brenda. The employee who didn’t believe I was your wife.” Hermione’s anger was so fucking cute.

“Well anytime you want to show off your ring is fine by me.” There was something deeply satisfying about her wanting to be called his wife. “If I would have known you liked the title so much I would have said it more often.”

“That would have ruined the game.” Hermione chuckled. True. Draco did enjoy seeing how far she’d let him push her. He was always delighted when she pushed him back. Like the two of them were walking along the tightrope together, holding each other’s hands when they were nervous, or scared. And they’d just made a huge leap.

“I think it’s also what made this whole thing confusing for both of us.” He admitted. Perhaps they did need to be a bit more direct about things. They were quiet again and he could see she wanted to say something so he waited for her, tightening his arm around her.

Hermione finally said, “I don’t know if I would have reacted any differently, even if we’d been spouting declarations of love the whole time. I-well, it feels-”

“You don’t have to explain.” He meant it. He was starting to put things together. It only made him want to kill Ron more. The audio on the security cameras gave him enough to understand.

“It’s not that I don’t want to...” She trailed off again.

Draco rubbed her head, “To clarify, there is no such thing as a two weeks notice anymore. You’re not quitting me and I’m not quitting you. You and Leo are the best things to ever happen to me and Scorpius. I plan to spend the rest of my life loving you, Hermione. That’s what I should have been telling you. Maybe you would have still reacted the same way, but at least you would have known your attempts to get rid of me were futile.”

Hermione buried her head in his shoulder and inhaled a few slow breaths, “I have never been more grateful for courting season in my life.” She pulled back. “I’m so sorry. I regretted it the moment it left my lips. I don’t want to quit you. I love our family. I love our life. I don’t know how I got so lucky. I think being this happy feels unnatural somedays and I’m waiting for it all to be taken away.” Her hands cupped his face. “I love you and I swear to you I’ll

never say it again. I'll-I'll figure out how to learn to share my feelings with you. I should have been more brave."

"Even if you say it again, I wouldn't take it seriously." Draco arched a brow. "On top of the control issues, I am quite possessive with the things that are mine. I really would have handcuffed you."

"Well, I'll vow it." Hermione whispered. His stomach fluttered. "I'll vow it as well." Draco replied.

"You'd vow not to believe me if I try to quit in a moment of pure shock and panic?" Her soft smile mad him smile.

"And if you're angry at me for a valid reason. Or if you're hangry. Or if you're sleepy-"

"Draco." Hermione rolled her eyes. He never got tired of hearing her say his name.

"I'd vow to you," He picked her hand up, kissing her ring. "That I'm here for you. Whenever you're ready. To listen and to try to understand and to not force you to say anything you don't want to."

Her bottom lip trembled and he saw something like relief in her eyes. She still looked scared this whole time. Still guarded about opening up to him, it eased some. The tension in her face relaxed, like she was finally feeling safe again. That's all he wanted, for her to feel safe with him. "I'm not going anywhere." He kissed her pretty lips.

"Thank you." She sighed. Then she started to look a little shy, "Would you judge me for how many sexual partners I've had?"

Draco chuckled, "That's really random. But no. I'm pretty sure I'm a slut."

Hermione swallowed nervously.

"You don't need to share the number." He said. He didn't judge her at all, but he didn't love thinking about other-

"Three." Hermione blurted. "And not even really three. I mean you're the third. Well, obviously Leo happened if you count that which I don't like to, but I was a virgin and then like two years ago I had a one night stand and he had no idea what he was doing but it was sex and it counts. I came at least." She nodded like she was convincing herself.

Draco blinked. "What?"

"You said you wouldn't judge me!" She covered her face with her hands, her blush rushing down her chest.

"I'm only the third person you've slept with? Ever?" Draco was experiencing a number of things he didn't know how to describe, several that made him an asshole.

"Yeah." Her voice rose. "Yeah the first time I'd ever had oral sex was our first date. That was the first time I'd ever had a cock in my mouth or a mouth on me down there. Or wore lingerie...."

"What the fuck." Draco choked. "You said you liked it hard!"

"I guessed I did and I was right." Hermione said, looking quite happy with herself.

"Hermione," Draco breathed, "I could have- I should have-"

"No." She shook her head. "That's exactly why I didn't tell you. I didn't want you to treat me differently. When I got your mother's offer, I knew you were experienced and that was part of the appeal of accepting. At minimum you'd know what to do with me and train me how you'd like it. I wanted someone who would tell me what to do because I really didn't know what to do. You were excellent at giving me instructions and I like- " Her blush went bright pink. "I like learning and getting high praise for my efforts. On my application I said I wanted to try everything at least once. I figured I'd get good at knowing my preferences after that and I was right." Fuck. Now he was hard.

Draco's brain was blended soup again. This was almost too much. Gods, he was a lucky bastard.

"You're the only woman I've slept with more than once if that matters. Besides Astoria." He said, offering the only thing that he could. He ran a hand down his face.

"Those lucky stars of ours are really something. We make the perfect pair." Hermione held her hand out again, the diamond glistening. He had loved watching it on her hand all these weeks, even when he'd been scared out of his mind, he'd known quickly she was it for him."

The first time you took your coat off I wanted to pass out."

Hermione scoffed. " You had no reaction at all. You were like a blank wall."

"Yeah well I had to keep my dignity in tact somehow. You had me on my knees pretty damn quick. I was ready to beg you to come back the next week from the taste of your pussy alone."

"When you sent me that video of you, I think I knew I was fucked." Hermione giggled. "I watched it so many times that night. It was a reward for every chapter I studied."

"I could have kissed you the first day you wore green."

Hermione's face grew skeptical and he sighed. "It honestly pissed me off. I wasn't prepared to have that urge. It was like I wanted to possess you with a carnal instinct and mark you as mine. It felt absurdly dramatic. I started questioning my judgment around you that day. It made me very guarded. The more I wanted to kiss you the less I felt like I should. Not without losing some part of me I didn't know if I would get back."

Hermione smiled. "We really haven't talked about this at all have we?"

"Clearly we need to work on our communication skills." Draco said, "but don't worry, I'm sure we'll find a new game to play." He kissed her ring finger again.

A few hours later Draco watched Hermione sleep from the sofa in their bedroom while nursing a glass of firewhisky. Normally, he had a rule about drinking on a weeknight, but this day had been, well, this day had been one of the hardest days he'd had in years. Ron Weasley would be fucking punished that's for damn sure.

And he knew he needed to marry the witch in his bed as soon as possible, whether she was aware of it or not, that didn't matter to him. The carnal instinct to possess her was roaring wildly inside him. Marriage contracts were a different breed of commitment than most marriages and he was ready to legally own Hermione Granger, because she already owned him. Draco was wrapped around her finger like the rings on her hand. He smirked to himself as he took another sip of his drink. It would be a fun little game waiting for her to notice the second ring on her finger.

Sicilian

Two evenings later Hermione was in bed, still resting due to Draco's orders when Pilly popped on the bed. She held a tiny arm full of sticky notes. "Pilly is so-so s-s-sorry!" The elf stammered, through heavy tears.

"It's alright." Hermione smiled. "Don't cry. I don't want you to be scared of me."

"No, Miss you don't understand. You were almost dying and Pilly was so mean!" The elf fell to her knees, sticky notes fluttering everywhere. "Please forgive Pilly, Pilly is so sorry."

"I'll forgive if you forgive me for whatever it is I did." Hermione scooted closer to the elf. "I want to be friends."

"You did nothing Miss! Master Draco said I couldn't be your friend until he said so." Her bottom lip trembled as Hermione's curled into a sneer. "He said what?"

"Master Draco said I had to be on his team. Pilly asked Master Draco if he could make an introduction so Pilly could get THEE Miss Hermione Granger's autograph! But he said no! He said Pilly would be better use if she helped him deliver roses and clean Miss' kitchen, but you were so unhappy with Pilly. Then he said if I pretended to dislike Miss Granger, Miss Granger would be motivated to be my friend."

Hermione already had ten different ideas for how she could punish Draco for making this elf so miserable. That bastard. He really was an asshole sometimes.

"Pilly I am not unhappy with you. I never have been. I forgive you. I truly want to be friends. That would make me so happy." Hermione reached out to the elf, holding her hand. "I think it's time to be on team Hermione Granger now." She smiled. "Draco was a very naughty wizard and made you believe I didn't like you because he's selfish. But I promise you I have never disliked you, not even for one day."

Pilly's smile was everything. *Finally*. But then it dropped and Hermione's heart went with it. "Well, Pilly just doesn't know who to believe sometimes. Master Draco said you'd like me if I moved you out of your flat is that true Miss?" Her eyes were filling with tears as she waited for her response.

"Yes, very true." Hermione said. At least that was true. She was ready to live in one place. The manor was the most logical, even if Draco had not informed her yet.

"Oh thank goodness." Pilly grinned.

"Pilly, I'd like us to have tea together. Every week. And together we are going to make Malfoy pay for his dirty tricks."

The door of the bedroom opened, "Granger-" Draco stopped. Trying to play it cool as both of females stared him down. "Hello to two of my favorite ladies. I was just looking for you

Pilly.” Draco strode towards the bed. “Pilly have I told you how cute look today.” The elf glared at him. “Pilly is on team Hermione Granger!” She folded her arms and lifted her chin.

