Curls and Bruises

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"When I'm done with you, I won't need your permission. You'll simply be begging for it."

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Chapter 1

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Hermione was unusually quiet as she stared out of the window, watching the scenery fly by. The Hogwarts Express was taking them to Hogwarts like it did every year. For Hermione and her friends however, it might be for the last time. She didn't want to think like that, but she had to force herself to be realistic. It wouldn't be long before everything finally came to a boiling point, or as some of her muggle friends liked to say; 'before shit hit the fan'.

It wasn't too long ago that the wizarding world had finally been informed of the truth; Voldemort had indeed returned, and nobody knew how to handle it. How *does* one respond when someone tells you that 'He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named', the darkest wizard to have ever lived, has returned from the dead? That warrants so much more than a horrified stare or a gasp of terror.

She glanced first at the empty space in front of her where Harry once sat, and then to Ron who was in an animated conversation with Seamus Finnegan before letting out a sigh. She was scared for Harry, truly she was. She understood that he wanted to find clues that could lead to answers that could help them win this war, but Draco Malfoy's pending Death Eater status was not the best place to start. It was *Draco Malfoy* for Merlin's sake. The boy threw out hollow threats of telling daddy and empty promises more than he breathed.

To be frank, she wasn't sure that Malfoy even had the guts to become a Death Eater. The first few seconds of getting the dark mark would've been too painful for him before he started to sob like an infant. She cracked a small smile as she remembered his dramatics when Buck Beak barely scratched him in third year. She shook her head in disbelief at the image of Malfoy kneeling in front of Voldemort with his arm held out like an offering. There was no way that he was a Death Eater. The idea was ludicrous.

She glanced at the empty spot again before frowning in a mixture of worry and confusion. Harry had been gone a while and she could tell that they were nearly at Hogwarts. She could also use this as an opportunity to patrol seeing as how she'd gotten out of her prefects meeting a while ago, and should have been doing that already. She slid out of her seat before beginning to walk down the train in search of him. She smiled at her friends and acquaintances in the process, trying to ignore some of the discreet looks she was receiving.

Ginny had repeatedly told her over the summer how much she had blossomed, but Hermione had never taken it to heart. Perhaps Ginny had been telling the truth, after all. It wasn't long before she had walked through all of the compartments, all except Slytherin's territory that is, but there was no way that Harry was in there. She turned around to head back before her own thoughts stopped her.

Unless … Unless he'd gone to try and prove his theory of Malfoy. She bit her lip as she struggled with whether or not to go. She didn't have to go in, just glance through the door. She turned around again and headed in that direction, stopping at the door and discreetly

glancing in the window. No one noticed her, thankfully, but she didn't see Harry or any place where he could be hiding, causing her to quietly sigh.

She was about to go back to her own seat when a head of pale blond hair caught her attention. He was sitting with who she recognized as Blaise Zabini and Pansy Parkinson, no surprise there. What was a surprise though was him glancing up and locking his eyes onto her, his expression blank and almost calculating, as if he knew that she was there before he even looked up. She forced herself to suppress a gasp as her eyes met his. They were piercing and far too intense for her liking, causing her to take a step back before heading in the direction of her own seat.

"Mione, you've barely touched your food," Ron commented as he continued to shovel food into his mouth.

It was a miracle she could even understand him, but that's what happens when you spend years perfecting the art of becoming fluent in the language of those who speak with their mouths full. She glanced at her plate before setting her fork down.

"Sorry, guess I wasn't that hungry," she replied with a small frown.

It was the truth, she wasn't in the mood for eating and she wasn't sure why. He gestured to her food with a raised eyebrow. She, completely understanding his customized sign language, handed her food right over. Harry laughed beside her as she giggled while they watched Ron practically inhale her food. Ginny, who was sitting a ways from them beside Dean, frowned in disgust at her brother before giving Hermione a look that screamed 'how do you put up with it'. Hermione shrugged in amusement and was about to say something when she all of a sudden got the strongest feeling of eyes on her.

She glanced around before her gaze finally settled on Malfoy who was dedicating half of his attention to listening to Theodore Nott go

on about something beside him and dedicating the other half to gazing at her like she was a foreign enigma. She figured that a normal person would at least be a little bit embarrassed at having been caught staring, but then again, Draco Malfoy didn't exactly count as a normal human being.

Her mind was screaming at her to look away and just ignore his odd behavior, but her body wouldn't listen. Her body had a mind of its own as she not only continued to gaze back but also frown at him in question. The corner of his lips lifted into his trademark smirk before he grabbed his glass of pumpkin juice and lifted it to his mouth, keeping his watchful gaze on her the entire time. It wasn't until after he had set his cup down and darted his tongue out to catch the stray juice did she finally look away. She looked down at the table as she felt her cheeks heat up. She wasn't convinced of him being a Death Eater, not even remotely, but she did agree with Harry on one thing; something wasn't right about Draco Malfoy this year.

"You alright?"

She glanced up at Harry as he gazed at her in concern while resting his hand on her arm.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I just feel a bit…ill, is all," she reassured him with a small smile.

He slowly nodded as he raked his eyes over her, making sure she was okay.

"Okay."

He returned his attention to his food, and she returned hers anywhere else but the Slytherin table.

"She's mental, I tell you. How on earth…"

She drowned out the sound of Ron's voice as she diligently took notes. He and Harry weren't going to be satisfied until Snape gave them detention, probably her too just by association. She tried her best to focus, but that was seemingly impossible when someone was practically staring holes into your back. She didn't know why Harry and Ron chose the second to last row to seat themselves into. Especially since it's no secret that Malfoy and his gang of misfits have practically staked a claim on the seats in the back.

Now that she thought about it, that's probably why Harry chose to sit back here, hoping that he could eavesdrop on Malfoy. As much as she disliked Malfoy, even he wasn't that thick in the head to start spouting Death Eater secrets right behind Harry Potter. That is, if he was in fact a Death Eater. She knocked her quill off of her desk and leaned down to pick it up, using this opportunity to glance behind her only to sit back up in a mixture of shock and fear. Malfoy had his eyes locked onto her, and he wasn't even bothering to hide it.

She took a deep breath and forced herself to continue scribbling, pretending as if she couldn't feel his heated gaze on her. She almost cried in relief when they were dismissed, and her friends stared at her in confusion as she sat there, waiting for the class to pile out. She wanted to be the very last one out, so that she could be as far away from Malfoy as possible. She had thought that his staring yesterday had been odd, but today it was just plain creepy.

"You two head on to lunch. I'll be there in a bit."

Ron didn't need to be told twice, but Harry lingered in the doorway, glancing around the empty room before resting his eyes on her.

"Are you sure that you're okay, Hermione?"

She forced her smile to reach her eyes as she looked at him. Harry was already worried about so much. She didn't want to burden him with any of her petty problems.

"Yes, Harry. Go on and eat. I'll catch up," she reassured.

He shifted his feet a bit before nodding and disappearing out of the doorway. She sat there for a few more minutes before standing and putting her things into her bag. As she made her way out of the classroom she couldn't help but think about what the hell Malfoy's problem was.

"Why so down, Mudblood?"

She let out a shriek of surprise upon seeing Malfoy leaning against the wall beside the door. His arms were crossed, and his head was tilted to the side as he stared at her with those piercing eyes.

"Wh-what are you doing here?" she demanded.

She tried to ignore how her heart was currently going a mile a minute. Had he waited for her? Had she really been better off if she'd just left class with everyone else? He didn't answer her for a while, and the way he stared at her unnerved her a bit.

"I was told to meet someone outside of Snape's class during lunch," he finally answered as he raked his eyes over her figure.

She unconsciously took a step back, to which he followed before shoving his hands into his pocket.

"What's wrong, Mudblood? You're not afraid of me are you?" he mocked, darkness creeping into his tone.

If he had asked her this question a year ago, the answer would have been an automatic no. Maybe even with an expletive thrown in, but now… She was sure her answer would be yes. This wasn't the same Malfoy they had all grown used to. The Malfoy standing in front of her was someone completely different, not only in appearance, but in attitude as well.

She leaned back a bit as it finally registered how tall he had gotten. His school shirt fit snug over his muscles, and she briefly wondered what exactly it was that he did to obtain those muscles. His hair fell

into his face and his eyes almost seemed to glow in comparison to his fair hair and skin. She couldn't help but think that this is what angels must look like, but as soon as she thought that she immediately remembered something about Lucifer being one of the most beautiful angels of all.

Everything about this Malfoy screamed dangerous. He had a dark aura about him that would make anyone second guess challenging him, including her, she was reluctant to admit. She found herself absentmindedly glancing at his forearm only to be disappointed to find the skin bare. He followed her gaze before he smirked. He took a few more steps forward, which she mirrored before her back hit the wall.

"Looking for something?"

"No."

"You're a filthy liar, Granger," he hissed as he leaned his hands onto the wall, effectively trapping her.

She couldn't lean more into the wall if she tried. He was so close to her that she could smell him, and he smelled like a mixture of spice, menthol, and cedar wood. It was a very dangerous and tempting combination to be around. She couldn't do anything but stare at him as he leaned towards her with that God awful sneer plastered onto his face.

"I don't like liars, Mudblood."

"And I don't too much care for you either," she snapped.

He simply smirked before tilting his head towards the hall as the sound of approaching footsteps got louder. Her eyes widened in alarm, hoping that it wasn't one of her friends coming back to check on her. She was certain that Malfoy wouldn't move, and she didn't even want to begin explaining the compromising position that she currently found herself in.

"Draco, come on."

She glanced over his shoulder to see Blaise Zabini and Theodore Nott standing at the end of the hall, Nott looking a bit uncomfortable while Zabini simply smirked. Draco turned back to face her with an unreadable expression on his face before raking his eyes over her… again.

"Looks like you got lucky, Mudblood. Until next time," he said with a sneer before following after his friends.

She stood there for a few minutes, in shock, before finally getting the courage to make her way to what was left of lunch.

"He's obviously in desperate need of a hobby, and it looks like he's found one in messing with you," Ginny explained as she flopped onto Hermione's bed.

"Merlin, I hope not. I have better things to worry about than some annoying boy who's hell bent on ruining my life."

"I'd say he's hardly a *boy* anymore. Wouldn't you agree," Ginny asked with a smirk.

Hermione rolled her eyes in disgust, but couldn't help but to mentally agree, Malfoy was far from a boy. She'd never really noticed his looks before, but the few times she did she couldn't help but to remember her revulsion at all the hair products he used and his scrawny figure. That wasn't the case anymore.

"...and I'd say you're hardly that same insecure little girl anymore."

"What has that got to do with anything?" Hermione asked in confusion.

Ginny rolled over onto her stomach while twirling her wand in between her fingers.

"Maybe he just wants a nice shag from you," Ginny reasoned with a shrug.

Hermione was tempted to throw something at the beautiful redhead.

"By calling me Mudblood and scaring me half to death? Oh, yeah, he's a real charmer, Ginny."

"Maybe that's his idea of foreplay," Ginny responded as she wiggled her eyebrows.

Hermione threw a pillow at her, causing her to laugh.

"You're thoroughly enjoying this aren't you?"

"Just a bit," Ginny answered.

"Are you forgetting the part where he's a suspected Death Eater?"

"Oh, please. This is Malfoy we're talking about. That's rubbish, and you know it."

"Maybe," Hermione murmured.

Ginny sat up onto her knees before looking at her best friend in confusion.

"What do you mean?" Ginny questioned.

Hermione shook her head in thought.

"He's different this year, Ginny. There's something about him that… that makes me uneasy. Something about him that almost makes me think that he could be a Death Eater."

Ginny stared at her for a bit before scooting back to lean against the headboard beside her.

"Have you told Harry?"

"And plant more ideas into his head? Harry's got enough on his plate. I don't want him to become fully invested in this when it might just all be in my head."

"And if it's not? All in your head…"

Hermione shrugged.

"I don't know, but I do know that it can't end well for anybody."

Draco rolled onto his back, then glanced at the panting girl beside him before resting his eyes on his ceiling in exasperation.

"And just what…do you think you are doing?" he drawled.

The pretty brunette looked at him in confusion.

"I…well I thought-"

"Thought what? That'd I'd actually let you sleep here," he sneered as he turned to face her.

The green eyed girl was silent as she continued to lay there and stare at him like a fish out of water. He could see that her eyes were becoming glossy. Merlin, she was going to start crying. He shouldn't have been surprised, but that still didn't stop him from mentally sighing.

"Yes," she quietly answered.

He snorted before rolling out of bed, naked as the day he was born, before beginning to search for his pants. There was no hope for his boxers. He mentally made a note to never sleep with this girl again. Of course, that would be much easier to do if he could actually remember her name. *Think* ...

"Listen…Violet-"

" *Viola* ," she snapped.

At least I was close , he thought with a shrug.

"I'm pretty sure all of your pathetic friends have gossiped all about me, so you know how this works."

"I-"

"No, wait. Don't tell me, you thought that you'd be different. You figured that you were much better than any of the others, especially your friends, so why wouldn't I let you sleep over instead of kicking you out like some common slag," Draco commented wryly as he slipped his arms through the sleeves of his shirt.

He could hear her shuffling behind him, shuffling and sniffling. He rolled his eyes as he heard the door slam shut. *Another one bites the dust* , he thought.

He tilted his head as he heard his door open and close again.

"They always come out crying. What the hell are you doing in here, Draco? Abusing them?" Blaise questioned.

"Just their self-esteem," Draco commented as he buttoned up his shirt, leaving the first three undone.

"Well, that can't be good for business," Theo teased.

"They always come back. I'm not worried…"

"Shouldn't you be working on the cabinet? Instead of shagging Merlin knows who...," Blaise suggested as he sat on the edge of his bed, hands shoved into pockets.

His eye almost twitched as he thought about his task. It was a difficult task, no doubt about that, but it wasn't anything that he couldn't handle. Despite what others wanted to believe.

"No. I know exactly what I'm doing," he answered.

"You don't want to finish this as soon as possible? You're just giving people more reasons to doubt you," Theo asked.

Draco stood up straight before turning to face them with narrowed eyes while he adjusted his sleeves.

"Who's doubting?" he demanded.

"The usual; Crabbe, Dolohov and the like. The ones who are hoping that you fail because they're worried about all of the time you've been spending with their precious Dark Lord," Blaise dryly answered as he examined his sleeve.

"You're his new favorite," Theo cooed.

"Favorite or not, I'm not doing this for Voldemort, I'm doing this for *me* , and my family. He knows that..."

It was silent for a bit as Blaise stared at him in wonder before he suddenly lifted an eyebrow at Draco.

"That's why you're dragging this out... It's about her," Blaise reasoned.

"Yes…," Draco replied quietly as he thought about a certain curly haired Gryffindor.

He had spent weeks thinking about the night his task would finally come to fruition. He wouldn't dare be able to return, and Granger had been the star in every one of his fantasies since fourth year. The curiosity and desire had never waned over the years, almost becoming too much for him.

Theo stared at Draco before he too smirked, accompanied by a chuckle.

"You're mental if you think she's going to willingly go anywhere with you. Especially after you complete your task," Theo said.

"Well, it's a good thing that I have no qualms about taking what I want then," he commented.

"Do you plan on killing her friends in the process? They're never going to let you just walk out of here with her," Blaise added.

"I'll kill whoever I have to kill. Besides, I'm sure we can all agree that the world would be a much better place without Weasley," Draco hissed.

"Oh, I'm not arguing with that. I just don't think that this is going to be as easy as you think it's going to be…," Blaise retorted.

Draco frowned at Blaise as he let his words sink in. No, he wasn't expecting it to be easy but then again he was sure it wasn't going to be as difficult as they were making it out to be. Either way, it didn't matter. At the end of this year he was leaving Hogwarts with the mudblood either tucked into his side or thrown over his shoulder.

Let me know what you think and don't forget to review.

Chapter 2

It was completely silent in the library, which Hermione was very thankful for, but then again it was pretty late, and she was sure that even Madam Pince had left. The library was practically her second dorm, so she trusted Hermione to lock it up once she was done. She was having trouble sleeping, and she'd be lying if she said that she had no idea as to why. It seemed that every time she closed her eyes she couldn't help but to picture a much grayer pair that had the ability to stare into her very soul. Draco Malfoy was an enigma, and that was very foreign to her.

He'd always been predictable and easy to scare, not so much anymore. She briefly wondered what had happened to change him, because one doesn't simply change like *that* overnight. There was always a reason. She wondered if it was because of his father's arrest before shaking her head at the thought. While Malfoy may have strived to be like his father once, she could tell that they weren't very close, but then again… She wasn't a part of the Malfoy household, so how was she to know.

Why am I even thinking about him , she thought. That was a very good question. Malfoy was a tosser who was always hell bent on making her and her friends' lives hell. She should be pretending like he doesn't even exist. She whipped her head around to peer into the darkness as she thought that she'd heard a noise. She gently shut her book before standing up.

"Hello?"

She was certain that she'd heard someone. She set her book onto the table beside her lantern before cautiously walking down the aisle. She couldn't see a damn thing. She pulled out her wand.

"Lumos," she whispered.

She took a few more steps forward before her shoulders sagged, the tension immediately leaving them upon not seeing anybody. She blew out a breath and spun around only to shriek in fright.

"Bloody hell, Hermione. You've got some lungs on you," Cormac complained as he removed his hands from his ears.

"You scared me. What are you doing here?" she gasped out.

He sheepishly grinned as he scratched the back of his head.

"Um…well, you see, I kind of have an assignment that's due the day after tomorrow, and I wanted to ask you in advance for help."

She stared at him for a bit as she leaned against the bookshelf before nodding.

"Okay, but did you have to do that *now* ?"

"Your friends told me where to find you…and I didn't want to come to you the day before it was due so…," he trailed off.

She nodded in agreement at his reasoning, even though her heart was still beating like crazy.

"Okay, meet me here tomorrow during lunch and dinner then," she sighed.

A grin broke out over his face.

"I'll make it up to you, promise," he stated.

"There's really no need for that-"

"No, really. I'll take you to the next Hogsmeade trip," he insisted, proud of himself, and before she could reply he had walked away.

She stared after him, wondering if she'd just been conned into a date. *With McLaggen* , she thought with a frown. A fleeting thought passed her mind that there wasn't really an assignment he needed assistance on. She walked back to her table to get her book only to find it missing. Her brows furrowed in confusion. She didn't remember putting it back on the shelf.

"Missing something?"

She spun around to face Malfoy who was leaning against the bookshelf behind her, her book gripped tightly in his hand. She narrowed her eyes at him.

"Have you been here the whole time?" she demanded.

His only reply was a shrug before he flipped through the pages of the book.

"Honestly, how can you be entertained by such rubbish," he chided.

"If you think it's such rubbish then why do you even have it," she snapped, offended

"Simply trying to pick your brain a bit, get a feel for you so to speak," he lazily replied.

"I'd ask why but I suddenly remembered that I don't particularly care. Why are you here? Surely it's not solely for the purpose of trying to understand me."

"Believe it or not, Mudblood, you aren't the only one who has trouble sleeping," he answered.

She was tempted to ask him to elaborate on that, but decided that, once again, she didn't care. She sighed before holding her hand out.

"I'd appreciate it if I could have my book back."

"I bet you would. Unfortunately for you, I think I'll hold onto it for a while," he drawled with a smirk as he tucked it into his robes.

She desperately wanted to stomp her foot against the floor like a child with a temper tantrum, but decided against it.

"Dammit, Malfoy. Look, whatever game you're playing at, whatever bet you've made with your friends-"

"Bet? You think I'd participate in something as completely juvenile as a *bet* ? Over you, no less," he hissed as he began to walk towards her.

She found herself gripping her wand tighter as she backed to the other side of the table, her eyes on him the entire time. Her back connected with a bookshelf, and she found herself sliding along it, away from him.

"I don't participate in such childish games, Mudblood," he sneered.

In one stride he was upon her, shoving her book into her hands while also pinning her against the bookshelf with his body. She tried to wriggle her hands from in between their bodies, but he simply shoved her into the bookshelf even more. She gasped as he leaned down until his nose was barely brushing against hers.

"When I play…I play for keeps," he purred into her face.

She closed her eyes as the smell of spice and cedar wood cascaded over her.

"Do well to remember that."

And with that he was gone, leaving her alone in the dark with nothing but her fear and confusion for comfort.

Hermione finished adjusting her tie as she waited for Ginny to finally settle down. She was still in a bad mood because of what took place the other night, Ginny's antics weren't helping.

"Are you done?" Hermione asked in exasperation.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Ginny chuckled.

"Somehow, I doubt that," she grumbled.

"Can you blame me? Cormac has got to be the most arrogant narcissistic boy to have ever stepped foot into Hogwarts, and somehow you end up saying yes to him taking you to Hogsmeade."

"For the last time, I didn't say yes. As a matter of fact he didn't even really ask. He practically told me that we were going to Hogsmeade together, the nerve of him. Can you believe that?"

"As a matter of fact, I can. This *is* Cormac we're talking about," Ginny responded.

Hermione groaned as she dropped her face into her hands. She looked up as she felt a tug on her arm.

"Come on, let's go get some breakfast. That'll make you feel better," Ginny suggested as she tugged her downstairs.

Hermione frowned as they made their way out of the common room. Maybe she did need some food in her. She needed something, what with Malfoy's odd and creepy behavior towards her. She didn't want

to admit just how uncomfortable he made her. Ginny stopped to look at her just as they walked into the Great Hall.

"Honestly, Hermione, do cheer up. It's just one day at Hogsmeade. If I had known you'd be so bent out of shape over it I wouldn't have teased you.

Hermione opened her mouth to protest that she wasn't upset over Cormac when she was rudely interrupted as a broad and muscular body practically bulldozed into her shoulder from behind. She looked up in time to see Malfoy sneer at her over his shoulder. Blaise and Nott kept on walking towards their table.

"Watch it, Granger," he hissed.

She didn't know what had come over her but she would be damned if she let him get away with something like this again. She wouldn't be Hermione Granger if she did. She took a step forward as he began to walk away from her.

"Watch what? *You* bumped into me," she called after him.

She could hear the chatter amongst the nearby tables drastically lessen as several students turned to look at them with wide eyes. She heard Ginny's quiet intake of breath behind her as Malfoy stopped and slowly spun around to face her with an unreadable expression.

" *What* did you just say to me…Mudblood?"

She took several steps forward until she was standing directly in front of him. She didn't know where this sudden courage had come from, but who was she to question it. She wasn't put into Gryffindor for nothing. She tried to ignore how the noise had considerably lessened now, far too engrossed in the confrontation unfolding before them.

"I said, *you* bumped into *me* . Are you not only blind but hard of hearing as well?" she snapped.

Malfoy narrowed his eyes and took a step forward. They were almost touching now. Malfoy suddenly grinned. It wasn't a nice happy-go-lucky grin either. It was a sinister grin, one filled with malice. The type of grin you'd see on a villain in a movie. She was briefly reminded of The Joker, a villain from the muggle franchise, Batman. He let out a humorless chuckle as he reached up to finger one of her ringlets.

"My, my, my… The kitten has claws, after all. I do find that interesting because that certainly wasn't the case the other night," he purred.

Her eyes widened and her heart lurched as students on the ends of the tables reacted to the insinuation. Unfortunately for her, two of her best friends had decided to sit closer to the doors today. She cringed as she felt their eyes staring holes into her back.

"All the same, you were right. My mistake, Granger," he whispered as he raked his eyes over her before heading back to his table.

She blew out a breath as the hall filled with its usual volume of chatter, no doubt, about her and Malfoy. She felt Ginny's hand on her shoulder.

"Hermione…what the *hell* was that about?"

"Yes, Hermione. What the bloody hell was that about?" a familiar voice hissed.

She turned and walked out of the hall without a second glance towards her friends.

"Hermione!"

"It was nothing, okay," she huffed as she spun around to face them.

Ron was livid, no surprise there, but for once, Harry's expression matched his. She shouldn't have been too surprised. After all, he was convinced that Malfoy was a Death Eater and said suspected Death Eater had just let everyone believe that they were having some illicit affair.

" *That* was your version of nothing? It sure as hell didn't look like nothing. What the hell did he mean by the 'other night'?" Harry demanded.

"Harry, just drop it," she groaned.

" **No** . I will not *drop it* . Did you and him-"

"No," she interrupted with a glare, fully knowing what he was about to ask.

His face softened a bit as he looked her over.

"Did he…he didn't do anything to you, did he?" he frantically asked, on the verge of a panic attack.

"No, Harry. He was just being his usual self the other night in the library, all he did was catch me off guard and manage to startle me a bit."

"He was far too familiar with you for my liking," Ron snapped.

She rolled her eyes at him before looking at Ginny. She seemed to be the only one aside from her with some common sense, and from the expression that she was giving Hermione, she could tell that she was thinking the same thing.

"Ron's right, Hermione."

She and Ginny both looked at Harry in disbelief.

"You're joking right?"

Harry frowned as he took a step towards her.

"No, I'm not. I don't trust Malfoy one bit, and he seemed far too interested in you back there."

She let out a chuckle of disbelief before crossing her arms over her chest.

"Harry, in case it somehow escaped your attention, I did challenge him, deliberately too. Did you really expect him to just ignore me? With the entire hall watching? Clearly you don't know Malfoy as well as you think you do," she explained.

"No, Hermione. It was more than that. I didn't like the way he was looking at you-"

"And how was he looking at me, Harry? Like he wanted to murder me? Like he wanted to lift his wand to the sky and yell 'Morsmordre' and have Voldemort himself come down here and kill me?" she mocked.

"He was looking at you like you were his next meal! He looked like he wanted to devour you whole, and I didn't like it," he snapped furiously, something unfamiliar dancing in his eyes.

"Well in case you haven't noticed, this is Malfoy that we are talking about; Racist Pureblood Extraordinaire. And I am the filthy Mudblood who is the perfect embodiment of everything that he was brought up to hate. So whatever *look* you think you saw, I can assure you that it wasn't genuine. He's *messing* with me. He's probably doing it to get to you, and it's working!"

"Hermione-"

"If it'll make you feel better I'll avoid him at all costs. I won't sit anywhere near him in class, and anytime he walks into a room I'll just leave," she sarcastically offered.

To her surprise he and Ron both seemed to sigh in relief.

"That would make me feel a lot better actually."

She threw up her hands in exasperation as she turned to face Ginny.

"Unbelievable."

"I'm not playing around, Hermione. You may have been joking, but I am entirely serious. *I don't. Trust. Him* ."

She sighed before reluctantly nodding.

"That's all I'm asking for, for you to just be cautious," he said.

With one last lingering look at her he walked back into the hall with Ron close behind. She shook her head in a mixture of disbelief, frustration, and anger.

"Are you coming back to breakfast?" Ginny quietly asked.

Hermione shook her head. She had suddenly lost her appetite.

"Okay. Just so you know, I think the boys are mental."

Hermione let out a laugh.

"I'm glad someone agrees with me."

She had never really liked patrolling much. She wasn't too fond of the dark, and that's all patrolling really was; walking around the castle at night. In this case, it was walking around the castle at night alone. Any other time Hermione would have been a bit fearful but tonight was different. She was using this alone time to her advantage to reflect on recent events, and she came up with a few conclusions. One, Harry was completely obsessed with Draco Malfoy and his Death Eater status.

She didn't trust Malfoy either, but she knew for a fact that Harry's sudden frantic wariness was because he thought Malfoy to be a Dark Lord wannabe. If Malfoy did have some elaborate plan then this was probably it, completely distracting Harry from the important matters at hand, and *boy* , was it working. She had to admit that Malfoy was no longer the same spineless twit they'd all grown up with though. Which brought her to her second conclusion; Malfoy had not only changed in appearance, but in mind as well. He'd upped the ante from his harmless teasing to more mature methods, and she had to admit that she was a bit impressed because whether or not she cared to admit it, he did frighten her a bit.

She suddenly slowed as she noticed a tall figure come out of what she recognized as the Room of Requirement. She quickly hurried her steps as she shined her wand in front of her. Imagine her surprise, and disdain, when her eyes fell on that familiar head of blond hair. Malfoy, clearly now just noticing the light, turned to her in mild surprise before it was quickly covered by a smirk.

"And just what are you up to at this time of night, Malfoy?" she inquired as she stopped in front of him.

"No good," he answered as his smirk grew.

She rolled her eyes. *That* she could believe...

"Uh-huh. I'm sure. I'll be informing one of the Heads of this, so that they can remove points accordingly, seeing as you aren't from my house. I trust that you know your way back to the dungeons," she quipped, suddenly remembering her conversation with Harry.

"What's the matter, Granger? Your boyfriend tell you to stay clear of me?" he mocked as she began to walk away.

She spun around to pin him with a scowl.

"No, actually. I just genuinely despise your very presence."

"I doubt that," he remarked.

She literally felt her left eye twitch as she stalked towards him.

"Let's get one thing straight, Malfoy. I do not wish to participate in whatever game you're playing. If you want to rile Harry up, have at it, just make sure you leave me out of it. Got it?" she hissed.

"The boyfriend must have given you a stern talking to if you're this tense."

"He's not my boyfriend," she snapped as she took another step towards him.

"What's the matter? He didn't please you enough?" he whispered as his hand reached out to rest on her shoulder.

He began to draw lazy circles on her neck with his thumb, and she tried her best to ignore how it made her feel. She would not let him get to her. She looked up at him as his eyes seemed to glow in the darkness.

"I'm going to pretend like you didn't even ask me that."

" *I* could make you forget your own name with all of the pleasure I could bring to you," he purred as he tightly gripped her waist and pulled her closer.

"As if I'd permit you to do any such thing," she said between clenched teeth, trying to ignore the feel of his body against hers.

She let out a pained gasp as he suddenly slammed her against the wall, one hand on her waist and the other plucking her wand from her trembling fingers. Her heart sank as she heard it clatter to the floor behind him. That same hand came up to entangle itself in her hair before he jerked her head back, exposing her neck. She could only wriggle her legs in protest, and she could barely do that, as he leaned his head down to brush his lips against her throat. They

slowly traveled up to her chin before stopping, a hair's width away from her own lips, leaving a scorching trail in their wake. She once again inhaled that dangerous cocktail that was his scent, mind foggy.

"When I'm done with you, I won't need your permission. You'll simply be begging for it."

What he said should not have caused a warm feeling to lowly settle in her stomach. It should have terrified her, which it did, but it should have definitely overpowered the lust she was feeling. What in Godric's name was *wrong* with her? She roughly bucked against him and managed to free one of her hands before roughly pushing against his shoulder.

"You disgust me," she snarled.

Liar , a dark voiced hissed in her head. With that thought she struck his shoulder again and was about try for a third when he caught her wrist in his iron grip. Her other wrist was in his other hand, but that did not stop her from struggling against him.

"What's wrong, *Hermione* ?"

He drawled her name in a seductive tone, and she flinched, not because it frightened her but because she liked it. She liked the way her name seemed to roll off of his tongue like water. That terrified her more than anything.

"Are you afraid because you know I'm telling the truth? Does it frighten you to know that I could, how do you muggles say it, *rock your world* ? I bet my galleons that it's already playing out in that pretty little head of yours. You writhing beneath me in the throes of passion as I-"

"Stop it," she hissed.

"Thrust into you. You beg me for more and I, being a generous lover, am only happy to oblige," he continued as he pulled her away from

the wall only to slam her against it once more for emphasis.

She was not only disgusted with him but with herself as well because everything he was saying was true. What did that say about her? She spit in his face and watched in satisfaction as his expression morphed into one of anger and disgust. He murmured a quick 'Scourgify' before yanking her away from the wall.

"It seems like you need a quick lesson in respecting your superiors," he stated calmly as if he were simply talking about the weather.

"You'll never be superior to me, you vile git!"

She suddenly winced in pain as his grip on her wrists tightened. She tried not to let it show, not to even make a noise, but after a while it was becoming too much. She let out a whimper as she tried to get him to loosen his hold. He emotionlessly stared into her eyes as he began to bend her wrists back in retaliation, causing her to yelp in extreme discomfort before being forced to her knees.

"If I am not your superior…then why are you on your knees before me, love?"

She cursed her traitorous body as a tear escaped down her cheek. Her mind flashed back to her argument with Harry, and she was seriously beginning to doubt that Malfoy was still only messing with her. She nearly cried again in relief as he suddenly let go of her wrists, her now bruised wrists.

He looked down at her in satisfaction before he walked over to where her wand was and picked it up. He absentmindedly twirled it between his fingers as he made his way back over to her position. He squatted down in front of her and held it out for her to take. He watched, transfixed, as she looked up at his hand through the curls that had fallen over her face. He was tempted to wrap one around his finger and give it a gentle tug, but he resisted. She snatched it away from him, and he couldn't help that feeling of pride that washed

over him as he caught a glimpse of the finger prints on her wrist. Those were *his* fingerprints and seeing *his* mark on her left him feeling satisfied. Of course she could always use a glamour charm, knowing her she would, but he would still know. And so would she. This would be their little secret.

How was he so sure that she wouldn't say anything? Simple, this was Hermione that he was talking about. He *knew* her. She wouldn't breathe a word of this to anyone, not even her redheaded sidekick because her pride simply wouldn't let her. She would want to deal with this problem herself, handle him on her own, and that would be her downfall. She wouldn't want the 'Duo of Dunces' to freak out and cause a scene. She would hate that because she, simply, would be right smack in the middle of it. He tilted his head to the side and stood just as she did.

"What? No kiss?," he asked with a pout.

"Fuck. You," she spat.

Careful what you put out into the universe , he thought as he gazed at her. Her eyes were burning with anger, but he could see the lust hidden away behind there. She couldn't fool him, no matter how much she tried.

"Sleep tight. I hope you dream of me," he sweetly stated before walking away.

She would dream of him, he'd make sure of it. He smirked before flicking his wand, easily blocking the nonverbal spell she'd thrown his way. This was going to be so much fun.

0_0 I have nothing to say for my behavior nor Draco's. At least now we see where the title comes from. Review, review, review! They're much appreciated.

Chapter 3

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She cried out once again as his hips came down with a vengeance, effectively pinning her to the bed. She couldn't think straight. He was everywhere, all around her and in her, and Hermione was seeing stars. Her wrists, pinned beside her head by his iron grip, were starting to ache, but she didn't care. She could hardly see a thing in the dark room, but her eyes could easily pin point his eyes from a mile away. He was staring down at her, his eyes a swirling mixture of raw lust and determination. With a mischievous glint in his eye, he suddenly halted his movements, and Hermione nearly moaned in protest. She bucked her hips, trying to create some form of friction, but he simply pressed himself harder against her, preventing any movement from her lower half. He lowered his head so that his lips came in contact with her throat.

"Hermione…"

Her name was but a sweet caress on his lips as the sound seemed to echo throughout the quiet room.

"Who do you belong to?" he questioned, sweetly.

She knew what he wanted, and she would not give it to him, even while in such a vulnerable position.

"No one," she whispered just as sweetly.

He pulled back to look at her, the hunger evident in his gaze, but the determination was winning for the time being.

"Who do you belong to?" he whispered, an underlying edge to his tone.

She simply stared back, refusing to answer, and suddenly his expression twisted into one of fury and frustration. Before she had time to register what was happening, his hand was around her throat, cutting off all airway. His upper lip curled back over his teeth as he leaned down until his nose was pressed against hers.

"You belong to me," he hissed.

She shook her head.

*"Say it! You belong to me! You are **mine** ," he roared.*

"Hermione, Hermione!"

She gasped in fright as her eyes flew open and she struck out as a reflex. Luckily for Ginny Weasley, she also had fast reflexes and was able to dodge the flying fist. They each stared at the other wide eyed, Ginny in caution and Hermione in shock and horror.

"Oh Merlin! I'm sorry, Ginny-"

"It's alright, it's alright-"

"No! I-"

"Hermione," the redhead said her name firmly as she gripped the older girl's shoulder.

Hermione blinked.

"It's okay. Some dream, huh?"

Hermione sighed before running her fingers through her unruly hair. 'Some dream' didn't even cover the half of it. She wished that this dream had been the first but, sadly, it wasn't, and there was no doubt in her mind that it wouldn't be the last. They were more like nightmares, to be honest, all of them starting out differently but eventually ending in a similar fashion to the one before.

"You have no idea."

Ginny didn't respond, instead she just stared at Hermione with a peculiar expression.

"What?" Hermione questioned.

Ginny fidgeted, suddenly uncomfortable.

"You…you said his name…in your sleep," she quietly answered.

"Whose?"

"Malfoy…well, Draco. That's what you called him."

Hermione stared at her in a mixture of confusion and dread.

"I did?"

The redhead nodded.

"I-…that's odd. I didn't dream about him or anything. The foul git must really be getting to me," she lied.

"You can't let him do that, Hermione. He isn't even worth your time, no matter how dashing he is," Ginny added.

"Yeah…"

"Are you okay, though?" Ginny suddenly asked.

"Of course. Why wouldn't I be?" she replied as she looked up at her.

"Hermione, you never sleep in. Even if it is Saturday," Ginny explained slowly.

Hermione eyebrows furrowed as she looked around to notice the dorm room empty.

"Sleep…in? What time is it?"

"It's almost one in the afternoon."

"What?" she exclaimed just before jumping out of bed.

"I wanted to wake you, but…you've just seemed really tired these past few days so…"

Hermione's shoulders sagged as she thought about the reason why. The incident outside of the Room of Requirement the other night had definitely shaken her, there was no point in even lying to herself about that. She absentmindedly rubbed her hands over her wrists. She had avoided Malfoy like the plague, and if she was being honest, she was disappointed in herself. So what if Malfoy wasn't messing with her? So what if he seemed to be serious about whatever the hell it is that he's doing? She was Hermione Granger, and she was going to be damned if she let Malfoy win this battle. She was determined to finish what he'd started.

"Uh…Hermione? Where are you going?" Ginny questioned as she watched her friend quickly throw on some clothes.

Hermione quickly put her hair up.

"I have something that I need to take care of. Don't worry, it won't take long," she stated, determined.

She shifted from foot to foot, as she had been doing for the past few minutes now. She'd found the person she was looking for, but she didn't know how to approach him exactly. She couldn't believe that she was starting to chicken out. Where had all that bravado from earlier gone? Said person suddenly caught her eye and smirked before returning to his conversation with the pretty blonde in front of him. She narrowed her eyes before marching over to him.

"Zabini," she interrupted.

The half Italian boy glanced at her before returning his attention back to the blonde and giving a jerk of his head. The other girl threw a glare Hermione's way before walking off.

"How might I help you, Granger?" he asked with a smirk.

"I need Slytherin's password."

He looked at her in mild surprise.

"Why…?"

"...because I need to speak with Malfoy."

"Oh, really?" he asked with a leer.

She rolled her eyes with a huff before crossing her arms over her chest.

"Yes, really. Are you going to give it to me or not?"

He seemed to think about it for a bit.

"Depends. What do you need to talk to Malfoy about?"

"That doesn't concern you."

He shrugged before standing up.

"He'll tell me anyway," he said as he walked past her.

She cautiously followed, ignoring the curious looks that they were receiving from students that they passed. The walk to the Slytherin dorms was quiet. Although, Zabini did seem to look over his shoulder at her with a smirk from time to time. She couldn't help but to frown back at him every time he did. They had finally reached the entrance after what seemed like forever when walking through the dungeons. It was dark, cold, and all around creepy. Fitting for Slytherin she supposed.

"Parselmouth."

The stone wall moved to reveal a dimly lit passage. She followed him inside and jumped a bit when the wall shut behind them. The walk was fairly short, fortunately, and it wasn't long before they had reached the Common Room. The Common Room was basically a dungeon with green lamps and chairs. The light in the room gave off a green tinge which she knew was because of the lake. All of the furniture was either dark green or black with the exception of the wooden cupboards. It was definitely spacious and impressive, but it was also cold and had a sinister atmosphere. There were a few students around who didn't bother to hide their distaste at her being there. Nor did they bother to hide their surprise and curiosity as she followed Zabini through the door that she guessed was the boys' dormitories.

"I'm guessing you don't bring girls through here often?"

"Oh, no, I definitely do. I just don't usually bring Gryffindor muggleborns, namely those who go by Hermione Granger."

She rolled her eyes as they finally stopped in front of a door, the last door. She found herself rubbing her wrists again as he barged inside.

"I've got a present for you, Draco," Zabini said in amusement as he blocked her view.

"Probably nothing I haven't had before," was Malfoy's dry reply.

She was getting a bit impatient.

"Oh, I seriously doubt that," Zabini said just before she shoved her way past him and into the room.

Malfoy looked genuinely surprised before a smirk slowly crept over his face. They stared at each other, mostly glaring on her part, as he slid into a sitting position on the edge of his bed. She shouldn't have been surprised that he had a dorm room all to himself, it was probably bought in advance. She'd almost forgotten about the other Slytherin who was watching in silence.

"Thank you, Zabini but you may go now."

She watched as he raised an eyebrow at Malfoy.

"You heard the lady," Malfoy said with a smirk as he gestured to the door.

Zabini simply chuckled before exiting, closing the door behind him. Not two seconds after the door had closed, Hermione had already made her way over to the blonde before promptly striking him across the face. She continued to hit at him, again and again, and much to her dismay, he either blocked or dodged almost every one.

"You foul *loathsome* -"

"Are you done," he said in amusement as he halted her attacks by wrapping his arms around her.

" **Let go of me** -"

"Silly me. I thought that you came back for more," he dryly replied as he let his arms drop to his sides.

She glared at him as she pointed her wand at his neck. She was panting, she couldn't remember a time when she was so angry.

"...and just what are you going to do with that? Kill me?" he asked as he glanced down at her wand.

"I have no intentions of killing you," she snapped.

Hexing him, on the other hand, didn't sound like such a bad idea, but then she immediately remembered how he easily blocked her nonverbal spell that night. He suddenly stood, a sinister smirk perfectly in place, causing her to raise her wand.

"You probably should…kill me, I mean...," he started as he walked towards her, a playful smirk on his lips.

"And why is that," she asked, mimicking his every step in the opposite direction.

"...because death…would be the only thing that will stop me…from getting what I want," his reply was dark and his face, suddenly serious.

He suddenly stopped walking, and she wasn't sure why until she glanced behind her. She wasn't too far from the door. She turned back around to face him before tightening her grip on her wand.

"...and that would be?" she shakily asked.

He didn't immediately reply, instead he examined her from underneath his lashes.

"That's for me to know and you to dot, dot, dot," he said in amusement.

She was done playing games with him.

"Look, Malfoy-"

"Oh, I think we're far past the last name basis, don't you? After that wonderful night we had-"

"Wonderful! Wonderful, he says! You are a *disgusting troll* . You- you *violated* me. You practically molested me and just about *broke* my wrists," she snapped.