“Pilly you’ve known me since birth. You can’t choose her. It’s illegal.” Draco scoffed.

“Not since Hermione Granger gave house elves the right to choose!” Pilly snapped. “Master Draco is a Master asshole!”

Hermione threw her back in laughter. Draco inhaled, “You know people say that about me and I truly just don’t care, but I do need you help me with something.” He whispered into the elf’s ear. Her eyes went wide and she nodded, tears forming again.

“Perfect.” He smiled. He locked the door with his wand.

“Give me your hand, Hermione.” He sat beside her and Pilly stood next to them.

“Pilly has taken a vow of silence, she cannot hear anything I say starting now. I will point to her and she’ll be performing an unbreakable vow between you and I.”

“You need time to think about this.” Hermione said, “I need you to think about this.”

“I need you.” Draco said. “All I need and all I want, is you. So please give me your hand let me make my vows to you.”

Hermione hesitated. Not because she wouldn’t vow everything back, but because she didn’t want him to rush this. Or was that her own fear talking? Hermione sucked in a breath and slipped her hand against his. Draco’s hand squeezed hers as he said, “And in return I want your forgiveness.” His eyes briefly glanced to his dark mark, her brows furrowed. “I want you to forgive me for not keeping you safe.” Draco said, “I’ll vow to do better, to be better for you.”

“You don’t need-“

“I’ve made a lot of mistakes in the past and I need to know you forgive them.” His eyes filled with tears as he glanced down at the dark mark again. “Even the ones when we didn’t love each other. The ones that are dark and cruel-“

Hermione gasped, “Yes, yes, I forgive you completely and wholly. Easily and effortlessly.”

He pointed to Pilly. Threads of silvery light wrapped around their hands, up their wrists and dispersed in tingling sparks up her arm as he began speaking, “I vow to you that I will never ask for anything that you don’t feel safe to share. I vow to you, that I choose you over anything or anyone else. All of you. All mine.” Draco’s face remained soft and sincere and completely gorgeous. “Hermione, I will remain completely devoted to you. You have my complete fidelity, loyalty, and trust.”

“I love you so much.” Hermione replied. “I vow fidelity, loyalty, trust, and complete forgiveness. I vow my devotion, my body, and my heart. All of you, all mine.”

“I love you so much.” Draco replied with a squeeze.

Draco smiled at her so gratefully she'd wondered why she'd ever doubted him.

And then she wondered if he was ever planning to tell her they just got married or how long the wedding band had been there too. *Dr. Granger is a gold digging whore.* What a silly password. Hermione had laughed so hard she peed. She was certain Draco thought he got away with it.

Later that night when they were tucked into bed, Hermione's ring glinted in the lamp light, another notice me not charm wearing off. The wedding band would stay charmed around their family since it's not traditionally given until they were married. Like when their families were present. Sneaky around did have a certain thrill to it. She let the charm die off and wondered when he'd bring it up. It was beautiful band with the Leo, Scorpius, and Draco constellations etched around it. Dotted with little diamonds as stars. Her lucky stars. It made her weep.

"Marriage. Marriage is what brings us together today." Hermione hummed nonchalantly as she pretended to read her book. He ignored her. Fine she'd be direct then. "When did you plan to tell we got married today, Husband?" His head slowly turned towards her. That sure got his attention. And he liked it by the cheeky look on his face. He waited, buying himself time. "I would ask what your definition of marriage is?"

"Is there any other kind?" Hermione arched a brow. He saw the ring and smirked. Snatching her hand and kissing it.

"I prefer the kind I told our mothers. That we'll be getting married in Las Vegas after your next exam in two weeks. Then we'll have a big wedding this summer in Sicily. Where our guests will receive little cards that read, '*Never argue with a Sicilian bride when her cheese and apples are on the line.*' And an endless spread of fruit and cheese will served. And our kids will dress up like R.O.U.Seseses in little tuxedos as they walk down the aisle and—"

Hermione blinked at him, trying to hide her laugh, "We are not having a Princess Bride themed wedding."

"I don't know the boys are pretty sold on the idea. And I do look really good in all black." Draco frowned at her expression of incredulity, he raised a hand in the air, "I swear on my life, it wasn't me, they just come up with the craziest ideas." He shook his head. "They're also both very excited to meet Elvis Presley."

"You've talked to them about getting married?" Hermione closed her book and turned to face him. Their best conversations always happened in bed like this. It felt like she got to have a sleepover with her best friend every night.

"You should know Leo is still struggling with the whole thing." Draco said, annoyed, turning towards her.

"How? What's wrong?"

"When I asked him to marry you, he told me he'd only say yes if I was rich and he wouldn't believe me when I told him I was rich. So I had to take the boys to the vaults just to convince him. He's still giving me a hard time because and I quote, that didn't look like a lot of money." Draco mimicked Leo's sassy tone impressively. "It was three vaults worth! I told him the whole damn floor was ours but he still refused to believe me."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "You are seriously so dramatic."

"I am telling you the absolute truth. That boy is very protective of you." Draco said. "I had to bribe him with a million, thousand galleons. I put both your names on all the vaults that day to prove it to him and he still seemed uncertain if he would come to the wedding."

Hermione's mouth parted. But before she could argue Draco kissed her. "Just so you know, I was willing to go much higher. I got the better end of the deal, Wife." Hermione's insides melted into liquid gold.

"I am very pleased and happy to prepare for the future." Hermione replied.

Draco smirked, "Should we announce our marriage with, 'Granger-Malfoy mildly content to be wed."

"Yes, please, that would be so perfect." Hermione nodded, laughing.

"Why is it so funny to us?" Draco laughed hard with her. "It's so stupid."

"Because we're weird. And—" She kissed him. Tiny little kisses were her favorite too. "It's like our own little secret because it's not even scratching the surface on what it feels like to be with you."

"Do you think everyone will think we're incredibly boring?" Draco kissed her.

"I hope so. And mediocre and adequate and cold." Hermione sighed.

They held each other for awhile. Draco pursed his lips and Hermione felt like Draco wanted to say something so she waited. When he didn't she turned around ready to sleep in his arms, until one of them got too sweaty and pushed the other away. It was usually Hermione and then Draco would place a cooling charm on her and wrap his arms around her like an octopus catching prey. When Draco spoke his voice quiet, but serious.

"I need you to listen to be very carefully. I don't want to you to think of Leo, or me, or anyone else. I want you to think of only yourself as I speak. Just consider what I'm saying and I won't expect a response tonight. I just need you to listen, understood?"

Hermione nodded. Her chest feeling tight.

"If I have the ability to put Ron in prison for tax fraud, that in no way will be connected to you, the boys, my name, or my family, would you want me to do it?"

"What about Lavender and their kids." Hermione breathed.

"There is a charity we donate to that provides for families with incarcerated family members. My name won't be associated, I don't volunteer there. Neither does my mother. I'll make sure she's taken care of for the next several years."

Hermione forced slow breathes through her nose. "How long would he be in there for?"

"He is actually committing tax fraud, so I'm just planning to point it out to the right people. It won't come back to me. I promise. The actual sentence will be up to judge. It's not a guaranteed thing. I don't want you to give you false hope, but it's something. Three to five years maybe."

Hermione had just one more question. "Would you be able to get him to Azkaban?"

"Those cases aren't typically sent there but I can try."

"Do it." Hermione said.

Draco tugged her chin and kissed her. "I've never been more in love with you, Wife."

Hermione wouldn't get her hopes up. But Draco's desire to help her like this was astonishing. He didn't even know... She'd tell him. Soon. "Nor I you, husband. Thank you."

Favors

Chapter Summary

Trigger warnings at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Notes

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

The following Saturday evening Hermione poured two glasses of firewhisky handing one to Draco as they sat on the sofa in the hotel's penthouse living room.

The curtains were drawn, the cold cloudy skies covering any signs of the sky. She'd sent the invite this time, but they arrived together. Hermione had a list of random requests to give to Big Nose Brenda before they came upstairs. Draco choked back a hearty laugh as she asked for a stripper pole to be delivered next weekend. It was incredibly satisfying waving her giant diamond around while wearing stripper heels.

They ate dinner at the hotel's restaurant and Draco introduced Hermione as his wife all evening. It was true this time, even if their mothers didn't know yet. Although Hermione was certain Narcissa was becoming suspicious.

When their glasses were emptied, Hermione grabbed a pair of handcuffs, linking Draco's arm with hers. "What do you have planned for me tonight, wife?" Draco arched a brow.

Hermione reached for a weighted blanket, covering her lap. "Honesty." Draco's face grew solemn. "Hermione I really don't-

"I want to. That's the difference now. It's my choice." Hermione cleared her throat. "The handcuffs are to ensure you don't leave the room. You won't get them off and I won't undo them. So no matter what I say, you can't leave."

Draco's jaw clenched, but he nodded.