"Broke? I think that's a bit melodramatic, don't you?" he incredulously asked.

"I have half a mind to go straight to Dumbledore," she hissed.

"But we both know that you won't."

Her eyes widened as she opened and closed her mouth.

"I…. Who are you to tell me what I will and won't do? I could go to him. As a matter of fact, I just might. I'm very tempted to have you expelled."

He smirked before taking another step towards her, one she did not mimic. His smirk only seemed to grow as she stood her ground.

"And why is that, love? Is it so that you won't be tempted by the mere thought of me? Out of sight out of mind, is that it? You figure, if I'm gone then you won't have a reason to feel awful about the way I make you feel. You won't feel guilty for the thoughts that would make your friends turn their backs on you. You won't keep imagining all of the fun that we could have together. You won't keep dreaming about me…"

Her eyes snapped up to meet his with a horrified, accusing stare. She blinked before looking away, in disgust or shame, she couldn't tell. It was probably both because even though she loathed to admit it to herself, everything that he was saying was true. He was a vulgar and demented tosser but she still found herself drawn to him, something that she was determined to remedy.

"You can't lie to yourself forever, Hermione," he whispered as he reached towards her face.

Her eyes were on him again as she smacked his hand away.

"Stop pretending that you know anything about me because you don't. You disgust me, Malfoy."

Her voice shook, and she cursed herself for it. To make matters worse, he didn't even reply. He just smirked before turning around and walking away from her.

"Is that all you came for?"

"I stopped by to tell you to leave me alone. I mean it, Malfoy. I want you to stay away from me."

"Okay," he said with a shrug.

"I'm serious!"

His only reply was a crooked smile. She glared at him one last time before leaving, slamming the door behind her.

"Harry-"

"Who would lie about that? No one would even believe it so it *has* to be true!"

"Look! Here she comes. Just ask her yourself…"

She slowed as she got to where they were sitting, at the far end of the table away from everyone else. She had a brief idea of what it was that they were discussing, but she hoped she was wrong.

"Hey, Ginny…Harry, Ron," she greeted as she sat down beside her best friend.

"Hey, Hermione."

Ron only glared at her while Harry just stared.

"Um…Harry wanted to ask you something, something important," Ginny started with a pointed look at said boy.

Harry sighed before leaning in.

"Some Slytherins…well, I know that it can't possibly be true, but some Slytherins were saying that they saw you going into the boys' dorms with…Blaise Zabini," he said with a clenched jaw.

"So what is it that you're asking me because that wasn't really a question," she nervously whispered.

"Are you skulking around with that dark haired snake?" Ron hissed.

She blinked, trying to decide whether or not to lie. If she confirmed it she would just have to come up with a lie anyway as to why because she surely couldn't go down the Malfoy road. Then they'd yell at her and tell her about how dangerous that was. But if she denied it, blamed it on some bored student, then all would be well. Unless, of course, she were to eventually be caught in that lie.

"Hermione?"

Harry's voice, dripping with a mixture of fear and concern, brought her out of her musings.

"Of course not. To be honest, I'm a little hurt to think that you'd even believe something so ridiculous," she incredulously answered.

Both Harry and Ron seemed to sigh in relief.

"Sorry," Ron mumbled.

"It's ok," she quietly replied.

"No, it's not. You're our friend, so we should know you better than that. We should have known that you'd never be caught dead in the dungeons, let alone going into the boys' dormitory with Zabini," Harry added remorsefully.

"Harry, it's alright. It's not your fault that some bored student with no life decided that they were going to try and ruin mine today."

She rested her hand over his on top of the table as she tilted her head at him.

"Okay?"

He nodded before glancing at their hands and smiling at her. She reached for her fork before glancing up to see Ron frowning at Harry's hand, where hers just was, before flicking his eyes up to her. She looked at him in question, but he merely looked at his food before starting to eat. She frowned, wondering what that was all about. She was quiet throughout the rest of dinner, too engrossed in her own thoughts. She felt incredibly guilty about lying to her friends but she felt even worse after seeing how bad they felt, especially Harry. She'd have to be more careful from now on. Then again, after her talk with Malfoy, she was sure that there wouldn't be a need to be careful.

She desperately hoped that he understood just how serious she was and that he would leave her alone. Ginny was right; the boy was bored and in desperate need of a hobby, so she was sure that he'd just leave her alone. *After all, there isn't anything too special about me* , she thought with a small shake of her head. Ever since she was a child, she always considered herself to be quite plain, and she was sure that everyone else's thoughts were no different. Granted, in the last few years or so she'd grown into a less hideous looking young lady, at least in her mind, but it was nothing spectacular.

She was shocked to find herself feeling a bit disappointed at the idea of Malfoy leaving her alone. Was she *that* desperate for attention from the opposite sex? She scoffed at her sudden train of thought, briefly catching the attention of Harry. She was Hermione Granger, she didn't need some boy to validate her purpose in life, especially some boy like Malfoy. Still, she did find herself often wondering what it would be like to be in the place of someone like Lavender Brown or even one of the Greengrass sisters. There were days when she

longed to be a normal witch that boys sought after, a witch that didn't have to worry about keeping her best friend alive and trying to save the world. There were those days when she wished that her biggest worry was not finding a top to match her shoes.

She set her fork down, suddenly not hungry, before resting her chin on her hand. Was she finally going through that phase that every other girl in her grade had already gone through? That phase where she was actually starting to care about boys and how they viewed her. *Too bloody late for that* , she thought.

She let out a sigh and was just about to pick up her fork again when a sudden change in the atmosphere caught her attention. She lifted her eyes just in time to see Harry turn back around with a furious expression on his face.

"Harry? What is it?" she asked in concern.

She watched as the skin around his knuckles grew taut as his hand clenched around his fork.

"Harry," she said more firmly, catching the attention of Ginny and Ron.

"Malfoy. He's staring at you," he said with clenched teeth.

Ginny looked up, and Ron spun around just as all of the color seemed to have drained from her face.

"I doubt that-"

"No, Harry's right," Ginny said quietly.

Hermione finally lifted her eyes to the Slytherin table to find that Harry was indeed right; Draco Malfoy was staring right at her with that stupid smirk. She averted her eyes just as Harry spoke.

"Did he bother you again?" he demanded.

"No, no. I don't know what his issue is but, it's just that; *his issue* . Just ignore him," she quickly replied.

She sighed in relief as her friends reluctantly followed her lead in just ignoring him. For her, however, she wished that it was that easy.

"Hermione, can I talk to you about something?"

She lifted her head from her parchment to meet Harry's gaze. He looked determined, eyebrows furrowed with apprehension. She leaned back into the sofa before setting her homework aside. It was getting late, and they were the only ones who remained in the common room.

"Of course. What's wrong?"

He sighed as he ran his fingers through his unruly hair before sitting beside her.

"What I'm about to ask of you is…insane and contradictory. Especially since I've made it pretty clear how I feel about Malfoy… but I'm out of options."

"Oh, Harry," she groaned in protest as she buried her face in her hands.

She could already see where this was going. She could almost hear the cogs working in his brain as this played out in his head.

"Just…hear me out, please," he pleaded.

She lifted her face a fraction of an inch in order to look at him.

"It's obvious that Malfoy has taken an interest in you. Whether it's because he's bored or trying to throw me off, I don't know. I'm thinking that we could use this to our advantage. You could get close to him…try and figure some things out."

She was quiet for some time. Not only did she think this wasn't going to work, Malfoy was smarter than they gave him credit for, but she was trying to avoid him like the plague. She'd just threatened him to leave her alone, so he would definitely be skeptical if she suddenly had a change of heart. She really didn't want to do this, but she couldn't exactly refuse. As far as Harry knew, she didn't have any concrete reasoning or proof of Malfoy being dangerous.

"I thought that you didn't trust him, Harry…"

"I don't! But…I trust you, Hermione. I probably trust you as much as I trust Dumbledore, maybe more. After that argument that we had outside of the Great Hall the other day, I got to thinking. You're a big girl, and as protective as I am of you I do have to keep reminding myself that you can take care of yourself. No matter how much I wish I could do it for you," he whispered.

She let out a sigh as Harry played with a stray curl. If only he knew just how much she couldn't take care of herself. If he knew of what had happened the other night, Malfoy would probably be dead by now. She looked at Harry as he gazed at her with an unfamiliar expression before finally nodding.

"Okay, I'll do it. But you owe me, Potter," she said as she returned her attention to her homework.

She looked back up at him when he didn't reply.

"What?" she asked in response to his frown.

He shook his head.

"It's nothing…"

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She sunk into the water with a heavy sigh. The prefect's bathroom was a heavenly place to take a bath, they'd said and they weren't wrong. She could feel her body relaxing, and she desperately wished

that she could just wash all of her problems away. Malfoy was a foul git, albeit a rather handsome one, who was determined to make her life hell. She'd concocted this brilliant plan to just simply avoid him, make him leave her alone. She felt like that would have worked, but Harry just had to come through and ruin that.

He wanted her to get close to him! That was the exact opposite of what she wanted to do. Perhaps her biggest problem of all was that Malfoy had been right. She had hoped that avoiding him would simply make her attraction to him go away, and now that Harry wanted her to get close and personal with him…. She shook her head.

She focused on her surroundings, thinking she'd heard a noise, but she'd locked the door, so there was no chance of someone coming in. Even if they did, she'd definitely hear them. She closed her eyes again. She needed to figure something out. How was she supposed to get closer to Malfoy while also fighting her attraction to him?

Her eyes flew open and she gasped in fright when someone grabbed her leg. She kicked out as she reached for her wand, but faltered and let out a shriek when she felt a sharp pain on the inside of her thigh. She reached for her wand again, and as soon as her fingers brushed the wood, she was dragged under. Her movements were far too frantic and jerky to see anything, but she did notice a muscular fair skinned arm.

She and the other person finally resurfaced. She spluttered as she was gently shoved into the side of the tub. It took her a few blinks for her vision to clear and her eyes to refocus on what was in front of her. When she did, she felt as if her heart was going to jump out of her chest. She found herself shrinking away as he gazed at her through hooded eyes. She watched as his eyes roamed over her face and down to her neck, stopping at the bubbles that hid the rest of her body from view. She swallowed before finally finding her voice.

"Have you lost your mind?" she whispered.

The corner of his mouth lifted into a smirk.

"Maybe," he huskily whispered.

She noticed, with horror, that his lips had a light stain of red on them. She remembered the pain she'd felt on her thigh before her eyes widened.

"Did you *bite me?* " she hissed.

"It's called foreplay, Granger."

She swung her hand out to slap him, but he easily caught it.

"I like it rough, but I will only let you go so far," he teased.

"You need to leave. You aren't even a prefect!"

"So?" he murmured against her hand, eyebrow raised,

Her breathing was becoming erratic as he trailed his nose down her for arm.

"What are you doing?" she asked, panicked.

"I'm not sure. I saw you come in here and I just went with it. I figured it'd be hot and exciting."

"I'm not going to have sex with you," she snapped.

He suddenly leaned in, she could feel his lips brush against the shell of her ear, and she shuddered.

"But it'd be fun," he quietly dragged the word out. "Not to mention erotic as hell. Can you imagine how *exhilarating* that would be? Especially knowing that someone could walk in at any time and catch us in the act."

She laid her hand on his chest to push him away, but it seemed that he had other ideas. He held her hand in place with his as he ran the tip of his nose along her shoulder. She closed her eyes, this was too much. He was making her feel things that she didn't want to feel. She suddenly shoved past him to the other side of the tub.

"Aw, I've scared her off."

"I'm finished with my bath," she snapped.

She turned around as she heard water splash behind her just in time to see Malfoy glide out of the tub. She sucked in a breath through her lips as she stared at him. It wasn't fair that someone so horrible could look that good. She had been right about his muscles. He was lean, but toned, not overly so, but enough to warrant worry for whomever was opposing him. She watched, transfixed, as droplets of water cascaded into the curve of his back and down his legs, making his skin glisten, like it was covered in crystals. Hermione exhaled.

She averted her eyes just as he turned around with that annoying smirk of his. She did look up when he made his way over to her bathrobe, fully clothed now, and she watched in horror as he picked it up.

"Hey! That's mine," she exclaimed.

He feigned surprise.

"Is it? Well I guess you better come and get it then."

Her eyes widened as he held it up. No one had ever seen her naked before, aside from her parents, but she was only a child then. There was no way that she was getting out. On the other hand, Harry did want her to get closer to him but she was positive that this wasn't what he meant. However, if she was going to succeed, that meant that she had to beat Malfoy at his own game. With a clenched jaw, she pulled herself out of the tub and made her way over to him. She

wasn't sure how confident she looked on the outside, but on the inside she was practically vibrating.

Draco's lips parted. He was at a loss for words as she climbed out of the bath. Every fiber of his being was screaming at him to go to her, claim her in every way a woman should be claimed. Instead, he simply clenched his teeth together as she made her way over to him. He hardly noticed her snatching the article of clothing out of his frozen hands, his attention far too engrossed on the way the water slid down every curve and ridge on her figure.

He had to admit that he was shocked that she'd gotten out. He had expected her to cower in there for quite some time. He frowned as the offending item was wrapped around her, hiding her from him. But the thin robe still clung to her shape like a second skin, and what a wonderful shape it was. Somehow, the girl in front of him had grown into a woman, a vixen and he didn't know how he hadn't noticed. She was mesmerizing, fit for no one else but himself. They would be unstoppable together.

He smirked as she shoved her way past him before holding up a possession of hers.

"Aren't you forgetting something?"

He watched in amusement as she spun around, her curls flying, to face him with a frown. He took delight in the way her lips parted in a silent gasp.

"Give me my wand," she snarled.

He only chuckled.

"I'm serious."

"Fine. Kiss me then," he replied with a shrug.

It seemed that she wasn't expecting that response because she actually looked taken back.

"What?" she whispered.

He suddenly grew serious as he took a step towards her.

"Kiss me," he huskily answered in a dark tone.

His eyes were glued on her lips as she contemplated what she would do. He wanted to taste her, and he knew that she would let him, it was her *wand* for crying out loud. It was like a limb to wizards and witches.

"You'll give it back?" she nervously asked after a few minutes.

"Yes," he answered with a smile.

Liar .

He grinned in anticipation as she walked towards him. She looked up at him with those big brown eyes, before he swooped down and claimed her mouth with his own. He couldn't stop himself from moaning into her lips even if he wanted to. She tasted better than anything he could have imagined. He wasn't sure how he would be able to kiss another girl without comparing her to the perfection that was Hermione Granger.

Her lips felt like silk, and she tasted like honey. Her own mouth moved expertly against his, and he groaned against her skin. One of his hands came up to rest on her neck, massaging the skin there while the other dug into the dip of her spine, yanking her closer. His body was on fire, and the evidence of that nudged against her, but neither one of them seemed to mind. He pulled her bottom lip in between his teeth, drawing a moan from her, and he smirked.

He didn't know how long they stood there, wrapped up in each other, but he took pleasure in hearing another small moan escape her as

he dug his fingers into her waist. It was then that she decided she'd had enough. They both stood there, panting, before she finally held out her hand.

"My wand," she gasped, struggling to catch her breath.

"I lied," he chuckled.

The glazed look left her eyes as it was replaced by one of anger.

" **Malfoy** -"

"I think I'll keep it for a while. I'll come find you when I decide what I *really* want in exchange for it," he purred, tapping it against her nose.

He smirked as he watched tears form in her eyes before making his way past her and to the door. He was tugged back by her firm grip on his arm.

" *Malfoy please* -"

He took in her frantic state before reaching up to brush his thumb against her trembling lip.

"Thanks for the kiss…"

And with that he walked out, leaving her there in a fit of humiliation and panic.

Don't forget to review. They are much appreciated.

Chapter 4

I really like this chapter. Especially the end, that's all I'm going to say.

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Disclaimer: I own nothing

Three weeks, twenty-one days, 504 hours. *That* was how long she had gone without her wand, and it was killing her. Each time she had needed it in class, which might as well had been every single day, she had to borrow Harry's. The first day he had asked her what had happened to hers, and she simply replied with an 'it's a long story'. She could tell that he wanted to know said long story, but instead he'd just kept his mouth shut. Every time she had seen Malfoy he'd grace her with that devilish smirk which did nothing to alleviate her anger.

As soon as he had left that night, with her wand, she'd cried. They weren't tears of sadness, no, they were tears of anger, frustration and humiliation. She had never felt so humiliated in her life. She was always one of those girls who made fun of other girls who would do something with a boy in exchange for something important. Whether it was a kiss, going down on him or just plain sex. She could never understand how girls could be so stupid to fall for that, and then actually have the nerve to be shocked when the boy didn't hold up his end of the bargain. Well, now, she was one of those girls.

Sadly enough, she had actually believed that Malfoy was going to give it back. Or at least, that was what she kept telling herself

anyway. In all honesty, and she hated to admit this, a large part of her just wanted to kiss him. She wanted to know what he tasted like, wanted to experience just a fraction of what so many other girls had, and the promise of getting her wand back had been the perfect excuse. Now, look where it had gotten her. Wandless, moody, and the angriest she had ever been in her life. The worst part of it all was that this didn't diminish her pull towards Malfoy in the slightest. Did she finally realize just how much of a prick he could be? Yes, but that didn't make her heart race any less at the thought of him, and it should have. She was so disappointed in herself. She sighed as she leaned against a tree and gazed out at the Black Lake. How did her life get so complicated in such a short amount of time?

She turned her head at the sound of approaching footsteps. A grin spread over her face as she watched her best friend make her way down towards her.

"I figured that I'd find you here."

"Missing me, are you?" Hermione asked.

Ginny just sent her a small smile. Hermione's grin faded as it was replaced with a small frown; something was wrong.

"Is everything okay?"

Ginny sighed before leaning against the tree beside Hermione.

"I like someone…someone other than Dean," she whispered.

Hermione softly smiled.

"Let me guess…Harry?"

Ginny turned towards Hermione with wide eyes.

"Is it that obvious?" she exclaimed.

"Not really. I'm just not thick, unlike Harry. You've had a crush on him since you practically first set your eyes on him," she chuckled.

"Well, yeah, but that was different. I was a kid looking at him like a hero. Now, it's...real. Do you…do you think he'd be interested in me?" Ginny quietly asked.

Hermione frowned as she crossed her arms over her chest.

"It's hard to say, really. I haven't really seen him give any other girls any sort of attention since Cho. But you're stunning, Ginny. He'd be a fool not to be interested in you."

Ginny sighed in relief as she nodded.

"Good, good. You know…I always thought that he liked *you* …"

Now it was Hermione's turn to stare at her with wide eyes.

" *Me?* You're joking right?"

Ginny suddenly looked at her with sad eyes.

"No…I'm not. Sometimes I would think that I saw him look at you in a way that he'd never looked at anyone. He and Ron were friends first, but…the friendship that he has with you is…different. Maybe even closer in a way. What you two have has always struck me as more meaningful, something that I could never hope to compete with," Ginny whispered.

Hermione blinked in surprise as she watched Ginny look out onto the lake, unshed tears brimming at the surface of her eyes. Hermione had to admit that her and Harry's friendship was different than either of their friendship's with Ron but it never struck her as having a romantic undertone. They just understood each other, she could actually talk to Harry.

"Ginny…that's ridiculous. Harry is my best friend…I can promise you that he doesn't even think of me like that. Why would he? I don't

even compare to *half* of the girls in fifth year and up, especially not you," Hermione reassured as she laid her hand on Ginny's shoulder.

Ginny spun around to face Hermione with an incredulous expression on her face, knocking Hermione's hand off in the process.

"Are you *blind* ? Hermione you- you've grown into such a stunning girl. It's honestly not even fair... You're like one of those girls that you only read about in books. The ones who are perfect without even trying. You're practically a genius and not to mention completely driven. You're a girl who has goals and knows what she wants out of life while the rest of us are just focused on ways to keep our boyfriends satisfied. The icing on the bloody cake, though would have to be that you don't even see it. You don't notice how so many girls wish they had a *fraction* of what you have and how the boys - *Merlin the boys* - how they look at you. The same way that I've seen Harry look at you," Ginny ranted, a slightly bitter tone seeping into her voice.

Hermione was frozen as Ginny turned back around to face the lake, her hand still in midair. She blinked, trying to process everything that Ginny had said, but that was easier said than done. Her best friend had to be going bonkers because Hermione just couldn't believe that any of that was true. It was ridiculous. Ginny was obviously upset about whatever feelings she thought that Harry had for her.

"Ginny…"

"Hermione…I just want you to know that if Harry does reject me because of you, it's okay," she whispered.

"Gin…"

Ginny slowly faced Hermione with a small smile.

"I'm serious. I'm not going to lie, if he doesn't return my feelings, it'll hurt. A lot, but who better for him to be with than someone as great as you."

"Ginny, I told you…," Hermione started.

"Apparently Harry isn't the only one who's thick," Ginny said, accompanied by a humorless laugh before walking past her.

"Hermione, it's hopeless!"

"Oh, shush. We've only been at it for about ten minutes now, Ronald. You would understand it by now if you had just been paying attention instead of making googly eyes at **Lavender Brown** ," she snapped.

Ron jumped in his seat a bit before clearing his throat. She was satisfied that he at least looked ashamed.

"Sorry. It's just…ever since I made the Quidditch team she can't stop staring at me," he grinned.

She rolled her eyes, but couldn't help but to smile. She had fancied Ron years ago, but was glad that it had faded within the last six months or so. She couldn't help but to be a bit touched that it seemed that he was well on his way to getting a girlfriend.