Hermione took a deep breath and looked through the windows, "The day my dad died was the day I found out I was pregnant with Leo." Draco's hand twisted in the handcuffs, intertwining his fingers with hers. "I was already fourteen weeks pregnant, but I had no idea. I had been studying for my entrance exams for healer's school and my periods had always been irregular and I hadn't been really paying attention. I performed CPR on my father for ten minutes by the time paramedics showed up, he'd been dead probably much longer though. When we arrived at the hospital the nurses told me I was pregnant and hemorrhaging, most likely miscarrying. And my mother was with my father's dead body while I was crying tears of gratitude. I was so fucking grateful in that moment." Hermione closed her eyes briefly, swallowing the ache in her throat. "I felt like a truly horrible person because my

father saved my life that day. The drunk driver was heading straight towards my side of the car and my father swerved taking the impact. He died and I was grateful because Ron," Her jaw clenched, she hadn't spoken the words out loud in so long. "Ron raped me and I didn't want his baby." Draco's hand squeezed tighter around hers.

Hermione continued as light rain began hitting the windows. "When I stopped bleeding a few days later, they congratulated me and I wanted to die. I became angry with my father at his funeral. Wishing he would have just let me die instead." The first tear fell down her face and she didn't wipe it away.

"After the war, I needed space from the wizarding world. I moved in with my parents and helped at their dentist office. It took me a while to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. I questioned if I even wanted to go back to magic at all. But my parents really loved my magic. They didn't stop encouraging me to face my fears and that's when I decided to go to healer's school. I finally reached out to Harry and Ron after not really talking to them for about two years. And Harry wanted to throw me a party, like a welcome back party. It felt like it was the right time to reconnect with everyone. Ron had previously been upset about me not wanting to date him after the war, but I didn't want a relationship with him like that."

Hermione took a steady breath, "When I saw him again, I was worried he'd bring it up, but he was so kind. He wouldn't stop bragging about me to everyone at the party. They held it at Ron's new flat he'd just purchased. And he pulled me up on a coffee table and announced to every everyone in the room how much he couldn't wait to see me become the next greatest healer, he told the whole room then that the joke shop was going to give me a scholarship for school. Everyone was cheering, I was crying with gratitude because I was so stressed about money. It was wonderful. I felt like things were going to be okay." Hermione sighed. "We drank and danced and partied late into the night. Throughout the evening Ron's kindness turned physically friendly with me." Hermione's teeth clenched as anger began swirling inside her. "His hands were all over me at one point and I shoved him off in the hallway. He'd gotten angry then. I saw the flash of rage in his eyes, but he shook it off quick and I blamed the alcohol. A group of them started playing a gambling game and Ron pulled me on his lap as a good luck token. Then everyone at the table did the same. Harry pulled Ginny in his lap, Luna grabbed Neville," She inhaled a shaky breath. "I was pretty drunk and everyone was so happy, so I just went along with it." Her voice trailed off as the images of the party played in her mind. Lightening flashed in the distance as rain poured heavily, hitting the open windows with force.

"Ron's hand slid up my skirt halfway through the game, he was rough, and touched me cruelly. I froze completely. I looked around for help, hoping someone was paying attention. Hoping for someone to help me. It took me several minutes before I realized I could save myself. I stood abruptly, knocking his drink all over his lap. I punched him right in the nose." Hermione's breathing quickened. "The whole room went silent and then burst into laughter. No one knew why I'd done it, but everyone thought it was funny. I left then and I was proud of myself. I felt strong. Like I'd just done something brave. I blocked Ron from my floo and warded my flat against him but two days later he came through my floo, drugged me, and took me back to his flat. Harry and a few others were there. They'd been drinking and gambling again and Ron announced his good luck charm was back. Then he took me to his room." Hermione sniffed as another tear fell. She couldn't look at Draco. Not yet.

"I woke up completely nude in his bed, I could only remember scraps of the evening, but I knew. My body knew. I was a virgin...." Hermione inhaled slowly. "I leapt out of bed and grabbed my wand. He tried to deny it at first, but my body held the evidence. There were marks from him and bruises blooming all over. I was so close to killing him. I could feel the rush of my magic flooding my body, the words were almost out of my mouth. I wanted to kill him so badly. I would have. I should have..."

Hermione let a few tears fall as Draco's thumb brushed over her hand. "Ron said, 'Harry's just outside. Do you really think he'll believe you?' I doubted myself then. He shoved me away hard and threw my clothes at me. He told me how I broke his heart and he'd never forgive me. That I embarrassed him in front of everyone when all he'd done was be nice to me. When I left Harry was on the couch eating cereal, he waved goodbye to me with a grin. I walked straight into an auror's office. Determined to show Ron I could find other ways to punish him. I'd do it the right way. The proper way. The auror was immediately skeptical, even though I asked for a rape kit and hadn't showered yet, he told me it was hard to prove and asked me if I was truly prepared for the media it would garner to accuse Ron Weasley, war hero and Harry Potter's best friend, of rape. I told him yes. I'd do whatever it took."

Thunder boomed, but the rain began to lighten.

"The whole system was slow. The detective was slow at reach out, the lawyer I contacted were slow at helping me. I didn't tell my parents. I didn't tell anyone in case it hurt my case. But that was mistake because Ron had witnesses that I was all over him at a party and spent the night with him a few days later. Then I was pregnant. And all I could think of was my child being known as a product of rape. Every time someone saw us they'd know who Leo was before knowing him at all. They'd feel sorry for him, judge him, label him. I couldn't let Ron tarnish him. I didn't want Ron's dirtiness to soil him. So I dropped the case. Throughout my pregnancy I started to remember more details of that night. It was awful. I hated being pregnant. I couldn't enjoy any of it. I felt so much guilt and shame and when I finally told Ron, he wanted nothing to do with the baby, which was the best scenarios for me." She was quiet for a long stretch. "When I found out I was pregnant this time, it was like being transported back, all that doubt and fear and... I don't know. It felt like I was trapped again. Even though part of me wanted it, I didn't feel like I could want ti. And then I was miscarrying again and I was grateful and angry and I felt crazy. And I didn't feel like I could say anything yet, because I felt like I should know before I could tell you. I didn't know how to talk about it to you without everything else coming up. And I just really don't like talking about it." She was quiet again and finally she looked at Draco. He was occluding heavily. His eyes were bloodshot and distant, his face wholly blank, but several tears still fell down his face as they made eye contact.

"Thank you for the handcuffs." He said, before pulling her into his lap. "And thank you for telling me."

They were quiet for a long time and Hermione finally said, "Please don't treat me any differently. Don't let this change anything about our sex life."

"It won't." He whispered as he stroked her hair. "Have you spoken to a mind healer about this?"

“Yes, a muggle one.” Hermione replied, quietly.

Draco sucked in a shaky breath. “I’m going to kill him you know.”

Hermione sat up, biting her lip. “If we can get him to Azkaban...a few people there might be willing to teach him a lesson for us.”

Draco furrowed his brow.

“Prisoner’s offer a lot of declarations of gratitude when you save their lives. Some may have told me if I ever need a favor, to let them know.”

Chapter End Notes

TW: retelling of past sexual trauma, including rape.

The Truth

Chapter Summary

TWs at the end of the chapter

Chapter Notes

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

A week and a half later Draco Malfoy closed the door to an interrogation room. Two shot glasses of clear liquid sat on it, Harry Potter sat on the other side. Draco leaned against the door.

Harry looked uneasily at him. “You gonna explain why I’m here?” Draco looked at the two way mirror briefly before moving. He grabbed one of the glasses and drank it.

“Truth serum.” Draco said setting the glass back down, “Hermione Granger is afraid of you Potter.”

“She’s been distant for a long time. I already told you we aren’t close. Not for my lack of trying.” He scoffed. “I didn’t do anything if this is your way of trying to pull out my secrets.”

“Ron Weasley sexually assaulted her during a party you threw for her. Then two days later he raped her while you slept on his couch.” Draco stated plainly.

Harry’s face went blank, shaking his, “No what are you talking about?”

“Leo is the product of that night.” Draco replied. “He’s been physically abusing her the last several months.” Draco pulled out his phone, playing the video of her assault.

Harry’s face fell. “What the fuck...”

“Potter, you are going to drink that truth serum. And you’re going to tell me if you knew about any of it.” Draco said. “And that’s how I’ll decide how you leave this room.”

Harry looked at the two way mirror and then back at Draco, understanding rolling through his features. Harry shot back the serum and waited several minutes before speaking.

“I knew Hermione and Ron ended on bad terms. I know Ron had a temper and...” Harry shook his head, his eyes blinking rapidly. “I had no idea it was this bad. I had no idea. I swear.”

His eyes went back to the mirror, “Ginny and I wondered if we’d done something wrong. And Ron was bitter about the breakup. We just assumed you didn’t think we wanted to be

friends with you. I'm so sorry Hermione. I'm so sorry. I swear I had no idea."

Later that afternoon Draco held Hermione's hand as they walked into a courtroom. Their lawyer's had sent an emergency custody summons.

"Detective Malfoy, you can be seated in the audience." Judge Carlson said. Gods he hated that man. After Draco had done some digging, he'd found out that he had a reputation for taking bribes, and most of his cases favored men.

"Nope, I'll be sitting next to Dr. Granger." The judge's jaw clenched. Ron's chair scraped as he stood up. "He doesn't belong here, he has nothing to do with my son!"

Hermione ignored him, sitting down with the legal team.

"I didn't want to believe the gossip, Detective. You should know Miss Granger isn't"

"Be careful what you say about my wife." Draco relished in the shock that spread into the man's face. The fear was a bonus too.

"You really married a fucking death eater Hermione!" Ron said.