"That's nice and all but you know what a girl really likes? A guy who can hold an intelligent conversation," she said while pointing to the text.

Ron frowned with a scoff.

"Who says I want to hold a conversation with her," he joked.

Hermione opened her mouth in shock before swinging at him with her book.

"You are *foul* ," she laughed.

"I was only kidding," he sniggered as he blocked her swing.

"Were you really? Because I don't believe it. That's awful, Ronald."

"Trying to teach Weasley how to walk and chew gum at the same time?"

Hermione found herself tensing up as that familiar scent washed over her. She had gone weeks without an incident and was hoping that she could've kept her streak going...apparently not. She didn't even dare look up as Ron responded to his snide remark.

"Don't you have a snake to go kneel to?"

Hermione smiled up at Ron, impressed. *That was a nice one* . She was even more impressed when Malfoy didn't reply for some time. She could imagine him just standing there and glaring at Ron.

"You know, you should really get a muzzle for your pets, Hermione," he hissed.

She jumped up and held her hands out just as Ron rose from his seat.

"Maybe a leash too," he chuckled.

"Ron, no. He isn't worth it," she reasoned.

She could feel his heart rate beginning to slow against her hands. She glanced at his clenched fists before resting her eyes on his red face.

"Go on and wait for me outside of the library. We'll study outside, okay?"

He slowly dragged his eyes from Malfoy to her before slightly frowning.

"Are you sure," he asked with a pointed look at the blond.

"Yes."

He reached out to grab his school bag before walking down the aisle, sending Malfoy a glare along the way. She let out a sigh before slowly spinning around to face him. To her shock he wasn't smirking, which was a first. In fact, he looked quite upset.

"You and the weasel seemed awfully cozy."

"Find a new insult, Malfoy. It's getting old," she replied, trying and failing to ignore how jealous he sounded.

She turned away from him to put her book back inside of her bag, but she shouldn't have been surprised when his hands came down on either side of her to rest on the table. She turned around, briefly closing her eyes at the feel of her body rubbing up against his. She found herself clenching her teeth together as he tilted his head at her, the smirk firmly back in place.

"You know…I was *quite* surprised when I didn't hear from you. Not one peep, not even another surprise visit. I thought for sure that your wand meant so much more to you," he whispered as he leaned in closer.

She dug her nails into the palm of her hand. He was just trying to get a rise out of her.

"I know that if it were *my* wand, I would have gone ballistic weeks ago," he whispered, his lips now brushing against her cheek.

"Well I guess that's the difference between you and me then. I'm not an impatient psychopath," she shakily responded.

He made a humming noise in the back of his throat as he pulled back to gaze at her.

"Maybe. Or it could just mean that you really *aren't* as much of a witch as the rest of us."

She made a sudden move towards him, but his hands shoved her right back against the table. She glared at him through blurry eyes as she did her best to calm her breathing. She mentally cursed when a sinister smile broke out over his face.

"Uh, uh, uh. It seems that I've hit a nerve," he purred.

"Just…please, just give it back. Okay? You've had your fun. You've managed to rile me up and embarrass me all at once. You've gotten what you wanted so just give. It. Back," she pleaded.

He reared back, a frown on his beautiful face.

"You think this is what I want? To cause you some minor embarrassment and be done with you? Oh, Hermione... I bet you're wishing for this to be over, but let me let you in on a little secret. This is far from over," he said as he leaned down again.

His lips brushed the shell of her ear, and his fingers began to dance along her waist. She was vaguely aware that her breaths were coming out in little gasps.

"It's only just begun," he purred.

She was loathed to acknowledge that once his fingers made contact with her she immediately relaxed despite his words making her skin crawl.

"How badly do you want your wand back?"

"I am *not* going to fall for that again," she hissed.

A light laugh escaped him as his hand came to rest on her arm. He was making it harder for her to ignore how her body reacted whenever he was around him.

"I admit, that was a bit harsh, but it was fun. No? Maybe it was just me then. I mean it this time. If you want it back…meet me at the top

of the Astronomy Tower tomorrow night. Whether or not you get your wand back all depends on whether or not you choose to believe me."

He pulled away from her and began backing away.

"Oh, and make sure that you come alone," he added, seriously, before walking towards the back of the library.

She stood there for quite some time, pondering what she should do, before finally throwing her bag over her shoulder. As she made her way out she completely missed how Lavender Brown's gaze followed her with narrowed eyes.

Walking down to the Great Hall for dinner, she couldn't help but to think on Malfoy's request. She would be an absolute idiot if she went to meet him alone but she *needed* her wand. This wasn't some piece of jewelry that she could just replace. It wasn't even her diary. It was her wand, and without it she was practically useless. Of course it had been killing her inside to go this long without it. She could always take someone, of course they wouldn't be there in the tower, but at the very least near the tower. She briefly thought about bringing someone up there with her using a concealment charm but Malfoy was too smart to be fooled by that. She needed someone to know where she was in case anything went…wrong.

She was just about to round the corner when two people that she knew caught her eye. She quietly backed up behind the wall and peeked around it. She wasn't spying per say, just doing what any other best friend would do in her situation. She watched in anticipation as Ginny practically had Harry cornered. Though she could see that Ginny was talking, she couldn't hear a word of it. She could tell that Ginny was nervous as she couldn't stop touching her hands. Her eyes strayed towards Harry's facial expression only to find it completely void of all emotion. She thought that this was odd, because Harry was always like an open book; she couldn't tell if this was good or bad. She had a feeling that it wasn't good.

She was just about to pull her head back when Harry suddenly glanced up and caught her eye. She ducked her head back around the corner, but she could already tell that it was too late. She waited about a minute or two before peeking around the corner again only to find Harry's gaze on her just before he swiftly leaned down to kiss Ginny, interrupting whatever she was saying. Hermione backed up some more before leaning against the wall with a small smile on her face. She couldn't stop herself from grinning even if she wanted to. Two of her best friends were together and that thought made her forget all about Malfoy for the time being. She waited a good five minutes before stepping out from behind the wall. Ginny was still in the same spot, albeit alone, but there was a love-struck grin on her face.

"Hey, Ginny."

Ginny looked up before practically skipping over towards Hermione.

"Hermione, you'll never guess-"

"I know. I saw," Hermione interrupted excitedly.

Ginny's attitude was positively contagious. She didn't think she had ever seen the girl so vibrant, and that was saying something, but it was true; she was practically glowing.

"I…I didn't think he would feel the same way. I was so sure…"

"...and didn't I tell you that you were being silly? Harry's not that much of an idiot; he knows a good thing when he sees it."

Ginny shook her head in a mixture of amazement and disbelief.

"And you're sure that you're not bothered by it?" Ginny asked, genuinely curious.

Hermione suddenly laughed, startling and confusing her friend.

"You're worried about *me* being bothered by it? If I were you, I'd be more concerned about that brute you call a brother," Hermione joked.

She couldn't help but to chuckle at Ginny's exasperated sigh and annoyed expression at what was to come.

She was quite early when walking into the Great Hall for breakfast. There were very few students ready at this time of the morning but luckily, Harry was one of those students. She practically bounced over to the Gryffindor table before plopping down in front of him with a smile.

"Good Morning," she greeted cheerfully as she began to pile food into her plate.

Harry's calculating eyes were accompanied by a small frown.

"You're in a good mood," he replied, slowly, almost in confusion.

"Of course! How can I not be? Two of the most important people in my life are together... *finally* . I always knew it would happen some day. It was only a matter of time, really," she said matter-of-factly.

" *You're okay with it* ?"

She looked up at him in confusion.

"Why wouldn't I be?"

He stared at her for a minute before blinking and shaking his head.

"I uh…I don't know," he mumbled as he reached for his drink.

"The only people that I think will be bothered by it are Dean and Ron. Dean will probably be bummed for a while but I feel like he'll move on fairly quick. Ronald on the other hand will be bullheaded about it just because he can. Other than that you really don't have much else

to worry about. Well…you both are on the Quidditch team so that could potentially pose a problem whenever you two are having a spat-"

" **Hermione** ."

Her eyes shot up in surprise at Harry's firm tone.

"You're seriously not bothered by it… *at all* ?"

Hermione frowned, noticing that Harry's tone sounded almost desperate.

"No. You know, you're almost starting to sound like Ginny," she replied.

"What do you mean? What did she say?"

Hermione let out a small chuckle as she picked at her food, distracted.

"Ginny seemed to be under the impression that…I don't know, you fancied me or something."

"Really."

She glanced up.

"She was *so* worried that you were going to turn her down. I tried to tell her that she was being ridiculous, but you know her, she wouldn't listen. Until, of course, when you said yes which is exactly what I told her would happen. Harry this great! How am I happier about this than you?"

It *was* great. This new development had put her into a good mood since yesterday. For a moment, she had forgotten all about Malfoy and her wand. For a moment she had forgotten all about her double life that she was trying to keep under wraps. That was, until, he had walked into the Great Hall with Zabini and Nott right behind him. She

had been in such a good mood until he had walked in and threw a smirk her way before continuing on to his table.

"Hermione, what's wrong?"

Her eyes refocused on Harry's concerned face.

"It's nothing. Just Malfoy being…Malfoy," she shrugged it off.

"Are you sure that he's not bothering you? If he is you know that you can tell me, right?"

"Harry it's fine. Really. Besides, even if he was bothering me, I can handle him."

No you can't. She was scared of how easy it had become for her to lie to her friends. Harry nodded, but she could tell that he wasn't completely convinced. She needed Malfoy to just leave her alone… and to get her wand back, tonight.

"Okay, Hermione if you don't start talking I'm going to leave you and go on down to dinner."

"No, no wait. Just…give me one more minute, okay?"

Ginny sighed, but laid back down on the bed, anyway. Throughout the entire day, in all of her classes, Hermione had been debating on whether or not to tell Ginny. If she wanted Ginny to be there just in case anything happened then she was going to have to start from the beginning, because Ginny would want to know everything. Hermione just didn't even know how to start or where to begin. But she needed to do this now, because in just a few short hours she would be preparing to meet him and get her wand back.

"Okay, that's it," Ginny said as she sat up and hopped off of the bed.

"Wait! It's about Malfoy," Hermione blurted out.

Ginny froze in her tracks before spinning around to face Hermione with a curious and incredulous expression. A sly grin suddenly spread out over Ginny's face.

" *Malfoy* ? You're trying to go for Malfoy. Hermione's trying to snag the school Heartthrob," Ginny sang.

"No, it's not like that," she argued.

Are you sure about that?

"Oh, really? Then what's it like," Ginny asked in a sultry tone.

Hermione closed her eyes and sighed before opening them again in defeat.

"He has my wand."

Ginny's eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

"O-kay. Why does he have your wand? *How* does he have your wand? Merlin, Hermione, you're supposed to be the brightest witch of your age."

Hermione fiddled with her fingers before nervously licking her lips. She shifted to her other foot before quietly answering.

"He took it…while I was in the Prefect's bath…"

Ginny stared at her with a slightly open mouth.

"Look, Hermione, I really don't want to get involved in whatever sick foreplay you guys have going on-"

"No, no. You don't understand…I didn't want him in there to begin with."

Ginny's eyes widened as she took a step towards Hermione.

"Hermione…did, did he…?"

"No. He just…."

"Okay, you know what, forget it. Start from the beginning," Ginny demanded seriously.

Hermione sighed before leaning her hip against her bed.

"I guess you could say that it started on the first day of classes, but you already know of that incident. We joked about it in my room, saying that he was obviously bored with his life. But…it really started about a day or two later. There was an incident in the library, nothing serious, but it was enough to freak me out a bit."

"What did he do?"

"Nothing. It was mainly his behavior and the things that he said. Remember that day at breakfast, when he and I had the confrontation?"

Ginny nodded in realization.

"That was what he was referring to. I didn't exactly have on my brave face that night. He was trying to scare me and it worked, but the incident at breakfast obviously provoked him…"

Ginny's face suddenly grew dark.

"Why do you say that? Did he hurt you?"

"Not really…"

"Okay, Hermione…there is a big difference between not really and no," Ginny snapped.

"He just grabbed me, is all. His grip was a bit tight on my wrists and you and I both know that I bruise easily," Hermione lied.

"Hermione! That's serious. Why haven't you said something to anyone," Ginny exclaimed.

"Because it's not a big deal. It's just Malfoy being a prat. Besides, you make it sound as if I didn't leave a bruise or two on him either. We both know I'm practically unstoppable with my wand."

Hermione felt bad for lying, but she didn't want to make a bigger deal out of this than what it was. She just wanted it over and done with. Ginny nodded in agreement.

"Okay. Let's get to the part where he snuck into the Prefect's bathroom and took your wand."

"Well, this was after I had visited him to tell him to quit with the games-"

"Wait a minute. So you *did* go to the Slytherin dorms with Blaise Zabini?"

Hermione sighed as Ginny stared at her in shock.

"You lied," Ginny pointed out with a smirk.

"Yes, I know but what was I supposed to say? At the time I figured that I had gotten through to him and that there was no need to stir up trouble."

"But you obviously didn't get through to him since he has your wand," Ginny said matter-of-factly.

Hermione ignored that comment and decided to continue.

"I was in the bath when…he came in too."

Ginny jerked her head back.

"As in…he came into the bathtub with you?"

Hermione nodded jerkily as Ginny scoffed.

"Okay, Hermione are you sure that it's not like that?"

"Just listen. He was in there being his usual perverted self-"

"Hold on. Perverted? As in he wanted to have sex with you? Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy wanted to have sex with you and this didn't happen because…?"

"Because he's a foul tosser who's probably well on his way to becoming a Death Eater," Hermione hissed.

Not to mention he nearly drowned her and proceeded to not only chomp on her thigh like a chicken wing but also indiscreetly eye fuck her.

Ginny put her hands up in mock surrender.

"I thought you told me that he was bad news and that I should stay away from him, no matter how hot he is," Hermione commented as she crossed her arms over her chest.

"Yes but that was before I knew that he wants to shag you. Besides, it's just a shag. It's not like sleeping with him will seal your fate or something."

Hermione sighed in exasperation. This was not how she pictured this conversation going.

"Okay, just continue."

Hermione decided to leave out that part where he saw her naked and just get right to the incident that caused her humiliation and anger.

"Long story short, he told me that he would give me my wand back if I kissed him. So I did…"

Ginny crossed her arms over her chest before leaning against the bedpost.

"I'm sorry, but it sounded like you just said you kissed Draco Malfoy."

Hermione gave her an exasperated look.

"But wait…he still has your wand…"

"Trust me, I know," Hermione replied, bitterly.

"That foul git. So how are we getting it back?"

"That's the thing. He said that if I wanted it back I have to meet him at the top of the Astronomy Tower tonight, alone."

"Hermione, that's completely mental," Ginny deadpanned.

"I know. That's why I need you to come with. You'll probably only be able to wait outside, but at least you'd be there just in case."

Ginny was quiet for a moment as she walked around the room.

"I'm a bit peeved that you kept all of this from me. I'm your best friend, so you're supposed to tell me these things, but… You are in trouble and you need your wand back so…I'll do it."

Hermione and Ginny both nodded at each other before Hermione started to take the steps leading up to the top of the tower. She'd be lying to herself if she said that she wasn't nervous. She was going up to the top of the Astronomy Tower, at night and wandless, to meet Draco Malfoy. But she would also be lying to herself if she said that she was nervous for only one reason. She was fearful, yes, but not just because of what he might do. She was also fearful of what she might do. She had a tendency to act differently around him and she didn't like it. He made her think and feel things that she didn't want to think and feel. That she shouldn't be thinking and feeling.

He made her question so many things about herself and him. Hermione didn't like having questions, she liked knowing. She wished that things could back to normal, when she knew that Malfoy was just a foul mama's boy who couldn't be taken seriously. Now, he was a dangerous and captivating young man who managed to stir feelings in her that she'd rather not even think about. She wouldn't even have given him a second glance, but now it seemed that he was constantly on her mind, like a dirty little secret that she would rather be kept hidden. She finally began to slow just as she stepped foot into the moonlight. It was such a wonderful view, but it was a shame that she wouldn't be able to properly appreciate it.

"I didn't think you'd show."

She spun around, startled, only to be caught in his arms. She officially hated that oh so wonderful moonlight that seemed to do wonders for Malfoy. The haunting glow cast a shadow over the side of his face, drawing attention to his prominent bone structure. The part that wasn't hidden in the shadow was almost ethereal; his hair could have passed for silver and his eyes reminded her of those of a feline's at night. They glowed with a vibrancy that she had never seen before. She took a step back as his lips curved into a smirk.

"…and you're alone."

She could have sworn that his eyes gleamed, almost knowingly. She frowned in confusion as he took a few steps back before offering his hand.

"Shall we?" he whispered.

"Where are we going?"

"Some place more…secluded," he said with a smile.

"W-what's wrong with here?" she nervously asked.

"What does it matter? We're alone here and we'll be alone wherever it is that we're going. Or am I wrong?"

She blinked as he stared her down, daring her to object. Her shoulders sagged in defeat as she laid her hand in his. As they made their way down she couldn't help but to wonder about where they were going. If she wasn't nervous before, she most definitely was now. When they began nearing the bottom, Hermione tried to discreetly make her footsteps heavier and louder to warn Ginny that they were coming. However, when her foot landed on the last step, she saw that it was no use.

"Ginny," she gasped.

She made a move towards her friend, but was stopped by Malfoy's firm grip on her arm. The redhead was currently being held at wand point by Theodore Nott while trapped in the arms of Blaise Zabini.

"Let her go," she hissed at Malfoy.

"Don't get mad at me, sweetheart. *You* got her into this," he replied with a sneer.

She couldn't even deny it because it was the truth. She watched as Draco jerked his head in her direction at Nott just before Malfoy aimed his own wand at Ginny while Nott turned his wand on her. She took a step back as she glared at him. Malfoy suddenly blew out a sigh.

"And here I thought that maybe I could trust you," he stated, almost sadly.

He shrugged before turning to face Ginny, staring her right in the face.

"Obliviate," he hissed.

She watched in horror as he began collecting the memories from Ginny's mind. She had no doubt in her mind that Ginny wouldn't even remember their conversation from earlier, let alone coming here tonight. Everything that she had done was for naught. He suddenly smirked before uttering a word that made her gasp in indignation.

"Imperio," he whispered.

She took a step forward, but immediately halted when Nott took one towards her, his wand aimed right at her face. She was completely helpless as she watched Ginny walk down the corridor before disappearing around the corner.

"Go make sure that she makes it to her dorm. Merlin forbid she take a tumble down the stairs," Malfoy commented.

Nott and Zabini followed after her without sparing Hermione a second glance. She clenched her hands into fists as Malfoy aimed his wand at her. He briefly jerked it down the corridor.

"Shall we?"

She began to walk, glaring at him as she walked past. For quite some time she didn't know where they were going and her feet had begun to ache. He didn't say a word and neither did she. She was far too horrified at how easy it had been for him to use that curse on her friend, his own school mate. She was relieved when he signaled for her to stop outside of a random classroom. After uttering 'Alohomora' at the door, he ushered her inside. It was dark, but upon entering the classroom she realized that it wasn't a random classroom, it was professor Slughorn's classroom; the potions room. She winced as he locked the door. She felt rather than heard him walk towards her.

"Let's begin," he purred in her ear just before brushing past her.

"How could you do that to her?" she demanded.

He slowly spun around.

"I'm not the one who dragged her into this. Did you really think that I wouldn't know that you brought her along? Give me some credit…"

"You didn't come alone either," she pointed out.

"No, because I know you, Hermione. I knew that you were not going to agree to my terms, but the saddest part of all is that you thought you'd be able to get away with it."

He began walking towards her.

"Are you finally understanding now? *I* am in complete control of this situation. *I* am calling the shots. You may be a smart little witch, but I am smarter. You may think that you've got it all figured ou,t but never forget that I will always be two steps ahead of you. This ends when I say it ends," he hissed.

She stared at him with wide eyes. Merlin, what had she gotten herself into? She didn't come here to play games with him, but somehow it always ended up coming down to that. She just wanted this night to be over with already.

"My wand," she whispered.

"Ah, yes. Your wand. I have no qualms about giving you your wand back, but you have to agree to three…conditions," he said with a smirk.

She huffed as she crossed her arms over her chest.

"What's the first?" she demanded shakily.

"The first is the easiest of the three, but it is also my favorite," he said as he trailed a finger down the side of her face.

She didn't answer, instead she just raised her eyebrow, signaling for him to continue.

"From now on, starting in this moment, you will acknowledge me by my first name…"

She frowned.

"That's…it? That's the first condition?"

He did say that the first was the easiest, but she wasn't expecting that. Hopefully this meant that the other two weren't so bad.

"Yes."

"Fine."

"Fine…?"

She sighed.

"Fine…Draco."

She briefly shut her eyes as he smirked. She enjoyed saying his name a little too much.

"Secondly, I want a kiss."

"You already got one," she snapped.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Let me elaborate. I want a kiss, just one kiss, but it will be anytime and anywhere that I pick. You will have no forewarning," he chuckled.

"Absolutely not," she hissed.

There was no way that she was agreeing to that. He could kiss her in front of everyone during dinner time. He shrugged before beginning to take a few steps past her.

"Wait," she cried as she spun around.

She really didn't want to agree to this, but she needed her wand back, dammit. He raised a brow expectantly.

"Okay…just not in the Great Hall or Courtyard or something like that…"

He smirked before walking back over to her with a nod.

"Okay. You have my word that I won't kiss you in the Great Hall or Courtyard or…something like that," he mocked.

"What's the last one?" she questioned, impatiently.

His smirk suddenly grew as he raked his eyes over her just before walking past her, his hand trailing along her waist. She turned around just in time to see him grab a chair. He walked back over to her before halting, immediately followed by him settling himself in the chair. He patted his leg, causing her to scoff incredulously.

"You want me to sit on your lap like some little school girl?"

His chuckle was dark as he looked up at her through his lashes, his eyes clouded over with a savage anticipation.

"How old do you think I am?"

She found that her throat was beginning to get tighter at the sound of his husky tone.

"I want you to give me a lap dance."

Her heart lurched, and her eyes widened in response to his request. He could get bent.

"You can forget about that," she gasped out.

"If you're scared…"

"I most certainly am not!"

"Then what's the hold up?" he questioned.

"That's… *foul* . I'm not some slag," she exclaimed.

He reached out to take her hand and pull her closer.

"No, you're not. You're Hermione Granger, pure and inexperienced, and I'm more than happy to teach you," he whispered in a sultry tone.

She closed her eyes. *Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it* . That was what she kept chanting to herself over and over again inside her head. She shouldn't even be sitting here and contemplating this. She should just leave, but how would she get her wand back? She couldn't live without it, it was a part of her and knowing Mal-… *Draco* , he was the type of person to never ever give it back. It would be just like him to keep it forever, but she couldn't do this. What would Ron think? What would *Harry* think? Merlin…

"Do you want your wand back or not?"

She opened her eyes to see him twirling her wand in between his fingers, a dark glint in his eye. She closed her eyes in defeat. This was it, the point of no return. She couldn't tell you how she knew, but she just knew that after tonight, everything was going to change. She could feel it. She had managed to keep her attraction for him at bay but *this* , this was crossing a line. There was no going back after this, and she could tell that Draco knew what she was thinking because he began to pull her closer. She might as well had left her dignity at the door.

She blew out a shaky breath as she slowly lowered herself onto his lap. A shudder traveled down her spine at the feel of him pressed against her. Neither one of them said a word as one of his hands rested on her hip and the other reached up to tangle itself in her curls. It was so quiet, she was positive that he could hear her heart trying to beat out of her chest. They stared at each other in silence as he began to guide her hips, moving her against him. Hermione

had never felt anything like this in her life, and she found herself biting her lip to keep from making a sound.

"It's okay. Let me hear you," he whispered as he tugged on her hair.

She shook her head. She would not give in, she wouldn't let him know just how much this affected her. But all too soon his grip had tightened and she was grinding back and forth against him. The feeling wasn't just in her core; it was all over. She felt like she was on a high; her eyes became unfocused and her teeth started to loosen their grip on her lip. He suddenly jerked his hips and she let out a small moan. To her utter embarrassment, she moaned again, louder, when he jerked his hips a second time, almost violently.

"Do you know how amazing you look, how utterly captivating you are like this? Above me, your face twisted into one of complete and utter pleasure. Just imagine it, Hermione," he breathed out.

She frantically shook her head. She had to tune him out or else he'd have her right where he wanted her.

"Picture it, there would be nothing in between us, purely skin on skin and you could be as loud as you want. I'd make sure of it," he hissed.

She suddenly put her hand against his chest and was just about to end this when he stood up, her in his arms and her legs around his waist. He roughly laid her onto a lab table before attaching his mouth to the skin above her breasts. Her mouth opened in a silent moan as his hand made its way underneath her shirt. Oh gosh, he was about to have his way with her, and she didn't even care. His lips began to travel upwards, causing her to suddenly grin.

"Are you going to collect your second condition now?" she gasped.

He froze before slowly standing up, letting her up in the process. His hair was wild and his eyes were no different. They darted all over

her, and quickly, as if he couldn't find one thing to focus on. He smirked before pulling out her wand and trailing it down her shirt.

"You'd like that wouldn't you?"

She didn't answer, too busy trying to catch her breath as she wrapped her hand around her wand. He didn't make another comment as he trailed his eyes over her figure one last time before exiting the classroom, leaving her there hot and bothered and asking herself one question. What the hell did she just do?

As always, reviews are much appreciated. Note that I'm typing this while also fanning myself because *boy* .

Chapter 5

He froze before slowly standing up, letting her up in the process. His hair was wild and his eyes were no different. They darted all over her, and quickly, as if he couldn't find one thing to focus on. He smirked before pulling out her wand and trailing it down her shirt.

"You'd like that wouldn't you?"

She didn't answer, too busy trying to catch her breath as she wrapped her hand around her wand. He didn't make another comment as he trailed his eyes over her figure one last time before exiting the classroom, leaving her there hot and bothered and asking herself one question. What the hell did she just do?

Draco was frustrated and a frustrated Draco was not someone you wanted to cross paths with. The girl beneath him had quickly learned that…the hard way. His grip on her hair tightened as a familiar face flashed through his mind, the same familiar face he nearly came close to kissing not even an hour ago. He'd almost wasted his second condition then and there and that was definitely not something to be wasted. No, he had the perfect opportunity already set in his mind. With a snarl he flung the girl away from him in disgust. She was too thin, too pale and her hair was absolutely horrendous for it was far too straight. He was not satisfied and he was loathe to acknowledge that even though he'd been far rougher than she had expected, Daphne Greengrass looked perfectly satiated. He ran his hands through his hair before raking them down his face.

"Draco…?" the blonde questioned, uneasy.

"Get out."

It was but a whisper, but she heard him all the same. With a sigh she began to roll out of bed in search of her clothes, but she was moving far too slow for his liking. With lightning fast movement he had grabbed the mirror sitting on his desk and flung it at the door, shattering it, causing pieces to fly everywhere.

" *Get. Out. **Now** .*"

Daphne didn't need to be told again as she grabbed the rest of her clothes in a hurry and left without looking back. Draco exhaled through his nose with a clenched jaw. With a wave of his hand the

mirror was easily mended and placed back on his desk as if nothing had even happened.

The next morning, as the sunlight began to shine through the curtains, and her dorm mates began to get ready for the school day, she lay there. She had tossed and turned all night and at about four in the morning she had decided to just give up and lay there, thinking. All night she had pondered on the fact that although she had gotten her wand back, she didn't feel triumphant or even relieved in the slightest. For hours she had thought on why that was before finally coming up with an answer, one that scared her; she didn't actually gain anything. Sure, her wand was back within her grasp, but look at all that she had lost in return. Ginny no longer remembered their entire conversation or anything that had happened last night. She was right back where she started, but maybe that was for the best. It was unfair and selfish of Hermione to get her involved in her own mess.

Now, he wanted her to call him Draco from now on which wasn't so bad, that is, if she didn't draw attention to the fact that she really enjoyed calling him Draco. She had agreed to another damn kiss and this time there would be no warning. There was no telling when and where he was going to kiss her. The worst of it all though, would have to be what she had done to get her wand back. The loss of her dignity wasn't the worst part of that experience, the worst would be that she actually enjoyed it.

She enjoyed…grinding onto Draco like one of his whores. If she were to look in the mirror right now she probably wouldn't even recognize herself. Why would she? Hermione Granger did not go around kissing tormentors and she definitely did not give boys lap dances. She was not Hermione Granger. Draco had somehow managed to turn her into this fumbling puppet who he seemed to have complete control over. She needed to regain control over her life, but she didn't even know how. Imagine that, a question that Hermione Granger didn't even know the answer to.

She let out a sigh as she slipped her feet into her Mary Jane's. There was no way she'd have time to eat breakfast now, it was much too late. The walk to Potion's seemed far too short in her opinion and before she knew it she was seated and preparing to take notes from Professor Slughorn's lecture. As she flicked her hair over her shoulder, she noted, with slight surprise, that Lavender Brown had decided to sit beside her today. Hermione masked her confusion with a gentle smile, which Lavender eagerly returned. It was in the middle of class, while they were all furiously copying the text that Lavender decided to talk to her.

"Hermione?" she quietly questioned.

Hermione slightly tilted her head to indicate that she was listening.

"I was wondering…could you put in a good word for me? With Ron, of course."

Hermione turned to face her with a smile.

"Sure. He'll be positively beaming to know that you fancy him too," she answered.

Lavender's smile got even wider, if that were possible, as she propped her chin on her hand.

"Ron fancies me? You're sure?"

Hermione nodded just before copying down the next line. It was quiet between the two of them for some time before Lavender spoke again. *This time* her voice had an icy undertone.

"It must be…eating you up inside. Isn't it?"

Hermione looked at her in a mixture of shock and confusion before answering.

"What…?"

"That Ron is into me."

Lavender had a smug look in her eyes, which confused Hermione. She let out a soft chuckle before returning her attention to the text.

"I assure you, I do not see Ronald in that way," Hermione reassured.

At all .

"Of course. You're much more into *blonds* …aren't you?"

Hermione's eyes flickered up, staring straight ahead in horror as her entire body seemed to freeze. Did Lavender know? No, there was no way…. Hermione gave Lavender a tight lipped smile and a shrug before looking back down at her paper.

"For your sake, I really do hope that you aren't into Ron like that. I'd hate for him to know just how close you are with a certain Slytherin," Lavender suddenly hissed.

Hermione turned in her seat to face Lavender.

"I have no idea-"

"Hermione, you're a smart girl. So let's not play dumb, okay? I saw the two of you yesterday in the library. I thought that there was no way, but then I realized that it's true what they say about underestimating people. Who knew you had it in you…"

"Look, Lavender, what you saw yesterday…was not what it looked like. Trust me, okay? You don't know what you're talking about."

"...and you think Ron will care about whether or not it was or wasn't what it looked like?" Lavender snapped.

Hermione sighed as she turned to face the front.

"What do you want from me, Lavender?" Hermione asked in defeat.

"I want you to back off. I don't buy it about you not being into Ron. Everyone knows that you had such a crush on him-"

"Feelings change you *dimwitted troll* ," Hermione snapped in anger.

She couldn't believe that this was happening. This couldn't be happening…

"Well I don't believe you. So back off, or I'll broadcast to the whole school what you've been doing in your spare time. Actually, I guess *who* would be a better term."

Hermione turned to face her just as they were dismissed. She watched, tearfully and helplessly, as Lavender strode out of the classroom with the rest of the students. What just happened? How was she supposed to determine what Lavender meant by 'back off'? Then again, knowing her she wanted Hermione to just avoid Ron completely. Was she expected to stop talking to one of her best friends just like that? But what else could she possibly do. There was no way she could risk people finding out about her and Draco.

"Hermione?"

Her head snapped up and her eyes landed on Harry before she looked away as she began grabbing her stuff.

"Hey, hey…. What's wrong?"

She shook his hand off before hurriedly making her way out of the classroom.

"Agh!"

She panted as she hurtled another rock into the Black Lake. Was this year doomed to be her worst year at Hogwarts ever? Not to mention it might be her last. How had she been so stupid to be seen with Malfoy in such a public place? Did it not occur to her that other

people came to the library as well? She picked up another rock and flung it into the lake. Lavender Brown was blackmailing her. She was actually blackmailing her. Hermione had repeated it to herself several times, but it was still hard to believe. The nerve of that girl!

"I can think of a better way to release all this pent up frustration, love."

She spun around and swore she actually bristled at the sight of him.

"You," she snarled as she charged him.

He simply smirked before grabbing her incoming fists and spinning them so that she was in between him and the nearby tree.

"Yes, me," he said excitedly.

She didn't even have any proper insults. As a matter of fact, she didn't have any insults. She just wanted to be left alone. She sighed as she stared past him.

"I don't have enough energy for you right now, Draco."

"Then you just lay back and look pretty while I do all the work," he joked with a smirk.

She almost cracked a smile at his crude suggestion. Almost. Neither one of them said anything for a while as he began to play with her hair. If he wasn't…him, she might have enjoyed it. However, despite him being him she did find herself starting to enjoy it.

"What's your game, Draco?" she whispered.

"Elaborate," he quietly answered.

"With me. Why…why me?"

He didn't answer and for quite some time she was under the impression that he never would.

"Do you know that Voldemort had asked me that same question?"

A heavy feeling settled in her chest as her eyes landed on his face in shock, but he was so close that all she could really focus on was his nose and lips.

"He wanted to know what I wanted with a 'filthy mudblood such as yourself'. Do want to know what I told him?" he questioned, darkly.

She didn't answer for she was too afraid to even move. Did he just confess to her that he was a Death Eater? No, she had seen his arm. It wasn't possible…but why had he been discussing her with Voldemort?

"I simply told him that you intrigued me… Do you want to know a secret, Hermione?"

He continued anyway when she didn't answer.

"I lied. In truth, it is so much more than that…," he began as he took a few steps back.

Her heart began to beat faster as he stared at her with those piercing eyes. A smirk tugged at the corner of his lips as he slipped his hands into his pockets before turning towards the lake.

"You are the complete opposite of everything that I was brought up to be, everything that I was taught. Your very existence combined with your intelligence is a complete contradiction of what I was raised to believe in. You are far too gentle, compassionate, sweet, and far, *far* too…innocent."

He turned to face her again as he said this, a look of wonder on his face, as if *she* were the enigma.

"...and that, my little Gryffindor, is what makes you such an easy target. It's what makes you so… *irresistible* . You confound me."

She pressed herself into the tree some more.

"You're doing all of this just so you can ruin me? Ruin my…image? No offense, Draco, but you sound like a jealous adolescent girl."

A dark, smug chuckle left his lips as if he was in on a secret that she was unaware of.

"I don't want to ruin you or your innocent appeal, sweetheart. I want to possess it. I want it to belong to me and to me only. I want *you* to belong to me and me only. It's finally clicking, isn't it? Did you think I was joking about all of the fun we could have together? I assure you, I was entirely serious."

Hermione stared at him in fear before she realized that she couldn't breathe, she couldn't breathe. Draco wasn't making any sense whatsoever. When she spoke it was strained, as if she was in desperate need of air.

"If this is your way of confessing your love-"

"Love," he scoffed.

She took a step away from the tree and begin to slowly move back.

"Do not confuse me with members of your pathetic house. This has nothing to do with love. I want you, plain and simple," he continued.

"You're crazy," she fearfully whispered.

"While that may be, it still doesn't change anything. A Malfoy always gets what a Malfoy wants, Hermione. One way or another."

He simply stared at her with that smug smirk as she backed up before quickly making her way back to the castle.

He was insane. That was what she kept repeating to herself over and over again as she made her way back to the castle. When she thought about it, it definitely explained a lot but it just made no

sense. Draco wanting her? In that way? No, the boy was insane. She rounded the corner and gasped in shock as she came face to face with Harry, a very angry Harry who was holding the Marauder's Map in his hands.

"You have something you want to tell me?" he demanded.

She sighed and brushed past him. Today was not her day, it was like one thing after the next.

"Hey! Hermione…"

He gently grabbed her arm before spinning her around to face him. He was furious and to be perfectly honest, she didn't know why.

"What?" she asked, exasperated.

She might have found Harry's face comical but his anger erased all traces of humor that she might have found in this situation.

"What? What? That's all you have to say for yourself," he snapped.

She threw her hands up.

"When you left Slughorn's classroom, crying I might add, I thought that maybe I could try and talk to you in our next class. You didn't show and I was worried so I pulled out the map and imagine my shock at seeing you and Draco Malfoy together at the Black Lake."

"You told me to get closer to him. I was just doing what you asked," she lied.

"I said get closer to him, not go off alone with him to Merlin knows where for Merlin knows how long. That's just plain stupid," he hissed.

"Well you know what they say, Harry. If you want something done right sometimes you have to do it yourself. If you're not happy with how I'm doing this then *you* do it! I didn't want to do this in the first

place. As a matter of fact, I was actually trying to avoid him at all costs before you sprung this little mission on me," she retorted.

"I just-"

"Think he's a Death Eater, I know. I'm pretty sure the whole school knows but keep talking about it. I don't think that the wizarding schools in the States caught wind of it yet. Harry, you've turned into a man obsessed. Even if Draco is a Death Eater what exactly can you do about it? There's no mark on his arm so you don't have solid evidence to prove it and that's a pretty serious offense to accuse someone of without proof. You cannot spend all of your time on this. Focus on Ginny or better yet, your first Quidditch game next month."

She jerked away from him and began walking down the corridor.

"Hermione!"

"So why are we not sitting with Harry and Ron again?" Ginny asked.

"It's complicated," Hermione sighed out as she picked at her food.

Ginny set her fork down with a huff.

"Okay. Are you fighting with them?"

"Not exactly…"

Ginny raised an eyebrow, indicating for her to continue.

"Harry's just…being extra paranoid and I cannot deal with that today and apparently I can no longer be friends with Ron, so…," Hermione trailed off.

"Who says you can't be friends with Ron?" Ginny demanded.

"Lavender Brown," Hermione sang in a mocking manner as she raised her eyebrows.

"She can't do that!"

"Yes, she can. She's convinced that I'm into Ron. She has something on me and if I don't 'back off' she'll tell Ron and Harry," Hermione muttered.

"What does she have…?" Ginny trailed off as Hermione shook her head.

Ginny suddenly sighed.

"Whatever it is, just tell me when you're ready."

I already did , Hermione thought sadly. She sent Ginny a small smile.

"Sure."

"I do have to ask though. Is it about Malfoy?"

Hermione's eyes widened. Did Draco somehow mess up the memory spell?

"Why…why would you ask that?" Hermione hopefully questioned.

"Just curious. He's been staring at you for the past five minutes and this isn't the first time. If you and he are…together, it's okay."

"No, we're not. He's just being a prat. Nothing short of the usual," Hermione said with a small smile.

"Okay, if you say so," Ginny sang as she picked up her fork.

"Zabini."

"Granger. To what do I owe this pleasure?" he asked with a grin.

"Why are you out so late?" she demanded.

"I could ask you the same thing," he responded with an arched eyebrow.

"I'm a prefect."

"Mmm, but it is not your night to patrol. I would know since I am also a prefect," he said with a smirk.

Touche.

"How can you stand there like that? So…so arrogant and carefree as if you had no part in what took place the other night," she snapped.

He looked up at the moon with a smirk.

"It's a simple answer, really. I'm loyal to Draco. Well, that and I just don't care, but first and foremost I am loyal to him. You see, Slytherins do not have friends, but Draco is the closest thing I have to what you would call a friend; an ally. Besides, it's much safer to be beside the devil than in his path. Wouldn't you agree?" he asked as he turned to face her.

"...and just what is that supposed to mean?"

"What do you think it means, oh Brightest Witch of your Age? I don't know if you refuse to see it or you really are that naïve; Draco is dangerous. When I say dangerous I don't mean in that 'Bad Boy' way that you girls find *oh* so appealing, I mean dangerous. I'm convinced that the boy has no soul to tell you the truth. I've seen him do things that would make you Gryffindors hurl. He's not one to be trifled with."

She wrapped her arms around herself as a chill passed through her.

"Is that a threat?"

He chuckled, humorlessly.

"No. That is a warning. A Malfoy always gets what a Malfoy wants and Draco is no exception," he said with a dark look thrown her way just before he began to walk past her.

She found herself rubbing her hands up and down her arms.

"Oh and Hermione?"

She slowly turned around to face Zabini, a serious expression on his face. His next words caused her heart to skip a beat inside of her chest.

"Do be careful. I'm surprisingly rather fond of you, and it'd be a shame if you ended up dead."

Blaise has always struck me as a slightly arrogant character who has this air of indifference about him. I love it

Chapter 6

"No, my dear. That is a warning. A Malfoy always gets what a Malfoy wants and Draco is no exception," he said with a dark look thrown her way just before he began to walk past her.

She found herself rubbing her hands up and down her arms.

"Oh and Hermione?"

She slowly turned around to face Zabini, a serious expression on his face. His next words caused her heart to skip a beat inside of her chest.

"Do be careful. I'm surprisingly rather fond of you and it'd be a shame if you ended up dead."

"That's…new," Theodore commented with a grimace as he threw a look of pity at the poor 3rd year.

Draco tilted his head as if to get a better angle as he watched the student drag his fingers down his face, his nails leaving a trail of blood in their wake. He made a slight humming sound in the back of his throat.

"Yes. Voldemort created it and informed me to test it out, give a report on the effects," Draco replied disinterested.

The kid was silent, due to a silencing charm, but his mouth was open as if he were screaming. He was frantically shaking his head from side to side and his legs kept jerking as if he were having a seizure.

"What does it…do?" Theo asked fearfully.

Draco let out a quiet laugh.

"I don't even know. I *do* know that I definitely wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of it," he jested as he stood up to stretch his legs.

"It's not going to kill him, is it?"

Draco paused, suddenly unsure.

"Voldemort said that it wouldn't but then again…he isn't exactly known for his honesty."

With a flick of his wand the kid went limp as he fainted. Theo watched as Draco cleaned the student up with a quick 'Scourgify' before murmuring a silent 'Obliviate'. Did Theo approve of harming an innocent kid? No but what exactly could he do. He decided to change the topic of conversation.

"How's it going with Granger?" Theo suddenly asked.

Draco merely looked at him before returning his attention back to the unconscious student.

"That bad, eh? Let me guess…she hates you."

"No, but she's not particularly fond of me either so…then again I really don't care. She's attracted to me and that's all that matters. That's more than enough to work with," he commented.

"But wouldn't it be easier on yourself if she did like you, even a little bit?"