"I believe Mr. Weasley needs to calm down before we proceed." Sharon stated, then said, "We'd like to discuss how Mr. Weasley's financial legal issues might impact his future and the stability he's be able to provide Leo."

"Those charges are blown out of proportion!" Ron said.

Draco stared the judge down as the hearing proceeded. It was a good thing he made the right decision, but regardless, the judge's bribes were going to become publicly known in only a few hours. Leo was given Saturday visits, twice a month, but those would likely never come to fruition and Draco made sure to smile widely at Ron and the judge as he left the courtroom, right after kissing Hermione to celebrate their win in court.

The following day Draco watched with way too many tears filling his eyes as two rodents in mini tuxedos walked down an aisle in a small wedding chapel in Las Vegas. They threw red and white rose petals and sat by Jean and Narcissa. Draco wore a custom designed dark green velvet and black suit jacket, a black shirt with several of his buttons undone, black pants and red bottom loafers. Vegas chic as Hermione called it. He just liked that he looked and felt like American money.

As Elvis Presley's *Can't Help Falling In Love*, played Hermione began carefully walking down the aisle with a bouquet of red roses, wearing a short, white strapless dress, tall white

stripper heels, her wavy hair covered by a very long trailing, glittering veil.

Draco completely lost it. He couldn't be more grateful for those fucking lucky stars of his or whatever it was that gave her to him, he'd never stop proving to her that she safe with him.

"Thank you, thank you very much for joining us today to celebrate love today." Elvis said. Draco was certain he was drunk. "I understand each of you have vows to share."

Draco cleared his throat. "I'll keep it short and sweet. I love you so much if feels like you're tattooed on my heart." He'd found the tattoo three weeks ago after an argument with Hermione about brie, he'd finally admitted to her, 'fine brie is a meal.' And half an hour when he looked in the mirror, her name was tattooed down the side of his torso. It was perfect. And he made plans to put his name on her ass.

Hermione's mouth parted and then she began laughing, then blinked rapidly as she spoke. "I didn't believe in true love or miracles until you showed me they were possible. Thank you for proving me wrong." He'd kissed her for an obscenely long time and groped her ass as their photographer snapped photos.

Two months later

Draco walked into an interrogation room where Ron Weasley sat with his head hung low.

"Where the fuck is my lawyer?" Ron snapped as the door shut.

"He's busy." Draco hummed as he held his stare, slowly rolling up each of his sleeves.

"Well get the fuck out of here." Ron's face flared with anger as he stood. He was unrestrained and Draco was happy to have Weasley fight back. It'd make this much more enjoyable to think he could escape his wrath.

"Did you really think I wouldn't come after you?" Draco chuckled. "Did you think I'd let you hurt my wife?" Draco took a step towards him and Ron ran to the door like a little bitch, yanking on it without any success. When it didn't open he side stepped to the other side of the room/ Draco mirrored his steps, taunting him.

"She wanted me." Ron sneered. "It's not my fault she wanted to fuck me!"

Draco's smile fell. "You can't even admit what you did can you? You hid in the dark and an attacked an innocent woman, but not just any woman, no that was *my* woman."

Draco cornered him. "And that was a big mistake, Weasely."

Ron lifted his balled fists, “Fine you want to fight, I’ll fight ya, Malfoy. All this over a dumb bit-” Draco’s fist collided with his jaw. Ron stumbled back, but shook it off, before slamming a fist into Draco’s ribs just a Draco slammed his knee into Ron’s stomach. Ron fell to the floor. Draco particularly enjoyed the feeling of Ron’s bones cracking as kicked him hard several times, just as Ron kicked Hermione.

Draco stopped after a few minutes, cracked his neck and inhaled a satisfying a breath as he moved to the other side of the small room. Giving Ron a little reprieve and false hope along with it. Ron tortured Hermione, abused her mentally, emotionally, and physically. He’d get the same treatment.

Ron pulled himself up off the floor, using the table to keep him steady, he spat blood. “She wanted me and you can’t handle that huh, Malfoy? Can’t handle that she called me to her house and lied to you about it. What did she tell you? That I attacked her? She likes it rough and she’s fucking hot, so it makes up for the fact she’s batshit crazy.” Ron laughed.

“I think you hate the fact that she’s disgusted by you, Weasley. You had to force her for something she begs me for.” Draco’s eyes narrowed on the poor excuse for a male in front of him. Draco was a bastard, but he couldn’t pass up the opportunity to rub it in Ron’s face. It was his last chance to do it after all. “How many times have you heard her beg you to fuck her?” Draco leaned against the wall, deciding which bone of Weasley’s he’d break first. Ankle. Yes. Ankle first. He smirked, “Because I get to hear her beg me every night and that’s not even the best sound she makes.”

Ron’s eyes were enraged, bolstering him with a sense of strength. *Good. Fight me like the bitch you are, Weasely.*

The door opened and Harry walked in, the door closing with a sharp click.

“Harry!” Ron’s face flashed into faux sorrow. “Thank fuck you’re here, mate.”

Harry’s head jerked towards Draco, “What the fuck, Malfoy?” Draco shrugged, letting out an audible sigh. Ron took a few steps towards Harry.

“Malfoy needs to be arrested, Harry. He’s a psychopath. He’s spouting death eater shit again.” Ron stood next to him, breathing hard.

“I’m really pissed off.” Harry shook his head at Draco. “I can’t believe you started without me. We agreed we’d do it together.”

Draco rolled his eyes, “You were taking too long.”

Ron’s head snapped between the two of them. “What the bloody hell is going on here?”

Harry answered with his fist, it flew into Ron’s nose with a sickening crunch.

Chapter End Notes

TW: Physical violence against a male

Soulmates

Chapter Summary

TWs at the end of the chapter

Chapter Notes

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

There were many moments during Draco Malfoy's relationship with Hermione Granger where he wondered if she could be his actual soulmate even though he'd never believed in such things. And many more moments where he was almost certain she really was, but there was one moment that not only strengthened the depth of their bond, but solidified it completely for him. There was no doubt in his mind that she was his perfect match and soulmate.

Three days after Ron Weasley was sent to Azkaban, Draco stood behind a one way window as he watched the very tired, very bruised prisoner limp into the fenced yard beneath him.

Ron Weasley entered, looked around the semi-empty yard and sat at the only empty table left open.

Ron lifted his still leg onto the bench and leaned back against the stone wall behind him, relaxing. A large group of wizards and witches walked in shortly after, blocking the only entrance and exit from of the yard. Ron's face grew hard, but he didn't move. He just sat there, occasionally glancing for the guards that would never come. The prisoners waited there for almost an hour as did Draco, simply watching the last parts of his life. They didn't take their eyes off of Ron. They all watched him the like the prey he was. When Ron finally stood, it was the first time Draco moved since standing in front of the window. Just a slight tilt of his head as the men and women stepped forward as Ron moved.

Ron took another limping step. So did they.

He moved a few more times, so did they.

That's was when Weasley began to notice something was wrong. True fear licked his face as he took a weak step backwards. It was too late, the group had him surrounded. He turned around slowly as the realization sank in. "I'll do anything anyone asks!" Ron yelled as he turned around. "I'll be your bitch, I'll be your fuck buddy, I'll clean the shit off your toilets!" He grinned at them. They all laughed. Loudly. Condescendingly.

He was embarrassed now, by giving up at the first sign of danger. The anger made him switch tactics. "I'm mother fucking Ronald Billius Weasley. I am not afraid of you!" He

turned around again, his poorly masked fear bleeding through as a few of the group members moved closer. "I'm serious! Stay the fuck away from me!"

"I'll make sure you get out of this mess, Weasley." Lucius Malfoy stood on top of one the tables, Draco hadn't laid on his father in a decade. He looked older, but he was healthy. Strong. Cocky.

"Turns out I need a bitch who cleans my toilets." Lucius chuckled creating a wave of murmuring laughs. Ron tried to straighten as he nervously looked around him, weighing the options. Would Ron Weasley choose to trust Lucius Malfoy? Either way he'd die, but it was satisfying to make him think he had hope. To make him think he has a chance, or even a choice in the matter.

"Well, Weasley?" Lucius bit into a green apple, humming as he chewed.

"What's the terms of your offer?" Ron asked with as much grit he could muster. Draco gave him a D- for the effort. So weak. Have some fucking backbone. If you're going to be a horrible person, at least have the balls to embrace it.

"I, Lucius Malfoy, will keep you safe from harm after you leave this yard." He smacked his lips. "On one condition." He took another crunchy bite.

"Which is?" Ron's chest heaved, as he tried to avoid leaning against his injured ankle. The ankle Draco broke just days prior.

Lucius smiled at him, while he chewed his food, pointing to his mouth and then held up his finger, gesturing to give him a moment. "What a tasty little snack I received from an acquaintance of mine." Lucius pulled out a cloth napkin from his uniform pants pocket, wiped his mouth and put it back in before replying. No doubt enjoying the whole show.

"On the condition, you admit your worst crime. Something ghastly. Something truly criminal." There was challenge in Lucius's tone. "You must confess your most devious, horrific sin, so that we can initiate you into the fold."

"And you're the ring leader?" Ron glanced behind him as someone coughed.

"Come on Weasley, what's taking you so long? Chop chop. They're getting restless."

A prisoner kicked gravel, sending it skidding against his ankles, making Ron jerk painfully at the contact. "How do I know—" Ron moved sideways as someone stepped forward. *Keep him guessing. Keep him scared. Keep him fucking paranoid.* "How do I know they'll listen to you?"

Lucius glanced around the yard. "Would you all so kindly take one step back, so our friend here can feel safe in our presence." A low chuckle trickled through the crowd as they all took a step back. Some more generously than others.

"I'm here for tax fraud." Ron offered, "But," he swallowed, "But I've stolen money too. I've stolen other people's identities, muggles mostly. You can take out loans and transfer money. It

takes time, but I can teach you all how to do it.”

Lucius feigned being impressed, “Wow.”

Draco wondered why Ron hadn’t offered that in the first place. Certainly more valuable than him cleaning a fucking toilet.

“What do you think everyone, do you think that qualifies?” Lucius glanced around with exaggerated gestures.

“BOOOOOO!” The crowd thundered.

Lucius waved the crowd down, “Alright, alright.” They came to a small murmur which made Weasley restless, shifting on his feet with a grimace.

“Tell us about Hermione Granger!” Someone from behind Ron called. He turned too quickly. “Shit.” Ron hunched in pain, holding a white knuckle fist to chest. It took him several moments to stand straight again.

“Yes, that name certainly rings some bells, doesn’t it?” Lucius’s manic laughter was echoed by the crowd cheering and whistling. “Please, please, tell us about Hermione Granger. We all have our own stories to share with you as well, but you go first, I’ve heard all theirs already. Borrrringgg.”

Lucius gave him a focused sort of look, and Draco huffed a breath at the expression. He could see right through it, but wondered if Ron could too, or if it looked more sincere down there. The danger was certainly real.

“Well she’s a fucking bitch.” Ron said. The crowd chanted, “More! More!” It stroked his ego enough to make him relax, his shoulders dropped.

“Tell us more!” Someone whistled from in front of him.

Ron’s sneer grew, “She had our son and didn’t let him see me for years.”

Lucius mouth opened a mockery of shock. “How disturbing!”

“She brainwashed him. Seriously the way that kid would treat me, it was fucking disrespectful. She never disciplined him and he was always a crying mess when I picked him up-”

“So what’d you do, beat the brat?” Someone called.

Ron frowned, “Fuck no, he’s just a kid.”

Lucius scoffed, “Well I liked smacking my son around.” And if Draco didn’t know any better, Lucius looked up at him sending him a wink. It looked to everyone like he was distantly remembering slapping Draco around, but it felt like they made eye contact. He tossed his apple up in the air, catching it before looking away.

“Tell us the good stuff, Weasley!”

“What was she like in bed?”

“How did it feel to fuck her?”

Ron chuckled, a smug expression uncurled on his face. That’s when Draco would have killed him. It would have been over too soon, but that smug expression would have fueled enough dark magic for the killing curse.

“She was pretty fucking hot.” Ron said, “Selfish lover though. You see, she kept giving me all these mixed signals. Leading me on and then telling me we were just friends. Then she’d put her tits in my face and I’m like you obviously want me.”

Draco squeezed his hand tighter.

“That’s fucked up.” Lucius said, with a disbelieving shake of his head.

“What happened then?”

Ron looked barely uncomfortable as he began to tell the story of raping Hermione. That was it, slightly uncomfortable. It was quickly snuffed out and replaced entirely by pride.

“Well,” He sighed, playing into the audience. “I took matter into my own hands. Real men have to enforce boundaries. Rules for their women to follow. And one night, I was sick and tired of being told no, that we were just friends,” He laughed like it was a joke. “I met her at her place.”

“Did you follow her home?”

“Nah, I went through her floo.” Ron wagged a hand in correction. “Caught her by surprise.”

“She seems like a fighter that one.” Lucius said, his tone growing colder as he tossed the apple in the air again.

“Barely,” Ron scoffed, “She froze, barely screamed, barely did anything but lay there. I made it easy on her, gave her some good drugs. I made sure she felt good the whole time. She has great tits.”

“And then what?” someone growled.

“I pulled her into bed and spend the night with her. The next morning, you should have seen her, she was a crazy person.” Ron shook his head, “She held a wand to my neck. I knew she wouldn’t kill me because she wanted it, but she had that crazy look in her eye. It made me worried about my son. Still does! As soon as I get out of here-”

“Hmm.” Lucius frowned. The serious nature of it, the shift in his body language told Ron something was off. The tension in Weasely’s face returned.

“What? That’s a pretty good story if you ask me, right?” Ron glanced around, hoping to find support amongst the group.

None came. So sad.

“Oh, I just think you described raping Hermione Granger.” Lucius blinked at him with dripping disdain.

Ron laughed hollowly raising hand, “Hey that word is overused. Sometimes women need it rough.”

“Are there any other stories anyone would like to share?” Lucius asked the crowd, but didn’t take his eyes off Ron.

A woman with white hair and a missing eye spoke first, “My eye was infected. Hermione Granger, fixed it. No cost. Just volunteered her time to do it.”

“She fixed my teeth and my jaw.”

“Hermione Granger delivered my baby. Taught me how to nurse her. And held my hand when I had to say goodbye.”

“Dr. Granger fixed my skin from falling off my face.” A scared burned man said.

“I guess I forgot to mention,” Lucius sighed. “We are all huge fans of Dr. Hermione Granger.” All of his cold, sinister energy direct at Ron. “Hermione Granger saved my life. I was on the brink of death with a very serious infection, and she pulled me out of it. It’s wild that a muggle born could do such a thing, but it’s true. I owe her my life. She also happens to be my daughter-in-law now.”

Draco’s chest tightened unexpectedly.

Ron’s face had shriveled into a mix of confused terror.

“Dr. Granger told me to tell you hi and goodbye.” Lucius said almost sweetly. “And that she will never think of you again and that for the rest of your life,” he waved a hand in the air, “however long you have to live, you will be thinking of her, you disgusting rapist.” Lucius frowned, “Her words, but I share the same sentiment. Except I’d be a little more graphic. Like for instance,” Lucius hopped down from the table and the crowd parted. “I hope that the first person to touch you, rips you tiny dick off, I hope you die hearing the word rapist, I hope your last moment is full of suffering.” He shrugged, “But that’s just me. I’m certain this crowd has hopes and dreams of their own. After all, we do owe her a lot of favors for saving our lives.”

Lucius chucked the apple hard in between Ron’s legs, causing him to stumble to the ground.

“Have at him!”

And then the crowd descended upon him.

Draco watched as Ron screamed. He watched a limb was pulled off his body. He watched as his screams turned into a wet choking sound.

A small breathy sigh released next to him.

Draco turned to Hermione who still watched on as Ron was stomped into nothing more than ground meat. In that moment he realized just how powerfully he felt for her. That's when he knew Hermione Granger was his soulmate. Because he was willing to lose his soul to all the dark magic in the world in order to protect hers. There was nothing he wouldn't do and no one he wouldn't kill for her to keep that look of relief on her perfect face forever. Because for the first time Draco Malfoy could see what Hermione Granger looked like when she felt completely safe, because she knew it too. The look in her eyes when she met his, wasn't about Ron at all, but full of trust. Because there were only so many people in the world you could trust with your desires to kill someone. That in and of itself is a sort of a dark magic. Hermione squeezed his hand back.

They left just a moment later, hand in hand, with Harry Potter walking beside them.

Chapter End Notes

TW: graphic descriptions of violence towards a male

Stars Are Arranged Sometimes

Jean Granger was packing for her daughter's wedding in Italy with a smug smile that would not leave her face. Jean knew you didn't have to be a witch to create magic in life.

Science was practically magic, baking too.

Last summer when she noticed her daughter's depression returning she didn't know how to help her. As a scientist and a feminist, she knew love was not going to cure her of it. But as a widow and as a mother, she knew her daughter needed more support.

It was a selfish motivation when Jean first started to fill out the courting matching system. The wizarding world had become quite progressive in the last ten years. Programs to include muggle born families expanded and Jean wondered if she could find a companion after all these years without her Robert. And dating a wizard felt like a step in the right direction, especially if it allowed her to connect with her daughter more.

When she filled out the courting application, she couldn't help but wonder if Hermione should too. Jean didn't even finish filling hers out, because another email was sent, distracting her before she could. A half-off offer from a Susan Bones to do star charts and soulmate readings. Hmm. How fascinating. Jean printed the coupon out and stuffed it her purse just in time for her to go pick up Leo for their weekly park date.

Once they arrived at the park, Jean had spotted Narcissa Malfoy immediately. The first time she saw the witch was three weeks ago when the park opened. Mrs. Malfoy was hard to miss, anyone who subscribed to Witch Weekly or The Daily Prophet saw the Malfoys in the news at least twice a month. It wasn't that she blamed them anymore for the war, but she wondered if their family had truly changed. So when she walked up to the woman, she stuck out her hand and said, "Hello, my name is Jean Granger, I'm Hermione Granger's mother."

Narcissa's mouth fell open for several long moments before she returned her hand, "Hello, I'm guessing you know who I am, but just in case you don't, I'm Narcissa Malfoy, Draco Malfoy's mother."