Draco never liked easy, it was boring, but he *did* need to get her out of the castle with him when the time came. That would go much smoother if she was willing. Maybe Theo had a point…

"Well, what do you suggest I do?" Draco questioned as he looked over his shoulder at him.

Theodore's face was suddenly graced with a smirk that could rival Draco's.

Draco strode over to the table before pulling out a chair, sitting opposite the dirty blond who'd been quietly studying. Alex Sykes let out a sigh before pushing his book aside. He was a quiet Slytherin, hardly noticeable, Draco noted, but he was a Slytherin nonetheless and a bloody useful one at that. Draco leaned his elbows onto the table with a dark glint in his eyes.

"I want you to do something for me…

"A Halloween Masquerade Ball? What, the Heads couldn't decide on a theme so they went with both?" Ginny criticized.

Hermione threw her a look.

"What? I'm just saying," Ginny defended as she threw her hands up.

"So what are you and Harry going to go as?" Hermione suddenly asked.

"I'm not sure. I really want us to be that mermaid and prince guy from that muggle story you showed us…"

"Ariel and Eric from *The Little Mermaid* ," Hermione corrected with a smile.

"Yeah, but… He doesn't seem all that interested. Actually, he doesn't seem interested, at all," Ginny sulked.

"Well, you know guys. They aren't really into stuff like this. He may be the-boy-who-lived, but he's still a normal boy. I say go for it. You definitely have the hair…"

"Well, what about you?"

"I don't know. To be honest, I'm not as enthusiastic as I would've been if this happened a year ago. I'm just not up for it," Hermione shrugged.

"Oh, Hermione, but you have to go! You cannot leave me alone with Ron's… *beard* ," Ginny said in disgust.

Hermione cracked a small smile. Although Ron and Lavender weren't what you would call official, they sure as hell acted like it. It hurt a bit to see that Ron didn't even notice her sudden absence from his life, but Lavender seemed happy enough about it. She sighed.

"Okay and I'll even let you pick my costume, because I really don't care."

"That's the spirit...sort of. I wonder what Malfoy will go as...?" Ginny wondered.

Hermione's heart jumped.

"What? Where did that come from?"

"Well, Hermione, you have to match your future husband."

Hermione looked at her, horrified, as she began to laugh. She then looked around to make sure that no one had heard her.

"I'm sorry, I had to, but come on. You can't tell me that you're not curious. Can't you picture him walking through those doors like a

Greek God or something? Maybe even a dashing knight…"

"Forgive me if I have a hard time picturing Malfoy as anything deemed to be heroic," Hermione sneered.

"Well, I wouldn't mind being swept off of my feet by him. Wouldn't you agree?"

"No," Hermione answered without hesitation.

Ginny laughed again, but her laughter was cut short as her eyes focused on something behind Hermione. Hermione spun around and was actually relieved that it was only McLaggen. However, that relief was soon cut short as she remembered that the first trip to Hogsmeade was this weekend.

"Crap," she muttered just as he made his way over to her.

"Hermione," he greeted with that smug grin of his.

"Cormac…"

"I hope that you didn't forget about our plans this weekend," he started.

"Of course not. I had been looking forward to it," she lied with a forced smile.

His grin suddenly turned into a smirk.

"I know. Anyways, I just came by to remind you and to tell you to where something nice."

She grimaced.

"…Sure."

He leered at her before walking back to his seat. Hermione turned back around in disgust only to find Ginny desperately trying, and

failing, to contain her laughter.

"Can you believe him?"

"I'm surprised you didn't curse him," Ginny laughed.

"I was trying to be nice…," she trailed off.

You are the complete opposite of everything that I was brought up to be. You are far too gentle, compassionate…

She let out another sigh.

"I thought for sure that you had better taste than *McLaggen* ," the voice in her ear sneered the name as if it were the vilest insult known to man.

She internally sighed. Why was she not surprised that people had found out about her date with Cormac? No doubt, he was the one telling everybody. She turned her head until she could see his sculpted jawline in her peripheral vision.

"He's just paying me back for helping him with an assignment. If I didn't know any better I'd say you were jealous," Hermione innocently commented as she turned back to face the front.

"Coy doesn't suit you, love. Besides, McLaggen hardly has anything worth being envious of," he hissed.

"Unless, of course, if he had me," she bit back.

That shut him up , she thought with satisfaction. She heard him sit back into his seat and could almost feel his eyes glaring holes into her back. But it wasn't long before his voice was in her ear again and this time he was the one to shut her up.

"For his sake, you better hope that's not the case. I have no problem slicing him open from head to toe for touching what is mine," he

darkly hissed.

Hermione nodded with a smile as Cormac continued to rave on about something or another. Knowing him, whatever it was that he was talking about probably had to do with him. It was a pity that he was so self-centered. He was always enthusiastic and so animated whenever he talked. They had been sitting at this same table in Madam Puddifoot's Tea Shop for almost an hour, now and she had barely got a word in. Honestly, she really wanted this so called date to be over with so she could go shopping with Ginny.

"So I was thinking…we'd make a really good looking pair at the Halloween Ball tomorrow, no?"

If it wasn't for that sickeningly smug grin on his face, she might have said yes just to be nice, but she knew that she couldn't handle much more of this.

"Cormac…that's really sweet of you, but…I just agreed to this because I helped you out and you seemed so eager to repay me," she shrugged.

"Oh... I see."

She found herself feeling a bit guilty as she looked at his crestfallen face.

"I'm really sorry…," she softly added.

"No, no. It's fine. I should probably let you get back to your friends," he said as he stood up and grabbed his jacket.

She followed his lead and shrugged into hers as well. He suddenly smiled at her before pulling her into a hug. She hesitantly returned the hug before she began to pull away. Suddenly, just as she was pulling away from him, he leaned down and pressed his lips against hers. Her eyes were wide and her arms were frozen in shock before

it finally registered what he'd done. However, by the time it had finally clicked, he'd already pulled away from her with a smile.

"Sorry, Hermione. I just…I had to do that. See you at the Ball tomorrow," he said just before he exited the shop.

Hermione was sure that her entire face was red from not only embarrassment but anger as well. The nerve of him, and then he actually had the audacity to shrug it off and smile. She let out a sigh before turning to exit when a figure outside of the window caught her attention. It felt like someone had socked her in the gut as she stared back at the cold, piercing eyes of an angry Draco Malfoy.

"Hermione! Are you even paying attention?"

Hermione pulled her eyes away from the door to look at Ginny.

"What?"

Ginny sighed before holding up two dresses.

"I said, sexy vampire or sexy pirate," Ginny asked with a grin.

"Neither," Hermione answered with a grimace.

Ginny huffed before going back into the racks as Hermione turned to glance at the shop window. She didn't know why she was expecting Draco to come barging in here, his wand aimed at her and a curse falling from his lips. Maybe it was because she could still hear his voice in her ear, threatening to violently murder Cormac if he so much as touched her. Maybe it was because she had felt his stare on her as she walked all the way here, like he was following her or maybe it was because the look in his eyes had held more than anger; they'd held promise. A promise that her kiss with Cormac wouldn't go ignored. She rolled her eyes before turning back around with a huff. She didn't do anything wrong. It's not like her and Draco were together.

She looked up as she heard Ginny gasp.

"This is positively gorgeous. You have to wear it," Ginny gushed as she rushed over to Hermione.

Hermione slowly stood and took the dress from her. It was beautiful, there was no doubt about that, but…

"Ginny…it's green," Hermione said hesitantly.

"Who cares? It's Halloween, and it'd look amazing on you," Ginny responded.

She isn't wrong , Hermione thought as she admired the velvet material. It looked like it belonged in the medieval time period. Maybe she could go as someone of royal blood. She just couldn't get over the color though, but Ginny was right; it was Halloween. Who cares?

Hermione lowered her wand as her normally curly hair fell straight past her shoulders. Two tiny braids that started on each side of her head came to connect in the back. Her makeup, courtesy of one Ginerva Weasley, was light but effective. She blew out a breath as she ran her hands down the material of the dress. She had no idea that it was going to fit so…snug. Nor was she aware that the neckline was so low, but Ginny had reassured her that it looked great. She placed her dark green mask on her face before exiting her room. Her short heels clicked softly against the floor as she made her way out of the girls' dorms and towards the Great Hall. She didn't know why she was nervous. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that she hadn't heard from Draco…at all. It was definitely unnerving waiting around for him to do something. But maybe this was his plan; torture her by allowing her imagination to run wild. It was not only ingenious, but it was also working.

She knew that she was late, to be honest she was late on purpose. She wasn't in the partying mood and the less time she spent here

the better. She had hoped that no one would notice her late arrival but as they say; hope breeds eternal misery. She couldn't help the slight blush that covered her cheeks when people turned to gawk at her as she walked by. The hall seemed more crowded for some odd reason and it took her ages to finally come across her friends. She was pleased to see that Ginny and Harry had indeed gone with The Little Mermaid. Ron had decided on an archer while Lavender appeared to be the very flower that she was named after.

"Hermione! You look amazing. I told you, didn't I?"

Hermione nodded, embarrassed by the attention that Ginny's outburst had drawn. Ron finally seemed to remember that he had his own date on his arm as he finally closed his mouth before respectfully agreeing with Ginny. Harry on the other hand said nothing. He merely drank the rest of his punch before grabbing Ginny's hand and leading her onto the dance floor. Ron scratched the back of his head awkwardly as Lavender clung to his other arm.

"Uh…I'd sit with you, Hermione that way you wouldn't be all alone, but…-"

"It's okay, Weasley. I can take it from here."

She spun around to face Zabini, a very half naked Zabini. Her eyebrows rose as she took in the exposed skin that his toga didn't cover, which wasn't much. She averted her eyes with a blush when Zabini threw her a smirk.

"Oy, Zabini-"

"It's okay, Ronald. It's just a dance," Hermione said with a strained smile just before Zabini led her to the other dancers.

She could feel Lavender and Ron's gazes on her back as she disappeared into the crowd. She was reluctant to admit that Zabini was quite the dancer. She cleared her throat.

"Well…don't you look…dashing," she said.

His smirk grew just before giving her a once over of his own.

"And don't you look positively… *delicious* . I sure hope Draco can keep his hands to himself because I might not be able to."

"You should watch what you say Zabini before Draco comes over here and murders you in cold blood," she half joked.

His smirk grew, mirth dancing in his eyes.

"Well, he can't be any more upset with me than he is with you at the moment," he stated.

Her eyes widened as she looked up at him.

"What? What do you mean?"

"I don't know what you did but he sure as hell isn't happy. Did you not listen to a word I said, Granger?"

She gulped just before letting out a sigh. Her eyes scanned the hall, searching for the topic of their conversation.

"Did…did he say anything to you? Do anything," she desperately asked.

He scoffed.

"He didn't have to. You could practically see his magic crackling around him. What did you do, Granger?"

"It wasn't my fault," she snapped.

"Oh, really? Forgive me if I find that hard to believe," he said with a raised eyebrow.

"It was Cormac. We were on that stupid date when he decided to kiss me out of nowhere. Unfortunately, Draco happened to be standing right outside of the shop window when it happened," she explained.

She jumped a bit as Zabini suddenly let out a laugh.

"Oh, this is going to be fun."

"He's not going to do anything stupid, is he?" she questioned.

"Stupid? Are you forgetting who we're talking about? Deadly would be a much more appropriate term," he murmured as his eyes lingered over her shoulder.

She bit her lip as she continued to glance around, completely missing the slight nod of Blaise's head.

"I do believe I just saw she Weasley slip out, quite drunk if I do say so myself."

"What?" she exclaimed as she spun around just in time to see the doors shut.

She pulled out of Zabini's arms just before lifting the bottom of her dressing and following after her friend. She was just in time to glimpse vibrant red curls disappear around the nearest corner. Hermione followed, but let out a sigh of frustration upon seeing an empty corridor.

"Ginny," she called as she took a few steps forward.

Nothing. She didn't hear anything. As a matter of fact, it was much too quiet. She quietly sighed before turning back around only to collapse at the force of the blow. Her hands took the brunt of the fall and she let out a hiss as they scraped against the rough floor. She cried out as she was roughly pulled up by her hair before being thrown against the nearest wall. She fell to her knees just as the

person came at her before fishing her wand out of her bra. She aimed her wand and was satisfied when he flew back, but was immediately disappointed when he quickly recovered. And unfortunately for her, he was blocking the quickest way back to the hall.

She lifted the bottom of her dress and took off in the other direction. She flew up the nearest flight of stairs when she heard his footsteps behind her. She mentally cursed whoever made her heels because they were surely slowing her down. As if to prove her point, her assailant suddenly grabbed her ankle, causing her to fall on the stairs, bruising her chin in the process. She stretched her fingers to reach her fallen wand, but was interrupted when she was flipped over onto her back. She gasped as the steps dug into her back and she gasped louder when their hands came to constrict around her throat. She spluttered and gasped for breath as her hands came up to connect with their face, desperately trying to push them off.

To make matters worse, it was then that the stairs decided to change. Her attacker pushed her head farther back so that it was in between the space where the stairs connected. Her knees buckled as she tried to get him off while looking at the oncoming staircase in horror. She balled her hands into fists but she was growing far too weak to pose any sort of threat. Suddenly, he was on the stairs beside her, twitching and screaming in pain. She let out a gasp as she was suddenly shoved farther down the steps just as the stairs connected. All she could see was a tall, broad figure standing in front of her.

"Get out of my sight before I end your pathetic existence."

Her eyes widened in shock upon hearing a voice she recognized. She glanced around his cape just in time to see her attacker takeoff up the stairs. He removed his hat and turned around to kneel down in front of her. She found herself staring at his white mask that only covered half of his face as he turned his attention towards her leg.

"Hey," she protested as he gently lifted it.

"It's bruised, Hermione," he said through gritted teeth.

"I don't care. I can take care of myself just fine," she snapped as she struggled to stand.

He rolled his eyes before wrapping his arm around her waist and helping her to stand.

"Let go of me, Draco-"

"I'm trying to help, you silly bint-"

"I don't need your help and nor do I want it. You foul, loathsome…"

She heard him sigh as she continued to rant. Maybe if she had been paying attention she would have noticed his wand. She suddenly fell limp as her world was drowned in darkness.

She frowned as she finally started to come back to consciousness. She hesitantly reached her hand up to press against her temple; she had a killer headache. She opened her eyes for a few seconds before closing them. The bright moonlight was shining directly onto her. Wait a minute…this was not her room. She suddenly sat up and gasped in pain at the slight soreness of her back.

"You're awake."

Her eyes flew to the end of the bed where he sat, watching her.

"Where… Am I in your room?" she questioned.

"Where else was I supposed to take you?"

"The infirmary," she said as if she were talking to a 1st year.

He rolled his eyes.

"Take me back to my dorms, Draco," she demanded.

"No. You need to rest. Who better to take care of you than me?"

"I didn't ask you to take care of me," she hissed.

His expression suddenly grew very dark.

"If it wasn't for me…that entire staircase would have been redecorated with the inside of your head," he stated.

She remained quiet and kept her eyes downcast as he stood. She watched as he grabbed a mug from his nightstand and offered it to her.

"It will help with the headache."

She hesitantly accepted it before taking a sip.

"I'm sorry," she suddenly said.

He smirked.

"What was that? I didn't quite hear you…"

"Are you really going to make me repeat it?"

He gave her a look as if to say 'of course'. She sighed.

"I said, I'm sorry. You…you're only trying to help me and you're right. You saved my life. That's something that I'll never be able to thank you enough for."

His smirk suddenly grew as something unfamiliar flashed through his eyes.

"Get some rest, Hermione…"

She nodded before handing the mug back to him and gladly sinking into the covers.

"This doesn't change anything," she murmured, drowsily.

His fingers came up to stroke her hair as he leaned down to place a kiss on her forehead.

"Whatever helps you sleep at night," he whispered.

Review, review, review!

Chapter 7

Surprise! Early update. I just want to say that I have had this particular chapter in my head since before I started actually writing this story. I just love it so much

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"I'm telling you, Mione, we've got this in the bag. Slytherin doesn't stand a chance," Ginny boasted to her friend.

Hermione hummed disinterestedly as she turned to the next page in her book. She wasn't all that interested in the talk of the first Quidditch match; Gryffindor versus Slytherin. To be perfectly honest she wasn't so sure that her house would defeat the snakes this year. Draco had happily bragged to her about the new plays and techniques they'd been practicing while she had been recuperating in his room last week. She'd like to say that she didn't have a choice in the matter of listening to him go on and on, but a small part of her had oddly found his company…enjoyable. He was mildly decent when he wasn't trying to manipulate her into kissing him and what not.

She had told Draco that his heroic act didn't change a thing between the two of them, but now she wasn't so sure. He could have let her die. After all, if he was a Death Eater then that would have helped his cause immensely. Without her, Harry would surely fail. She wasn't declaring that in an arrogant way, at all. She was merely stating a fact; Harry needed her and she was sure that Draco knew that too. So she was back to the original question. Why did he save her? She was aware of his… *desire* for her but surely it wasn't that great. He could easily find another girl, a willing girl who'd happily give him whatever it is that he wants from her. But a small voice in her head was telling her that it was something about her and her alone. This also reminded her of the question she had asked him that night.

"Why me?"

Draco looked up at her in question.

"Sorry?"

"I said why me. Why…why did he attack me?" she clarified.

This was something that had been going through her head for the past few hours. He let out a snort before slowly making his way to her side of the bed.

"You're a smart girl. Why do you think?"

She was quiet for a moment before she looked up at him, an incredulous expression on her face.

"Are you trying to say that that person was a Death Eater?"

"No. I'm saying that that person is trying to become one. Whoever he was clearly wanted to prove himself worthy enough. What better way to do that than to kill Hermione Granger, Harry Potter's best friend and Brightest Witch of her Age," he said with a smirk.

She darted her tongue out to run it over her dry lips before letting out a shaky breath.

"So…what? Are people going to start making attempts on my life now?"

A dark look suddenly fell over his face.

"I'd love to see them try."

"Are you even listening to me?"

Hermione was brought back to the present by Ginny's loud voice. She blinked before looking up from her book with a small smile.

"Sorry but you know I don't too much care for Quidditch, Gin. I'm certain that you guys will beat them…again."

Ginny cracked a small smile.

"I'm sorry. I know that I've been talking about this nonstop for almost twenty minutes now and I know that you aren't into Quidditch, but it's more than that. You've just seemed really distracted lately," Ginny said.

Hermione bit her lip before deciding on closing her book and scooting to the edge of her seat.

"Ginny…if I tell you something do you swear not to say anything to anyone?"

Ginny rolled her eyes.

"Hermione, this is me that you're talking to."

"I know, but I need you to swear it, Ginny. If this gets out…"

Ginny's eyes widened at the seriousness of the upcoming conversation before nodding.

"Harry…he convinced me to try and get closer to Draco in order to spy on him, but… Now there are feelings that have come into play," she said quietly.

"Feelings? For *Draco sodding Malfoy* ?"

"Ginny, he makes me feel things that I've never felt before. I liked Ron, you know that, but this is so...different. He's made me think of things I never have before, things that I don't want to think about, to tell you the truth. He's foul and demented, but there's this part of him that's...kind of inviting and playful," she shrugged. "He just does whatever he wants without a care, and while that scares me, a part of me... *envies* it. He can be such an arse, but lately he has been

doing things that have been messing with my head. Things that make me second guess my opinion of him."

"…Well how do you know that he's not messing with you, doing these things to purposefully make you feel that way?" Ginny questioned.

"I don't," Hermione answered seriously.

"You know that Harry's certain that he's a Death Eater…," Ginny trailed off with a light laugh.

"I know. I'm starting to think so too," Hermione whispered with a nod.

Ginny's laughter was cut short as she looked at her in horror.

"Why? Did he do something to you?" she demanded.

Hermione shook her head.

"No, in fact he did the opposite. He…he saved me, Ginny. He saved my life, but the guy, my attacker, whoever he was... Ginny, he used the Cruciatus Curse on him like it was nothing. Like he wasn't standing there inflicting pain on another human being. I didn't even hear him speak it," she said, horrified.

Ginny was silent for a while.

"I don't want to jump to conclusions. Even though it makes perfect sense for him to follow his father's footsteps, that might not be the case. It could just mean…that he's prepared, Hermione," Ginny said as if it were the most tragic thing in the world.

Hermione found her eyes shifting towards the floor, knowing what Ginny was getting at.

"We all know that there's a war coming. Given his family, I'm willing to bet that he's already seen some of it. There's going to come a time when you and I may have to use the Cruciatus Curse, and more

than likely the killing curse as well. If we're going to be out there fighting Death Eaters, a stunning curse will no longer cut it because they will not hesitate to end our lives. I don't know what happened between you two, but if your life was really in danger then you should be glad that he didn't hesitate to repay the favor to whoever was hurting you. You might be put into that same position one day, sooner than you think."

"You know you should really stop being alone all the time. Someone could easily…take advantage of you."

She only spared him a glance as he practically slithered —like the snake he was— into the seat opposite of her. She noted that he looked better than usual today. She couldn't put her finger on it, but he almost looked…happy. However, seeing as this was Draco, he being happy could never be a good sign.

"Are you excited for the game in just a few days?"

"I don't really concern myself with the matters of Quidditch," she quipped.

"You will once we win," he said with a smirk.

She closed her book for the second time that day before giving him her undivided attention. Her heart raced as he observed her with those piercing eyes.

"Cocky much?"

His smirk grew.

"…Very much."

She felt heat flood to her cheeks at the double meaning behind his answer. She straightened up in her chair before clearing her throat.

"I'd be careful not to jinx my team if I were you. Just your luck, we'll beat you… *again* ," she stated.

He grinned before standing up and making his way over to her side of the table. She tilted her head to watch him out of the corner of her eye as he stepped behind her.

" *Want to bet?* " he purred.

"I don't make deals with the devil."

The soft laugh that escaped him sent a shiver down her spine, and she jumped when she felt his lips brush the shell of her ear.

"Oh, Hermione. You flatter me," he whispered.

She watched as his hands came down on either side of her to rest on the table, caging her in.

"No, seriously. If we win…you have to go on a date with me and take a ride on my broom."

She thought it over as Harry's words ran through her mind. *Get closer to him* .

"Your…your actual broom, right?"

"That's up to you," he stated huskily.

She rolled her eyes before nodding.

"Okay. If we win then…you have to go on a date with me and… answer three questions, honestly."

"Deal," he said with a scoff.

She turned around in her seat to face him.

"Tell me…why are you so sure that you're going to win?" she asked.

She didn't back down as he leaned in, his lips a hairs width away from her own.

"...because, love, we Slytherins have moves that you Gryffindors have never even seen," he purred.

Her eyes focused on the wall behind him as she, once again, flushed at the double meaning within his words.

"Will I see you before the game?" he whispered.

"Whatever for?"

It didn't go unnoticed to her that they'd practically been flirting with each other for the past few minutes.

"For my good luck kiss, of course," he said with a smirk.

She didn't answer him, instead she turned back around and began to pack her things. He stood upright to give her room as she rose from her chair and turned to face him.

"I'll think about it," she said just before brushing past him on her way out.

"Hermione?"

She turned around to face Harry as students flew past them, trying to get to their next class on time. She noticed that Harry was looking anywhere, but at her and his hands were shoved into his pockets. So he wanted to apologize, did he?

"Can I walk with you to Ancient Runes?"

"Sure," she said just before turning on her heels.

She could hear Harry's hurried footsteps as he struggled to keep up with her pace.

"Hermione, I'm sorry," he finally said.

She stopped and spun around to face him.

"Hmm, I wonder how long it took Ginny to convince you that you're in the wrong. What did she threaten you with Harry? The silent treatment? No sex for a month?" she snapped.

"Hermione, stop. Okay? She didn't have to convince me or threaten me with anything. I realized that I'm an idiot all on my own," he replied.

"What a surprise. There *is* something that Harry Potter can do by himself."

He huffed.

"Look, I know-"

"No, Harry, you look. You forced this little… *assignment* on me. Then you actually had the nerve to criticize me on how I carry it out? Not only that, but you insinuated that I have poor judgment. I know exactly what Draco is capable of, trust me. I know what I'm doing," she ranted.

She watched as Harry's eyebrows furrowed as he looked at her.

"You called him Draco…"

"If I'm pretending to be his friend I do have to acknowledge him by his name," she said matter-of-factly.

"Does he acknowledge you by yours?"

"Who cares? Why is this even important?"

"Hermione…you know that when I said get closer to him…I didn't mean like that," he said with an almost horrified look.

She heaved a sigh.

"Harry, you clearly didn't think this through, did you? Did it never occur to you that I may have to…know him in that way?"

She wasn't too fond of the idea of that but with the way things were going, she feared that her situation could end up like that very soon. Harry balled his hands into fists as his face turned a color that could rival Ron's hair.

"No, absolutely not."

"You don't have a say in this anymore, Harry," she said.

"Yes, I do and I forbid it."

"Do you want to know the truth about him or not?" she snapped.

Harry didn't respond.

"Okay then. You can't have it both ways, either one or the other. Trust me, Harry. That's all I'm asking for…"

After some time he let out a sigh before giving a jerky nod.

"We're…we're okay, right?" he asks, tentatively.

"Yes, Harry. We're okay," she says with a small smile.

On their way to class they both talk about the upcoming game. She doesn't voice her opinion that she's confident in Slytherin though.

Hermione picked at her food as she watched her friends, decked out in their Quidditch uniforms, re-enact what they believed was going to happen at the game. Was it wrong of her to almost wish that they would lose? They were confident in their abilities. It was no different than her and her academics. She found herself glancing at the Slytherin table only to find it empty of a fair haired blond. She did

catch the eyes of Theodore Nott though who threw a wink her way to which she responded with a scowl. He only laughed before popping a piece of sausage into his mouth.

She finally decided that she wasn't very hungry nor did she want to sit around and listen to Quidditch strategies. She rose from her seat and left with the excuse of 'early start on homework'. Walking up the staircase, she ran into the subject of her thoughts. Said subject looked really good in his uniform, she noted.

"Come to find me, did you?"

"No. I just got tired of listening to Quidditch talk. Plus, I wasn't all that hungry."

"Well, we'll have to do something about that appetite of yours, won't we," he said with a smirk.

She crossed her arms as she felt heat rise to her cheeks.

"Can you stop with all of the innuendos?"

He touched his chest in mock outrage.

"I'm just trying to make conversation, love. It's not my fault if you can't control that perverted mind of yours," he teased.

She rolled her eyes just before walking past him.

"Don't forget about our bet."

She turned around.

"I wouldn't dream of it," she replied.

His smirk grew as he turned around and began to make his way towards the Great Hall.

"Draco," she called.

He spun around mid-step just as she began walking towards him. His intense gaze followed her as she stopped directly in front of him and leaned up on the tip of her toes before gently pressing her lips to the center of his cheek.

"Good luck," she whispered as she pulled back, a faint blush staining her cheeks.

The corner of his mouth lifted to form a crooked smile as he backed up and turned around, making his way towards the Great Hall.

"Another ten points to Gryffindor!"

Hermione had gotten to the game just in time to see both Gryffindor and Slytherin tied at thirty points. It seemed that Luna wasn't getting distracted for once. However, Hermione had to eat those words not a minute later when Luna began to comment on the odd shape of a cloud overhead. Hermione softly smiled at her blonde friend before looking out onto the field. She could see Harry floating around, in search of the snitch. Ron, as keeper, was in front of the goal and her eyes finally caught Ginny as she blurred past them at an impressive speed.

Her eyes finally landed on Draco, looking every bit as determined and fierce in his search for the snitch. Upon looking closer, she could see that his face was set in stone; he was livid. With a more in depth observation, she noted that he wasn't the only one. It looked as if every member of his team was beyond pissed, but she couldn't understand why. They weren't losing, in fact, they were tied and they still had a chance to win the game. A small stab of shame went through her as she realized that she was rooting for Draco to win.

Hermione moved her way to the front just as Ginny nearly crashed into a Slytherin player who she recognized as Zabini. As the minutes ticked on it looked as if Draco was getting angrier and angrier by the second, if that were even possible. Suddenly, there was a commotion in the crowd as Draco dived down at blinding speed to

what she could only assume was the snitch. Harry was right behind him. She bit her lip and peered up at the two of them as they swerved and twisted in between the players.

"It looks as if the snitch has been spotted."

You're a little late, Luna , Hermione thought with a soft chuckle. Everyone watched with baited breath as both Draco and Harry were neck and neck in the chase for the snitch. But it was a sudden movement, on Harry's part, that determined the outcome of the game. She narrowed her eyes as she watched Harry swerve in Draco's direction. It was so subtle that if she hadn't been paying such close attention then she would have missed it. Draco, trying to avoid Harry, over corrected and veered off of the path of the snitch and in turn…

"Harry Potter's caught the snitch!"

Her ears were filled with the roar of the crowd as everyone around her cheered, but she wasn't. She was too busy thinking. Draco had gone on and on about their plays. She had been confident that they would win and Hermione Granger was almost never wrong. More importantly, she couldn't believe that she had won the bet. Something didn't add up. Now her attention was on Draco and the look of absolute fury upon his face. His expression darkened even more when Harry looked at him, a smug expression on his face. Suddenly, Draco's expression changed...drastically. His entire face went blank just before a familiar glint passed through his eyes and his lips curved into a smirk. She recognized that look; he was about to do something, something she probably wasn't going to like. As if he read her mind, his eyes found hers as if he knew where she was all along.

She scowled at him. Just what on earth was he planning? His sudden change in attitude was unnerving to say the least, it put her on edge. It was-! Her thought process went completely blank as she realized, in horror, that he was flying straight towards her. It seemed that amongst the cheers and excitement, she wasn't the only one to

notice as one by one people began to look at her. She was frozen as he slowed less than a foot from where she was standing. She noticed that more people were beginning to look their way now.

"I came to collect that second condition now," he said with a smirk.

Her eyes widened.

"Draco-"

Her protest was cut short as he leaned over and captured her lips in a mind blowing kiss. She could hear the gasps and exclamations of shock all around them, but she couldn't bring herself to focus on that. She couldn't concentrate on the fact that Draco Malfoy was kissing her in front of the entire school. She could only focus on the way his lips expertly moved over hers and the way his tongue came out to dart over her bottom lip just before his teeth took said bottom lip in between them. He tasted like mint and chocolate and he smelled… heavenly. The fog finally cleared when he pulled away to glare down at Harry on the field with a smirk. Hermione blinked, still in a daze.

It was still loud, but now she could hear her and Draco's name being uttered everywhere she turned. Her eyes reluctantly landed on Harry, and for the love of Merlin she wished that the ground would just swallow her up. His entire face had gone red and she was sure that was murderous intent she saw in his eyes. She turned and began to make her way down when Draco began to lower himself onto the field. She, and so many others, got down there just in time to see Harry throw the first punch. She couldn't see the rest for people shoving their way in front of her to get a good look.

"Move," she exclaimed as she elbowed her way through.

"All of you, return to the main building. Now," she heard Professor McGonagall shout.

Hermione came to an abrupt halt upon seeing both Draco and Harry with their wands pointed at each other. A nasty bruise was beginning

to form on Harry's cheek and one on his chin. Draco's fair skin was blemished with the smattering of blood just under his nose. Aside from her and a few teachers, the only people on the field were the two Quidditch teams.

"Is there anything you have to say for yourself, Mr. Potter? Mr. Malfoy?"

McGonagall's question went unanswered, but Hermione didn't miss the venomous look Harry threw in her direction. Her eyes were focused on Draco as McGonagall continued to chew them out for their behavior. Hermione couldn't help but to feel mildly responsible even though she knew that she didn't force Harry to start fighting.

"…A week's worth of detention for the both of you and you'll each have to sit out your next Quidditch game. You best be on your way to the infirmary."

With that, McGonagall turned on her heels and exited the field with a huff. No one moved, but no one ignored the way Harry was looking at Draco.

"Why so upset, Potter? It's not like *I* spied on *your* Quidditch practices," Draco sneered.

Her eyes found Harry's when he didn't say anything. Draco glanced at her one last time before striding off of the field, his teammates following after him, throwing glares at the Gryffindor team along the way. The Gryffindor team began to slowly make their way off of the field when it became obvious that Harry wasn't going anywhere. The tension in the air was thick as she stood alone with only Ginny as Harry and Ron glared at her.

"Are you really going to just pretend like you didn't just… *kiss* Draco Malfoy?" Harry hissed, eyes wild and angry.

"Did you really spy on his team's practices?" she demanded.

Neither Harry nor Ron said anything and she noticed that Ginny was staring at them with wide eyes, clearly not aware of this fact. Hermione shook her head before brushing past them, only stopping when Harry grabbed her arm and spun her around.

"Where are you going? Back to *him?* " he snapped, eyes blazing.

"Not that it's any of your business, but yes. I am. I do feel somewhat responsible for his nose," she said firmly.

"Since when do you care about the likes of him?" Ron sneered.

"Who else am I supposed to worry about, right now? The oh-so-honorable Quidditch players who cheat and pick fights with underserving people?" she retorted just before exiting the field.

"I thought I might find you here. Although, I wasn't sure…"

He turned around to look at her.

"How's your nose?" she asked.

He wiggled it a little.

"A little sensitive, but other than that Madame Pomfrey fixed me up real nice," he answered.

She walked to stand beside him and looked down over the grounds of Hogwarts. It had been some hours since the game and the sun was starting to go down. It really was a nice view from the top of the Astronomy Tower.

"You kissed me…in front of everyone," she said after a while.

"That I did."

She could almost hear the smirk in his voice. She turned to face him.

"I know that you're angry at Harry for spying on your team, but I wish you hadn't done that."

"I'm not sorry," he said as he turned to face her.

She looked away from his heated gaze.

"If you came up here seeking an apology, you'll be sorely disappointed. I will not apologize for kissing you and I sure as hell won't apologize for doing it in front of the whole school. I have no regrets about staking a claim on what's mine for everyone to see."

"I do not belong to you. I'm a human being, not some object," she declared.

His only reply was a smirk and that annoyed her even more.

"…I broke up with Harry," Ginny whispered.

Hermione's shoulders sagged as she let out a sad sigh.

"Why? I thought that you were head over heels for him," Hermione questioned.

Ginny merely stared at Hermione for a minute or two with the strangest look before looking away.

"You know how you have this idea of something in your head? You have spent years picturing what it would be like, feel like. You've put it on this pedestal and then when you finally get it…it's nothing like you imagined. It's horribly…disappointing."

Hermione's heart lurched as Ginny's voice cracked. She wrapped her arms around her friend.

"It just…it hurts. I was in love with the idea of us and it was nothing like I expected it to be…"

"I'm so sorry," she murmured.

"Me too," Ginny whispered as she sadly stared at the refection of Hermione in her mirror.

"Listen, Malfoy, I did what you asked of me now *pay up* ," the boy demanded.

Draco slammed his fist on his desk as he stood up. He was already beyond pissed at losing the game, and now he had to deal with this.

"Why would I do that Sykes? I told you to ruff her up a bit until I got there. Not try to take her bloody head off!"

"You were running late. I couldn't keep chasing her all around the damn castle," the darker blond reasoned.

Draco exhaled.

"Besides, you got there in time and saved the day. Hell, I saw that kiss at the game. You got what you wanted, now give me what I want. You should be lucky that I'm not demanding extra for using the Cruciatus Curse on me."

Draco reached into his drawer and pulled out a small sack before dropping it into the other boy's hand. Sykes' only response was a small glare before he exited Draco's room.

"Draco."

He turned to face the girl who'd been hidden in the back corner of his room. He felt his body take aflame as he raked his eyes all the way from her unruly curls to her petite feet.

"Why can't I look in the mirror?" she asked with a huff. "I know you're into this, but I at least usually see *who* I'm playing dress up as."

"...because I said so," he stated as he began to loosen his tie.

He grabbed her by the hand and pulled her closer. *She isn't really her, but it will have to do for now* , he thought as he pushed the girl onto his bed.

Shoutout to whentheangelscry for giving me a wonderful idea and I really wanted Slytherin to win for a change, but an angry Draco is fun to write. And yes I did do another TVD/Damon reference

Chapter 8

I'm going to apologize in advance. Part of me was like no this story is dark enough, but the other half was like no! Let's go darker. This chapter is a major turning point. Also, no matter what happens in this chapter know that Dramione is endgame. Some of you may have doubts after this chapter, but do not worry.

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Disclaimer: I own nothing

Hermione settled herself onto the bundle of blankets and pillows as Draco stood in the center of the room, taking everything in. For their date —cue shudder— she had transformed the Room of Requirement into the inside of a cozy cabin. There was a fire place across from her and a decent sized kitchenette area to their right. She repressed a grimace as she realized just how… *cozy* it was. *But cozy is good* , she thought as Harry's words rang in her ear. *Get close to him* . Draco finally settled down beside her with a small smirk.

"Not bad," he approved.

"I finally got the Malfoy stamp of approval. My life is complete," she dryly commented as she took a sip of her Pumpkin Juice.

She watched as Draco did the same, only his cup was filled with Fire Whiskey and as far as he knew, so was hers. Was getting him drunk the most original idea? No, but for once Hermione Granger was at a loss on how to go about this. She had little to no experience where

boys were concerned, and she wasn't even sure if Viktor counted. She didn't know how to be coy or flirt. She didn't know how to make a boy so enamored with her to the point where he wanted to spill all of his deepest, darkest secrets. But she guessed that she had a bit of an advantage due to how Draco felt about her. Besides, their conversation last week in the library could have counted as flirting. All she had to do was do what she did then. If only she knew what that was.

"So…let's get to it, shall we?"

She could see the corner of his lip curve upwards behind his cup.

"Eager, are we?" he asked as he set said cup down.

"Surely you of all people must know that I'm only here for the answers," she replied.

He tilted his head to the side, seemingly deep in thought.

"I have another idea," he said after some time.

"This wasn't part of the deal," she said with a frown.

He held up his finger.

"...but we are on a date. So…why not both enjoy yourself and get your answers," he proposed.

She regarded him for a few moments. The last thing she wanted to do was enjoy this so called date, but she knew Draco and she knew that more than likely this was the only way to get him to talk. He grinned as she gave a jerky nod.

"Let's play a game loosely based off of Truth or Dare. There are only questions, but you must start the question with 'I dare you to tell me' dot, dot, dot. Easy enough," he asked with a smirk.

"What's the catch," she asked with narrowed eyes.

His smirk grew, causing her heart to flutter.

"If one of us feels like the other is lying, we call each other out on it. If it is indeed a lie then they take a drink. If not, then the accuser takes a drink," he explained as he set the bottle of Fire Whiskey in between them.

She closed her eyes. She could be completely honest and have him know…personal things about her or risk getting completely drunk. Either way she lost, but she was positive that if she did end up completely pissed not only would she not be able to remember any of his answers, but she would not put it past him to take advantage of her. Then again, knowing the extent of Draco's arrogance, he would be the type to get more satisfaction out of a sober girl begging for him rather than a wasted one who had no idea what was going on.

"Fine," she sighed as she opened her eyes.

"Wonderful. Ladies first," he replied.

Hermione was unsure on whether or not to dive in head first or work her way up to it.

"I dare you to tell me how old you were when you…lost your virginity."

She cringed as soon as it left her lips. She couldn't sound more like a horny prepubescent teenage boy if she wanted to.

"Fourteen."

"Liar," she hissed in shock as she waited for him to take a drink.

There was no way he was telling the truth, but as he smirked and gestured to the bottle she realized, with horror, that he was indeed being truthful. She frowned as she hesitantly reached out and tipped it up to her lips, wincing as the unfamiliar burn traveled down her

throat. She should have considered his answer more carefully, because if she remembered correctly, fourteen *was* around the age where Draco stopped looking like a bony slimy haired snake and more like a fantasy of every thirteen year-olds dreams. She shouldn't have been too horrified to find out that he'd started having sex at such a young age.

"Now, let's see," he rubbed his chin as he pretended to think.

She sat up, guarded, as his eyes suddenly iced over, a dark look clinging to his features.

"I dare you to tell me how close you are with Potter and Weasley."

She frowned. That was it? From the expression on his face this seemed like an important question to him and she couldn't understand why.

"They're my best friends. Although, I've always been closer to Harry than Ron, for obvious reasons. I'm certain that if it wasn't for Harry, Ron and I wouldn't even be friends," she answered quietly as she recalled the things Ron had said about her in first year.

Draco stared at her for a moment before his face relaxed, obviously pleased with her answer. She pursed her lips as she thought about her next question.

"I dare you to tell me about your relationship regarding your parents…"

She trailed off as she saw him tense for a split second, but it was enough to let her know that the almighty Draco Malfoy had at least one weakness. She could see his jaw clenching for a few moments before he finally answered.

"I…resent Lucius more than anyone in this world."

Her eyes widened and her heart clenched at the venom in his voice in that one statement. Hermione knew who his father was and what he was like, but it didn't change how she felt at hearing that a son felt that way about his own father.

"Why?" she quietly asked.

If he noticed that she was technically asking a second question he didn't acknowledge it.

"Once upon time I had revered him. That was until I saw him for what he truly is; a spineless coward. I'm at a point in my life where I no longer care about me, but my mother...," he trailed off, shaking his head.

"He is the reason for many of the unspeakable things that have happened to us, that are still happening to us," he finished, his eyes gazing at something she would never see.

Hermione had an inkling as to what he was talking about, but she decided to keep it to herself. She would know for sure later, anyway.

"…And your mother?" she hesitantly asked.

Slowly but surely, his entire body relaxed and the corner of his lips curved upwards into a small crooked smile. It was such a drastic change in such a short amount of time that she was sure she could easily guess exactly how he felt about his mother.

"She means the world to me," he fiercely claimed, his voice dripping with conviction.

And Hermione was positive that she did mean the world to him, because it was that sentence alone that forced Hermione to see another side of Draco, a side she was sure didn't even exist. Hermione frowned as she realized that even though she sometimes saw Draco as a soulless monster, deep down, all monsters were

human and every soul could be saved. She truly believed that Draco could be saved.

Hermione watched with mirth as Draco set the bottle down. The fact that he actually had the nerve to call her a liar when it was revealed that she'd kissed two boys – two , not one- was comical. Of course he didn't need to know that the first had been in her younger school days as the result of a dare. She didn't know how long they'd been in here, but she was positive that it had been at least an hour. She repressed a sigh and instead opted for a deep breath as she prepared herself for her next question, for what she was sure was going to be her last question. Draco's sharp eyes rested on her with anticipation, as if he knew what she was going to ask, as if he had been waiting for it.

"I dare you to tell me…if you're really a Death Eater," she said, shakily.