"I do." Jean said. "I just wanted to say hello." She didn't exactly have a plan per say, just curiosity about the witch. Curiosity always forced Jean to be brave, even if it was awkward.

Narcissa glanced to the playground, where a dozen children roamed the charmed slides and moving staircases. "Have a seat."

They sat silently for awhile. "We have been sending reparation payments to victims of the war for a decade, Hermione Granger has always declined them. I'm happy to send them to you instead."

Jean chuckled, "Oh, I don't want your money. To be honest, I was just curious to see what you'd do if I introduced myself." She shrugged. It was a goal in her retirement years to make more friends. Maybe Narcissa could be one.

"What if I had hexed you?" Narcissa said, blinking in shock, "Why would be so foolish? What if I had still held prejudice towards your daughter or muggles?"

Jean laughed louder, "You're a hoot. I've seen you here before with your grandson. I've wanted to say hi a few times, but today was finally the day. If you were going to hex me it wouldn't be around children."

"Any particular reason for the absurd bravery?" Narcissa said, her eyes still wide.

"Yes, I actually wanted to know what your opinion on something. I feel as though you might be brutally honest with me? Hermione is too biased to ask her."

"I have been known a time or two for directness." Narcissa replied.

"Are star charts and soul mate readings accurate?" Jean asked.

"It's not black and white, it's a scale of compatibility."

"Ahh, so if a mother who wanted to invade her daughter's privacy and," Jean reached into her pocket and pulled out a small printed coupon, "check her star charts and soulmate reading, it wouldn't be too invasive would it?"

Narcissa's smile was half offended, half impressed. "You came up to me because you assumed my last name makes me morally grey."

Jean bit her lip, "I apologize. I just," She chuckled, "Okay, yes, you're right, I was looking for someone to justify my curiosity. Hermione has been sad lately. I am just grasping at straws for what to do for her. We are close, but no one ever prepared me for how much they keep to themselves as they get older. It's like she doesn't want to share any of her feelings with me, but I can't blame her because it's exactly how I was her whole life."

"I understand that." Narcissa sighed. "but to confess, I've seen you too."

Jean turned to her, "Have you?"

"Yes, seeing Scorpius with a child his age is just heart warming. I asked him a couple weeks ago, to ask your grandson's name so we could set up a playdate. When he said Leo Granger, I didn't think she'd like a playdate with us." Narcissa side glanced at Jean, "What a shame for the paper to do that to them by the way, truly I hate The Prophet"

Jean looked appreciatively at the witch, "Thank you. Hermione is honestly too busy to coordinate a playdate, but I watch him often and we could meet you here anytime." Jean smiled.

Narcissa asked, "Why is Miss Granger sad?"

"If only I knew. The Prophet article is definitely a catalyst, but I think it just triggered something bigger. Leo's father has just come back into his life and she uses her busy schedule to protect herself. Once again, I only have myself to blame."

"I understand that. I find myself continuously overthinking everything I ever did for Draco as child. He's being ridiculously high maintenance about dating. And his son needs more attention."

Jean frowned, "The tabloids have not taken his divorce easy on him."

"No, and it's made him bitter and cold." Narcissa shook her head, "I just saw Miss Bones offer this morning and it's so strange that you've brought it up because I have not been able to stop thinking about it all day. It's not the route I'd typically go but Draco is seriously extremely picky when it comes to women. When he dislikes something, he just goes out of his way to tell his dates. Like for instance last week he took a witch to a lunch tea, and she wore a floral dress with a lovely large flower hat. Draco greeted her by saying, "You look stupid with your hat on. And the next date I was barely able to get him, he said, "wow I don't like your skirt at all." Narcissa blinked, "I think he may be the biggest asshole I've ever known and because of that he'll end up all alone and it's all my fault. I spoiled him so much as child. His expectations are just too high."

Jean barked a laugh. "You should do your son's chart too. Would you be willing to come with me? I am nervous to go to a magical place by myself. I could never, ever tell Hermione. She doesn't believe in divination. Says it's an insult to herself as an academic and physician."

"Yes, count me in." Narcissa nodded, "Are you free tomorrow?"

Susan Bones gaped at the two women as stared at their charts. Curiosity had gotten the best of them when Susan's expression looked odd when she finished Hermione's soulmate reading, only to do Draco's and scream.

"Could I just run some compatibility tests really quickly?" The two women glanced at each other with sly grins, "of course," they nodded.

When the results came back, they blinked and glanced at each other again, then at Susan again. "I have never seen a match this high before." Susan shook her head. "This is absolutely incredible."

"How would we go about encouraging a relationship?" Narcissa said.

Jean shook her head, "Hermione would never believe in this. She might even go out of her way to avoid Draco if I said the word soulmate."

"What about a courtship?" Susan replied.

"I'm not sure, the application system I saw, wasn't very impressive." Jean shrugged, but then turned to Narcissa, "But I do know photoshop..."

Narcissa leaned in, "I don't know what that is, but I like the look on your face." Narcissa sighed, "Oh I've always hoped I could arrange Draco's marriage."

"Honestly me too." Jean said. "This is a dream come true."

Susan added, "Honestly all they need to see is their compatibility. This is truly wild! Oh I will also say, that if either of them think they're dying, it is a symptom of finding one's soulmate initially."

"Draco's used to me making the arrangements, but I'm not sure he'd take me seriously if I told him I set him up on a date with Hermione."

"We need like an audition situation for them. Hermione *has* to think it's her idea." Jean nodded. "Do you take bribes in the name of soulmates?"

"Absolutely I do." She grinned.

"What if we just create our own matching system?" Jean said, nonchalantly. "But there are only two applicants who we get to fill out the applications..."

"Forced proximity is the best way to go." Susan nodded.

"We'll give them an initial time limit too," Narcissa said, "Draco needs to start to feel possessive of her so he'll grovel when he's an asshole to her."

"And Hermione will need to feel in control of the situation so she'll probably need a lot of freedom in the contract. In fact, we'll add a section where it specifically asks for the applicant's requests and contract drafts. It'll help her believe this was truly her plan." Jean said.

"We should emphasize that courting is emotionless." Narcissa added, "it's a myth held by outsiders of pureblood high society, but she won't know if we play into that."

"What will Draco think?" Jean frowned. "If she expects zero emotions..."

"I think Draco will believe she's his match." Narcissa chuckled, "He'll think it makes sense that he matched with a person who wants an emotionless relationship. it's one of his requirements. Whenever a woman starts telling him she likes him he freaks out, insults her, and never speaks to her again. Sometimes within twenty minutes of meeting them!" Narcissa shook her head, "I'm telling you I am desperate for this to be true. My son is truly only going to have one soulmate that can handle him. There is no way he is lucky enough to have more than one."

Jean sighed, "Well, now my question is, if he's an asshole now, will he be an asshole to her forever?"

"No, no." Narcissa, waved her hands frantically, "I don't mean to undersell him. Draco is charming, intelligent, kind, loyal, generous, and a fantastic father. What I mean is, initially it will be believable if it's cold, so he'll stick to it, until he realizes it's not a cold relationship at all. Once he realizes how well they work together, he will not want to let her go. Malfoys are very protective of the things they love. I have a feeling he'll figure it out very quickly. He might not admit it quickly, but he'll know. Which will make him possessive."

Susan held up the overlapping circles. "The chart does not lie. They're the real deal. It will work."

Jean nodded, "I believe it."

"Well, this looks like the start of a beautiful business arrangement." Narcissa said, glancing at Susan and Jean.

Jean smiled, "Let the magic begin!"

There is No Rush

It was a Monday afternoon and Hermione Granger was just days away from taking off three weeks of work. It was stressful enough to plan a wedding in Sicily, it was wholly different to be doing so while also studying for the last test that would determine her future. Tomorrow afternoon she'd take her test, then Wednesday was one more day shift at the hospital. Thursday morning they'd take a portkey to Italy. Sunday evening was their wedding.

Their second wedding. She couldn't wait to be his wife all over again.

Wife.

The word still brought a shooting thrill down her body. They were days away from the wedding of her dreams, although their Vegas one was perfect too. This one just got to include more people. It even included a few nods to The Princess Bride. They were getting married in a dense forest of Poplar trees in Enna Sicily. Draco has the boys totally convinced it's the Fire Swamp where real R.O.U.S roam freely. Draco blamed the boys for it, but Hermione was certain Draco was just obsessed with the film himself. He was wearing all black for the occasion, but Hermione put a stop to the boys wearing the costumes again. They'd be in all black as well. Hermione was also not wearing red, but something she did feel like a princess in, it was regal, floral, and sparkled. She did however have the sign about the bride and cheese planned with the most epic cheese spread she could ever imagine.

Last summer when her world was flipped upside down by the photo in the Daily Prophet and Ron became interested in their son, Hermione slipped into a functioning depression and she had no clue how bad it was until Draco Malfoy had changed everything. Life would be unrecognizable now to herself last summer. It felt magical. It still had its days of course, but she was safe and happy and loved. She could not wait to marry him. Again!

Leo didn't really understand the concept of death when they finally told him the news. He hadn't cried, but she could tell he was upset. Hermione had debated back and forth about what to tell him. She'd settled on Ron being hurt in the prison, which was the truth. They all attended his funeral and Hermione continued to invite Lavender over to the manor monthly for family dinners. Her twins were adorable and Lavender looked happier too. Leo would always know his Weasley family as well. Harry took him to the burrow regularly. It was refreshing now that Hermione finally felt comfortable hanging out with Harry again. She'd slowly began opening herself up again, reconnecting with old friends. She hadn't realized just how much she'd shut herself off from others. Being busy had been her shield, but it didn't serve her well anymore.

Draco and Harry had become friends over the last five years or so, working together on cases in the DMLE. And if that hadn't solidified their friendship, watching Ron die sure did. They hung out more than Hermione and Harry did.

She didn't exactly feel guilty about Ron. She wasn't sure what she felt. Grateful being the top emotion. But mostly she really didn't think much about him at all.

Leo and Scorpius were practically twins and growing so fast she could hardly keep up with their growth spurts. They both still loved to read and were incredibly smart. The boys were going to spend a week with them traveling Europe for a family honeymoon after the wedding, before Draco and Hermione took a private trip of their own, to a beach in the Caribbean.

Her phone buzzed on the table, drawing her away from the textbook she was supposed to be studying. Her brain was overloaded with studying only wanted to think about wedding to-do lists.

“Hello?” Hermione said. “It’s fine. Are you alright?” She paused listening to the sobbing voice on the other end. “Okay, okay. Just stay where you are. I’ll be there in just a few minutes.”

She called Draco, “I’m leaving the manor, just wanted to let you know.”

“Where are you going?” Draco replied, “Aren’t we going to your mother’s tonight? Dr. Markham and all that?”

“I’ll meet you there in an hour, maybe two.”

“Tell me where you’re going Granger, so I don’t spin in mindless anxiety.”

“I’m going to the hospital.”

“Did they call you in?”

“No, I’ll explain when I get back.” Hermione hung up and apparated out of the Manor’s library before Draco could chase her down, because she had a feeling he was already looking for her.

Astoria was sitting on a hospital bed with red rimmed eyes. She was so frail and thin, Hermione greeted her with a soft smile.

“Thank you for coming.” Astoria said as a tear fell down her face. Hermione just nodded as Astoria gathered her things. They walked out of the hospital and Hermione offered her arm before they apparated to the rehabilitation facility. It took about an hour to get her registered and checked in. Hermione paid for everything.

When it was time to say goodbye Astoria could not stop crying. “I can’t do it. It’s never worked before.”

“There is no rush for healing Astoria.” Hermione said. “Take things one day at a time. Don’t think too far ahead in the future. Focus on just today.”

She nodded but still, her chest heaved, the bony parts of her collarbones looked like they could snap in two. “Would you bring Scorpius to see me?”

Hermione swallowed, she had spoken to Draco about this. He’d overheard their conversation about rehab in the hospital and it was a difficult topic between them. He didn’t want Scorpius

to visit, but he understood why it could be beneficial, basically he just didn't like Hermione was right.

"I think we'll need to just see how things go first, but if you'd like, I will visit you. I can come tomorrow evening or the following evening. I can also visit with Daphne after we come back from Italy. Eventually I think we could bring the boys too."

"You'd bring your son?" Astoria wiped her face.

"Of course." Hermione said, "I don't want Scorpius to have any reason to be afraid to come. Let's give it four weeks and I'll bring them in."

"Okay." Astoria nodded. "I don't deserve your kindness, I don't know why you're doing this."

"We share a son, you and I." Hermione was quiet for a moment. "I'd like to be friends with you and despite what you're feeling right now, you do deserve kindness, but it has to start within. Just focus on yourself, learn to take care of your needs, be honest in therapy."

"Thank you."

When Hermione finally arrived at her mother's house she cried for ten minutes in the bathroom. She prayed to Merlin things would work out for her this time.

"What's wrong?" Draco apparated into the bathroom, grabbing her by the waist. "Tell me right now or I'll-"

"I checked Astoria into rehab." Hermione said wiping her eyes. "It was just emotional. I remember taking my dad and it was just hard."

Draco was speechless for a long moment.

"We are visiting her with the boys in four weeks, if she can manage to stay that long. I'll visit her before we leave for Italy."

"We leave in like two days."

"I'm aware," Hermione said, wrapping her arms around him.

"You want to bring Leo too?" His arms tightened around her waist.

"I don't ever want Scorpius to be embarrassed about her. He already calls me mum, It's better if our whole family is supportive. Just like with Lav and the twins. Families come in all different shapes and sizes."

Draco sighed, her forehead. "If we weren't already married, and not getting married again in four days, I'd ask you to marry me again right now."

"You never even asked me to marry you once." Hermione huffed.

"Because I'm a smart man and knew I had to have you whether you liked it or not." Draco lifted her chin, pressing his lips to hers. "Now, let's go meet your mother's new boyfriend."

Hermione shook her head. "You realize I work with him everyday?"

"yeah, well I don't." Draco rolled his eyes. Hermione still couldn't figure out why Draco didn't like Dr. Markham.

Just an hour later while her mother and Phillip, which was still weird to call him that, and Narcissa were out in the backyard, Hermione found Draco standing in the living room. He was looking at the array of pictures on the wall with a deeply perplexed expression.

"Why are you trying to intimidate the photos on the wall?" Hermione said as she approached. "You were supposed to grabbing my bag."

"Look at this photo and tell me what's wrong with it?" Draco said not taking his eyes off of it.

Hermione looked at the group picture of their mothers and the boys at the park. She'd seen it a few times in passing. It was a park they regularly attended... Hermione's brows furrowed. Scorpius had one missing tooth and one baby tooth. When they'd met him he had...

"How would they....This doesn't..." Hermione's voice trailed off as she met Draco's eyes.

"When exactly did you agree to court me, Granger?"

"I applied through the courtship application. Met with Susan Bones, and then..."

"Why did you meet with Bones?" Draco scoffed.

"She was the courtship coordinator for my application." Hermione frowned. "Didn't you meet with her for your application?"

"No, doesn't she do like divination readings?" Draco said.

Hermione choked a little, "Like star charts?"

"yes, soulmate readings too." Draco looked at her and there was a weird look in his eye that Hermione did not like.

"Oh my gods." Hermione said louder as reality sank in.

Draco's smile was so sincere, it helped ease the teasing in his gaze, "Should we do a special toast for them at the wedding, thanking them?"

Hermione rolled her eyes, but couldn't contain her laugh, then her tears started to fall. "I don't even believe in divination." She sniffed.

Draco wrapped an arm around her as they stared at the photo, "Those lucky stars of ours were arranged."

"Stop." Hermione gagged. "I can't, I'm going to be sick."

"You are so dramatic." Draco chuckled, kissing her head.

"I don't believe in soulmates. It's statistically, completely improbable. Wildly unrealistic."

"And?" Draco looked down at her smugly

"Now I'm questioning my whole identity again."

He shook his head, "You have the audacity to call me dramatic and this is how you react to knowing who your soulmate is?"

"Divination is not real!" Hermione snapped.

"And?"

"You are obviously my soulmate." Hermione said angrily, complete disbelief running through her.

Draco's smirk turned possessive, "Gods bless those lucky arranged sta-"

Hermione shut him up with a kiss. Then pulled away her mouth open wide in shock.

"How long have you known?" She gaped at him. "You! Traitor!"

Draco shrugged.

"How long have you known that our mothers were working together? How long have you known we were soulmates?" Hermione snapped.

Draco smirked, "About the time I put that ring on you. Which you've still yet to guess."

Hermione shook her head, "This is inconceivable."

"No, darling, just true love."

Epilogue: Three Years Later

Draco Malfoy stalked down the halls of Malfoy Manor.

His mother was on a trip with his mother-in-law. Astoria and Pilly were with the boys for the night.

No one was here except Hermione and they going to have some fun. His breath hit the cold hard metal in front of his face.

Draco raised his wand and the lights suddenly went off through the entire property.

“Come out, come out, wherever you are....” He sang as he threw open all the doors down the hall with his wand. Him and his perfect little witch had gotten very good at this chasing game.

The challenge delighted him every single time. There was a feral pleasure that hit him hard when he could catch her in his arms and then make love to her while saying the most filthy things he could think of.

His robes fluttered behind him as turned a corner, spotting a distant shadow moving into a room.

“There is no where you can hide that I won’t find you.” That was the truth, too. She knew it. It’s what made this so fun.

The mask glinted in a mirror as he passed his reflection, he chuckled deeply. She hadn’t seen him yet and he couldn’t wait to hear her scream. Behind him a door creaked open.

He stopped. Listening. Waiting.

Hermione was behind him moving slowly. All these years of practice and she’d gotten good at sneaking up on him, especially lately. After counting to three, he turned.

Impressively she was much closer to him than he realized, her wand trained on him.

He underestimated her.

However, she underestimated him too, because her body was frozen with that delicious fear, her nipples hardened under her silk nightgown.

“Well hello there,” Draco said tilting his head to the side taking a step forward. Her wand trembled in front of her as Draco approached in his death eater mask.

“Do you know how much I’ve been craving muggle-born cunt?” He said, with a deep groan.
“Because I’m starving.”

Hermione swallowed, blinking rapidly.

She took a more confident step behind her, then another. “There you go, baby, keep running, I wanna see how fast you can go.”

Hermione picked up her pace, attempting to run backwards. Draco picked up his pace too, wanting to see what she’d do, the minute she turned around he’d apparate in front of her and-

Draco fell hard to the floor as Hermione sent a trapping jinx around his ankles.

“Fuck.” He snapped. Quickly pushing up off the floor, he shouted, “You’ll regret that.” Smashing the restraints with his wand, Hermione’s smirk made him want to laugh.

Gods he loved her.

When he took a step forward, she raised her hands, “Tell me you concede and I’ll let you watch me pee on a stick in the bathroom.”

He felt his face drain of color, “What the fuck?”

“If you don’t concede I’ll take it without you!” Hermione backed a step away.

“You will not!” Draco tried to move again but he fell face forward instead.

“I will not take away the jinx Malfoy.” Hermione said, “Concede!”

His wand shot out, with a scanning spell. It was technically illegal for him to do one, but who was going to tell on him? He’d been practicing and getting lessons from Dr. Markham at family dinners when Hermione was working or not paying attention. Apparently Jean Granger entered the courting match system and matched with Dr. Markham...Hermione loved it, but Draco was not so sure she also just didn’t think the wizard was attractive. The guy’s ego was fucking enormous. But regardless, he had valuable skillsets and supported Draco’s protective nature, so he’d finally decided to stop disliking the male. Mostly.

Hermione’s gasp wasn’t just one of awe because he’d revealed that she was indeed carrying his child, but one of shock too, because the spell was rather difficult to perform. Pride enveloped him as he realized his spell had worked. Before the other strong emotions took hold of him, choking him.

They’d only just decided they were ready to try for a child and it made them ravenous for each other. Sex had never been so bloody good, but her affinity for muggle things only went so far with Draco. There were certain things magic was just better at, specifically all the information they could gather at a much faster rate than a fucking pee test.

Draco’s eyes filled with tears as they both watched the tiniest fluttery orb move around her stomach. The projection kept spitting out information, how far along she was: *six weeks*. The projection reloaded with more information. The jinx around his ankles ended and he finally got off the floor, then he realized he was still wearing the fucking death eater mask.

He tossed it aside and shook his head, what a weird fucking way to find out his wife was pregnant. Draco fell to his knees, wrapping his arms around Hermione's waist, kissing his stomach as he watched the projected tiny golden orb inside her flutter again.

Without his dark mark it felt almost childish to wear the mask. Hermione had not only done something remarkable for the hospital, but with Dr. Markham's help she was able to publish her findings and was about to speak to the entire magical medical community about blood magic and curses in a week. It was her new specialty. She's back in school for it. The thirst for knowledge was never quenched with her.

Hermione tested a theory on Draco right after their wedding in Italy. She hypothesized that pureblooded males who received a muggle-fashioned blood transfusion by a compatible muggle born, could help make the dark mark disappear. In addition to creating several blood stability charms in case things went badly, she also had to invent several potions to use to partially dissolve the dark magic. It was remarkable.

And to no one's surprise, she was right. Draco had the procedures done over the course of two days in front of multiple doctors, researchers, and a few surgeons, who were on standby in case his arm exploded or fell off. An hour before they were supposed to arrive at the hospital Hermione was suddenly convinced that she was wrong and called several more doctors to meet her at the hospital to once again check her theories. The whole soulmate thing really made her question herself. Thankfully, she got over it quickly.

But no, she was right. Three years ago his brilliant and beautiful wife made history again and he got to be part of it with her. And now he'd made a baby with her. This perfect witch of his, was going to bear his child. Something roared inside of him.

"It's a girl." Hermione said.

That's when Draco started sobbing. Bloody hell being in love made him such a softy. Once he got ahold of himself he threw Hermione over his shoulder. "If you think simply trying for a child made me obsessed with you, you're going to be sick of me now."

Hermione grinned. "I'm up for the challenge."

Eleven months later.

Hermione stared at the perfect baby laying against her legs. Their daughter took her breath away every time she looked at her.

They couldn't stop staring at her.

Nyx had just finished nursing and finally settled, they'd only have another hour and a half before she'd be awake again. Draco and Hermione should be sleeping because at two months

old Nyx was not a great sleeper, but they just couldn't stop staring.

"Did she get more perfect in the last two minutes?" Draco asked. Hermione was leaned against his shoulder, as they sat against the headboard. A whimpering breath, fell out of their daughter's tiny mouth before pursing into a small O shape. Hermione's breath caught in her throat again.

"Absolutely, she did."

Her daughter's tiny fist was wrapped around her thumb and Draco ran his fingers over her head, both of them still glued to their baby. Nyx was born with a handful of dark hair like Hermione's, except a small tuft that sprouted white blond in the middle of her hair. It was the most gorgeous thing Hermione had ever seen.

Every time she looked at her, she couldn't believe she'd made something so perfect with Draco.

"Can you believe we made her?" Draco said, his awe made her eyes water.

"Stop plagiarizing my thoughts." Hermione whispered.

They were exhausted, it was three in the morning. The boys would be up in just a handful of hours. Sleepovers were different nowadays, but doing all of it with Draco was magical. He was her best friend and that's why Hermione knew exactly what he was thinking when he looked at her and their eyes met both of them swallowing hard.

"No." Hermione's eyes began to go glossy again.

"You have no idea what I was going-"

"Do not say it out loud." Hermione shook her head. "She's barely eight weeks old."

"I wasn't saying anything at all. I was just looking at my beautiful wife and admiring our baby." Draco narrowed his eyes, "perhaps you're projecting your own thoughts onto me."

"I was doing no such thing-"

They both jerked at Nyx's whimper. Her eyes fluttered open, blinking at them in slow motion. Her round face and long eyelashes made her seriously cherubic. "Hi, sweet girl." Hermione hummed.

"Well not sleeping is probably her only flaw." Draco yawned.

"Don't let daddy insult you, you are my perfect, sweet angel."

"Do you think we'd continue to make perfect children?"

Hermione slowly turned her head towards him smugly, "I knew exactly what you were thinking."

"You are projecting, I was just asking a curious question." Nyx's eyes closed again with a shuddering sigh. Hermione smiled at their baby.

"If hypothetically we had another child, of course they'd perfect. We already have three perfect children. It's not in our DNA to make anything different."

"It might be reasonable to say that we owe it to society. To recreate perfection again." Draco said, side glancing at her. "Hypothetically speaking."

Hermione replied, "If we had another child we'd never agree on a name. It took us my entire pregnancy to just agree on hers."

Draco barked a laugh that made the baby jerk and cry. "Look what you did now." Hermione whispered. "It's okay. It's okay." She swayed her legs, but Draco scooped Nyx up, the tiny scrunch of her legs making Hermione's heart swell. Fuck. She'd never experienced baby fever. Ever. But there was no other way to describe the sensation she currently felt.

There was something healing about going through a pregnancy with Draco. They both enjoyed it together so thoroughly. Both of them got to be excited about every single stage. Something neither had experienced before. Every moment was celebrated, every milestone, every worry shared between them, every scan and party, they were so happy the entire pregnancy. Two months ago, Hermione was in early active labor and they walked around the gardens while Draco massaged her lower back, when her water broke. Draco apparated into the house gathered their things, then was back in front of her within minutes. "Bags are packed, you ready to go to the hospital, Granger?"

"Hell yeah I am." Hermione said. She really was so done being pregnant, and so thrilled to meet their child. Draco was the best birth coach, and the look on his face as he caught their baby was burned into her brain and heart and soul.

And now, now she wanted another baby with him. Especially as Draco laid their daughter on his chest, patted her tiny bum, while kissing the top her head.

"That look on your face is highly suspicious." Draco said, "I hope you're not thinking about having another child, because I'm certainly not."

"I was actually wondering, if you could do legitimency on babies?" Hermione moved closer, laying against his shoulder.

"I think technically yes, but it's extremely unethical, not very much research on the topic. Not to mention any formed thoughts."

"Of course she has thoughts." Hermione frowned. "Brilliant, tiny ones"

"I'll tell you what our newborn is thinking without doing a an unethical science experiment on her. Nyx thinks, 'oh that was a painful fart. Oh I want mummy's titty, oh I want my daddy because he's so funny and my favorite parent. I can't wait to be a Slytherin.' And that's pretty much it."

They were more convinced everyday that Scorpius and Leo would end up in Ravenclaw. It was hard not to champion for Gryffindor either.

Hermione chuckled, “Do you think she has any thoughts about wanting a sister though?”

It was Draco’s turn to look smug, “I knew it. I can read you like a book.”

“It’s only hypothetical.” Hermione sighed. “And hypothetically, if she wanted one, I’d be amenable to giving her one.”

“Like I said first, we owe it to society.” Draco leaned over kissing Hermione’s forehead. “Plus, creating another perfect human with you is so much fun.”

“That’s a great point.” Hermione said, “maybe in three years from now.”

“Or two.” Draco replied.

“Two could work as well.” Hermione yawned.

“Then a sister it is.”

Eighteen months later Draco and Hermione were pregnant with twin boys. When the twins were two years old, Hermione said, “They need another sister.”

“I agree.”

Baby sister came one year later. Then followed by an accident little sister.

Their gaggle of children made the wizarding world tabloids call them weirdos, but Hermione did not care what they said, because she knew that their weird, happy family was only possible because of true love.

Oh and meddling mother-in-laws.

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