A cruel smirk graced his features as he chuckled before he slowly stood up, causing her to lean her head back to gaze up at him. She frowned, wondering what his reaction was going to be. She imagined that he would laugh in her face and deny it or maybe even insult her intelligence, no doubt resulting in an argument. She didn't expect him to grab the sleeve of his shirt and yank it back, revealing the inside of his forearm. Hermione felt as if an ice cold bucket of water had been poured all over her. Whatever buzz she had felt from the few sips of Fire Whiskey she had taken was well and over with now. She was aware that she had been silent for quite some time now, but she couldn't focus on anything other than the dark, haunting eye sockets staring back at her from the skull that was plastered against his beautiful skin.

Her hands reached out to claw at the wall as she stood on shaky legs, her breath coming out in pants. She didn't understand. She had seen his arm, but… He was a wizard, for crying out loud! A simple concealment charm could have hidden it. She was so incredibly stupid! Her mouth had gone unbelievably dry as she slowly raised

her eyes to meet his, but for some reason she couldn't see his eyes. All she could see were the eyes of Narcissa Malfoy, reminding her that he could be saved. It was completely silent, save for her shallow pants.

"Why?" she finally asked, her voice cracking.

She took a stumbling step back as he took one forward. She couldn't decode the expression on his face and now, knowing what she knew, that unnerved her.

"Why not..." he chuckled.

She stared at him like a mad woman, trying to understand what could possibly be funny.

"Do you see me laughing? Do I look like I'm enjoying this **at all** ? Why…why would you-?"

"Sell my soul to Voldemort? If I told you that I'd have to kill you."

"Stop it! Just, stop," she snarled, digging her hands into her hair as she paced back and forth.

She had a hard time wrapping her head around the fact that Harry's suspicions had been right. Draco Malfoy was one of them now. That statement alone terrified her for so many reasons, reasons that she didn't even have the energy to analyze, right now. He was inside the castle with Harry and Dumbledore. Had he been reporting back to Voldemort this entire time? Or was there a much bigger picture than that, than him simply being a spy?

She stared at him through blurry eyes and with a horrified sob she realized that she was actually starting to pity him. She never believed that Draco was truly evil, despite the fact that Blaise had said otherwise. This had to have been forced on him. It made sense, because the pressure had to have been coming at him from all directions. She refused to believe the possibility that he… *No* , she

thought as she shook her head. Draco was a lot of things; cunning, crude and even a liar, but he was not evil.

"We can help you," she whispered.

An arched eyebrow was the only evidence of his surprise at her statement.

"Help me," he repeated.

"Yes! Whatever it is that they threatened you with-"

"You are an idiot," he interrupted in amusement, dragging out each word.

She inhaled as if she had been slapped.

"Why, because I believe that you can be saved? Because I don't think it's too late for you?" she hissed.

Despite her feelings towards him, Hermione would never wish the life of a Death Eater on anyone.

"...and…what makes you think…that I didn't want this?" he accentuated each pause with a step.

Hermione stumbled back at the dark tone in his voice and the intensity in his eyes. She shook her head.

"Because I don't believe that you're capable of-!"

She yelped in shock when he brought his hands down on each side of her with a bang. She stared at him with wide eyes as her fists tightened around her wand.

"And that's what just might get you killed, my sweet Gryffindor," he whispered against her ear.

Before Hermione knew what was happening, he had grabbed her fist and slammed it against the wall, *hard* . She hissed in pain as her wand fell and all too soon she was yanked away from the wall and her world was spinning. She inhaled as she landed none too gently on the stack of blankets and pillows, Draco's large frame above her.

"You must think that you're so smart," he purred as he trailed his nose down her cheek.

Hermione was shaking, she was actually shaking, because one, she had never been in a position like this before and two, she had never been in a position like this before with a *Death Eater* ; one whom she was embarrassingly attracted to. She laid her hand against his chest and pushed, but she could have been shoving a brick wall for all of the use it was doing her. He pulled back to look at her.

"Legilimens."

Hermione's eyes widened as she felt the pressure. She had read all about Occlumency and Legilimency, but reading about it and experiencing it were two very different things. It wasn't a pleasant feeling at all, the foreign feeling in her mind, someone forcing their way in there. It didn't last long, maybe a minute at the most, but she felt dizzy and out of breath. She was barely aware of the little nips Draco was making at her neck.

"Did you really think that you were going to come in here, get what you wanted and go running back to tell Potter? You must think that I'm really thick," he said, his voice laced with amusement.

"No, no," she mumbled, attempting to sit up.

She groaned when he shoved her back down. She looked up at him as he gazed down at her with the most peculiar expression. If she had to compare it to anything, she'd compare it to a look that a cat might give to a mouse trying to escape his claws.

"Go ahead, Hermione. Tell him everything we discussed and everything that happened. Divulge all. Of the dirty. Details," he growled.

And with that he dived in and sank his teeth into her shoulder. A pained shriek left her lips as she bucked beneath him. His hands were pinning hers down beside her and she didn't dare move her head, she was in enough pain as it was. She felt him slowly pull away before mumbling something that she couldn't understand, but if the tingling in her neck was anything to go by, she'd say that it was a spell. Her eyes widened when he pulled back, his lips slightly stained with *her* blood.

"You clearly have some sort of vampire complex, because this is the second time that you've bitten me," she croaked.

He chuckled as he trailed kisses down the side of her face.

"Get off of me," she snarled.

He ignored her and began to kiss down her chest, towards her stomach. She didn't believe that Draco would do the unspeakable, but she was going to be damned if she gave him the chance to prove her wrong. Ignoring the sensations that were spreading throughout her body, she bucked her knees into his chest.

"Get. Off."

He chuckled, yet again, as he came back up to face her.

"Do you really think that I'd force myself on you? Hermione, Hermione…"

She could feel her heart nearly bursting as his tongue came out to flick the shell of her ear.

"I told you that when you and I finally end this silly game we are playing, you will be begging me for it," he purred as his hand came

up to brush a curl away from her face.

She used this brief moment to reach up and slap him, *hard* . The sound seemed to have echoed off of the walls and even after a minute, Hermione could swear she still heard it ringing in her ears. She was positive that she didn't hit him hard enough to hurt him even if the force of the blow did turn his head.

"Heh," was his only reply as he reached up to touch the side of his face.

Without warning, she was suddenly yanked up and her back was pressed against his chest. His arms felt constricting as he bent down to press his lips against her cheek.

"I really enjoyed our date, sweetheart. Maybe we can go out again sometime," he whispered against her skin.

"I'm curious on how you'll manage that after you've gotten expelled," she whispered, shakily.

She trembled as he pressed into her backside, forcing her to lay her hand on the wall to brace herself.

"Are you going to tell on me?" he purred.

She didn't respond, only gulped as one of his hands slid down to trace patterns against the exposed skin of her hip. He suddenly backed up and flung her away from him, causing her to stumble as she reached for the door.

"Go run to Dumbledore, Hermione. Tell him and Potter everything."

She regarded his stance against the wall, feet and arms crossed as if he didn't have a care in the world. His head was tilted and a devilish smirk graced his features as his eyes bore into hers.

" *I dare you* ," he whispered just before she ran out.

"Did you hear what happened to Ron?"

Hermione looked up from her book in shock as she stared at Padma.

"What? No-."

"Apparently, he was on his way to the prefect's bathroom last night when he was attacked. They didn't use magic either, used Muggle methods to beat him," Padma explained.

Hermione's eyes widened. She blinked, trying to process the information.

"What?" she whispered.

"Yeah, some random attack. Well, obviously not random with everything that's going on. It's…"

Hermione didn't stick around to listen to anymore. All she could think about was Draco's eyes when he practically encouraged her to tell of what she knew. She hadn't had a chance to yet, but she should have known that when it came to Draco, nothing was ever encouraged. She should have known that it was a threat. She ignored the looks she was given as she practically sprinted to the infirmary; she was used to them by now. Apparently her and Draco's impromptu kiss was still the hot gossip. Almost all of Gryffindor didn't know how to act around her, now and all of the Slytherins wanted her dead, especially the girls for daring to touch 'their Draco'.

Harry was already there when she entered; sitting in a chair, and Ginny was absent. Lavender was beside his bed. She ignored her dark haired friend and the blonde bimbo, and went straight for Ron.

"I'm fine, I'm fine," he waved at her.

But despite Ron's statement he was clearly not fine. She could see that the potions had healed a lot of his bruising if the yellowing skin

was anything to go by, but his eye was still slightly swollen and his arm was in a sling. Hermione opened her mouth to say something, but she didn't even know where to begin. I'm sorry I thought that I could take on Draco 'Death Eater' Malfoy? I apologize for getting you beat up because of a Death Eater's fixation on me? That didn't sound so good to her, but she really wanted to know how this happened. Apparently Ron knew her well because he answered her unspoken question.

"I don't know, okay. I was just walking and then out of nowhere I'm socked right in the face-."

"It was Slytherin, probably payback for the game. I just know it," Harry interrupted as he came to stand beside her.

She could feel the anger rolling off of him in waves. She wanted to disagree with his accusation, but she couldn't because she knew that it was Slytherin. Well…at least one. She knew that this was a warning. If he wanted to seriously injure Ron he could have, but he didn't and he was letting her know that. In his sick mind he probably saw this as an act of mercy. He probably expected a thank you.

"Where's Ginny?" she asked.

"Going to get me some grub," Ron answered with a wince as he adjusted his position with the help of Lavender.

Hermione didn't miss the looks that the blonde was sending her, but she didn't have it in her to care. Ron was her friend, and he was in the infirmary for Merlin's sake! She wasn't going against their agreement. She was surprised when Ron reached out and pulled her into a hug.

"I can see you worrying, stop it. Alright? I'll be fine"

She sighed as she pulled away with a nod. It took everything in her not to break down and fall apart in front of everyone, because then they'd know for sure that something was wrong.

"I'll be back later to see how you're doing."

As she got to the door she was stopped.

"Can I walk with you? Please," Harry whispered.

She heaved a sigh before walking out, Harry beside her. The corridor was quiet aside from the sound of their shoes against the floor.

"McGonagall has suspended me from playing for the rest of the year," he said suddenly.

She stopped in surprise and turned to look at him.

"Why?" she asked tentatively.

"I told her that I spied on Slytherin's practices."

Hermione blinked in surprise before she stepped towards him, some of her animosity seeping away.

"Why would you do that?" she whispered.

He looked away before resting his glassy eyes on her.

"...because I can't stand the thought of you walking around and hating me," he whispered.

"Harry…I could-I could never hate you," she said as she wrapped her arms around him.

"It was stupid. I know that, but I just-"

"I don't understand, Harry. You guys are good. You didn't need to cheat," she said as she pulled away.

"They've gotten really good, Hermione. Like…really good. I was scared that we were actually going to lose," he responded as he stared at her.

She tried not to dwell on the way her cheeks flushed as his hands pressed against the small of her back.

"McGonagall said that there's going to be a rematch too. If we lose… we lose. It's more than what I deserve," he said with a shrug.

"I never hated you, Harry. I was just disappointed and even a little shocked that you would do something like that."

"You…you defended *Malfoy* . It made me so angry that you could chew me out and then go running to him," he hissed as his fingers dug into her back.

"Harry-"

"That…that was what made me realize just how badly I screwed up. I made Malfoy look like the good guy."

They both chuckled at the thought, but inside Hermione was screaming. There was no way Draco could ever be the good guy, but she was drawn to him so what did that say about her? The air suddenly grew tense as she stood there, in the middle of the corridor, in Harry's arms. He opened his mouth to say something when they were interrupted.

"Well, isn't this adorable."

Hermione pulled away from Harry as if she had been burned and turned to face the intruder. Draco stood about three yards away from them, hands shoved into his pockets. Everything about his posture and face said that he was uninterested, but the way his eyes bore holes into her said otherwise.

"What do you care, Malfoy?"

"I don't, Potter. I just felt that I should do my good deed for the day by breaking up this *disgusting* display of public affection," he sneered.

Harry suddenly stepped forward, fists clenched by his side.

"I know it was you."

"Come again?" Draco innocently asked.

"Ron. I know that it was you and if not then I know you were at least behind it," he snapped.

"I'd deny it, but what's the point. I'd gladly bash his face in any day. I should have skinned him alive."

The words had barely left Draco's mouth before Harry tackled him to the ground. No one else was around and that just baffled her. Hermione knew that kids ditched class all the time, so the fact that today of all days they decided to be productive... She ran towards them as Draco rolled them over and hurled his fist at Harry. She pulled out her wand, but Draco reached out and grabbed her wrist, standing up and pulling her against him.

"Did Hermione tell you about our date, Potter," he asked as he looked down at Harry who was clutching his nose.

She struggled against him as his grip tightened.

"Oh, but you already knew about it, didn't you? It got a little steamy if you know what I mean..." he wiggled his eyebrows as he chuckled.

"Shut up, you slimy-"

"I bet she didn't tell you that," Draco interrupted with a smirk.

Harry reached out to grab at him, but Draco simply sent him a swift kick to the stomach. His other hand came to cover her mouth before she could scream as Harry began to cough.

"Touch him again and I'll string him up by his loins," he calmly whispered in her ear.

He leaned down and pecked her cheek before flinging her away and disappearing around the corner. She crawled over to Harry as he sat up.

"Harry-"

"He knows," he hissed.

"He's quite decent at Legilimency. Actually, he's impressively good," she admitted.

"All the more reason to think he's a Death Eater," he snapped as he stood up.

She didn't comment on that.

"We need to tell Dumbledore-"

"No. I'd rather take care of that tosser myself."

She sighed.

"Harry, no. Dumbledore will-"

"Give him two months' worth of detention! I want to make sure he gets what he deserves," he snapped before turning around and making his way down the corridor, she not too far behind.

Hermione covered her ears as her best friend squealed. Clothes were strewn all over her dorm room and more were being added to the mess as Ginny rifled through her wardrobe. She was currently looking for something to work with as a foundation for her dress. Why? Because it wasn't too long ago that it was announced during dinner that a Winter Ball would take place this weekend just before they left for the break. The announcement was rewarded with the expected gasps of delight from the girls and groans from the boys. Hermione probably fit into the boys' category. With the recent events

in her life, the last thing she was concerned about was some stupid dance. But seeing as how Ginerva Weasley was her best friend, there was no way that she was getting out of this.

"This one," Ginny cried as she pulled out a short silver dress.

The entire top half was sheer with intricate, glittery designs along the front and sleeves. The bottom half was a simple silver.

"It's already almost perfect. All we have to do is lengthen it and do something about the back."

"What? Why? I like it like that," Hermione complained.

"Hermione, the neckline is so high. There's nothing wrong with that, but we'll probably have to lower the back to even it out. You've got to show *some* skin," she giggled.

Hermione agreed with a small sigh.

"So Dean asked me to go to the ball with him during dinner," Ginny said.

"That's good, right? I mean things didn't work out with Harry and you at least like Dean."

"Yeah, I guess," she sighed.

Hermione looked over her shoulder at her friend.

"I'm not sensing good here, Ginny. What's going on?" she gently asked.

Ginny suddenly plopped down onto Hermione's bed with a soft sob.

"I wanted things to work out with Harry. I really did, but I couldn't force something that wasn't there. If I could, trust me when I say that he and I would be all loved up right now."

Hermione moved to go sit beside her friend. She knew how much Ginny loved Harry and she was sad to see her friend hurting.

"Things can change, Gin. You two are so young, right now that maybe you're just not right for each other. That doesn't mean that years down the road from now you two can't find your way back to each other," Hermione reassured.

"What if…what if I told you that he never even liked me in that way?" Ginny whispered.

Hermione pulled back in shock.

"What? Why would you think that?"

"He told me."

"He told you?" Hermione asked rather loudly.

"He's practically in love with someone else. He told me that he only dated me to make her jealous, but it didn't work. Then he said that he tried to make things work with me because we're such good friends, but he couldn't force feelings. So he came clean and said that it wasn't fair to either one of us, but me especially."

Hermione didn't know what to say to that. She was upset with Harry for misleading Ginny the way he did, but in true Harry fashion he did try to turn things around and make them right.

"Are you upset with him?" Hermione asked.

"I was at first, but not even an hour later I had let it go because I knew that he didn't feel that way about me. The whole relationship just felt off. Deep down I knew that, but I was just kidding myself. I wanted to believe that the boy of my dreams could actually return my feelings."

"Well who is this girl? That's what I want to know because I don't like the fact that he chose her over you. Is it Cho?" Hermione asked with

a gasp.

Ginny chuckled as she shook her head.

"No, no. she's actually a pretty great girl. She's super nice and smart-"

"So you know who it is? He told you?"

"Hermione, let's just drop it. I-"

Ginny was interrupted by a knock on Hermione's door. With a small frown, Hermione stood and made her to the door. Hermione's eyebrows rose when she spotted Parvati. Parvati was in the group of Gryffindors who iced her out after the infamous kiss. Of course, this was only *after* Hermione had kindly told her to mind her business after she'd asked Hermione, yet again, about the origins of her and Draco's scandalous love affair. It was no secret that she was conjoined at the hip with Lavender Brown and Lavender was known to have a big mouth. Hermione was far from stupid. She much preferred Padma.

"Yes?"

Parvati glanced behind her before resting her eyes on her with a small smirk.

"Harry's downstairs, says he wants to talk to you," she said rather loudly before walking back down the stairs.

Hermione turned around to face Ginny who sent her a small smile.

"It's probably nothing. I'll be right back."

She ignored Lavender and Parvati's eyes as she made her way down the stairs and through the common room. Harry was sitting in a chair near the door. He stood with a small smile before leading her out of the door. They stopped a few feet away from the portrait.

"Is this about Draco?"

"No, actually," he said with a chuckle.

She patiently waited for him to talk.

"Do you want to go to the ball with me?"

Hermione's eyebrows rose in surprise. She wasn't expecting that.

"Really?"

"As friends. I figured that you're single and I'm recently single, so why not just go together," he clarified with a shrug.

Despite the fact that he seemed relaxed about this, something about his eyes conveyed that he was anxious.

"Okay. Why not," she answered with a small smile.

He exhaled as he nodded with a smile.

"Great. I'll see you later then," he said before walking down the stairs.

She made her way back inside only to be greeted by Lavender.

"Stealing your best friend's boyfriend now? How cliché," Lavender remarked in a snide manner.

Hermione rolled her eyes as she brushed past her.

"Considering that you're where the gossip starts and ends, you should know that Harry and Ginny broke up weeks ago. Secondly, he and I are just going as friends. You eavesdropped on everything else, so why didn't you hear that?" Hermione snapped.

"I wouldn't be surprised if they broke up because of you. You're spreading it for Malfoy. Why not Harry too?" Lavender commented

with a chuckle.

Hermione spun around so fast that she almost made herself dizzy.

"Are you implying that I would betray Ginny like that? She is practically my sister. Neither Harry nor I would do anything to hurt her and you know that so what's the real issue here? Why are you so adamant on trying to make my life so difficult? Is it because of Ron? Are you *that* threatened by my friendship with him? Well guess what, Lavender, your insecurity issues are just that; *your* issues. They have nothing to do with me so stop dragging me into them."

Lavender's face twisted into one of rage.

"Insecure? You think that I of all people am insecure? Why, because I don't trust you around my boyfriend?" she shrieked.

By now their argument had drawn a small crowd of spectators.

"I don't think, I know. I told you, Lavender. I'm not interested in Ron. He's my best friend and that is all. Even if that weren't the case, anyone can see how much he fancies you. So if you don't trust me you should at least trust him and your relationship, but you can't even do that can you? You doubt yourself so much that you don't even trust that your own boyfriend wants you!"

Hermione didn't see Lavender move her hand until it was too late and by then the sound of the slap had echoed around the room. She heard the collective gasp and hush of murmurs as her head turned. Hermione rubbed her cheek before facing Lavender and returning the favor, twice as hard. She watched as the other girl stumbled before flying at her in a rage. They were a hot mess of tangled limbs and hair as they rolled around on the common room floor. If someone had told her yesterday that today she would be in a fight with Lavender Brown, she would have had them sent to St. Mungo's.

She was aware of voices around her, but she didn't care. All she cared about was making Lavender eat her words. She didn't even

care when she was yanked off of the other girl by two pairs of hands.

"Get her out of here before the Heads come in here or worse; McGonagall," she heard one of the seventh years say.

She watched as Lavender was forcibly taken out of the portrait door while she was dragged upstairs.

"Hermione, hold still."

"I'm sorry, okay? It stings," she replied.

"Well I didn't tell you to go and get into a fight, Ms. Prefect," Ginny chuckled.

Hermione groaned.

"What if McGonagall finds out? I can't be Head Girl if I get into fights! I don't even know what happened. It's just…after everything she's done and said to me and then she was saying that stuff about Harry and you… Then she hit me! She actually hit me, so I hit her back," Hermione shrugged.

"Hermione you know that I don't care that Harry asked you to the ball right? It's just as friends and even if it wasn't I wouldn't care. You're the only girl I'd ever want him with aside from me."

"Never in a million years," Hermione chuckled.

"You say that. There, you're good as new," Ginny said.

"Thanks," Hermione said with a sigh as she touched her forehead.

"Apparently, Lavender looks much worse than you do. Who knew you had it in you," Ginny laughed.

Hermione couldn't help but to crack a small smile.

A soft gasp caused Hermione to turn around. Ginny was standing in the doorway, her eyes wide and mouth agape. She was a vision in a shimmery gold dress with spaghetti straps, the bottom half covered in lace and it cut extremely low, showcasing Ginny's bosom. It was so Ginny.

"What's wrong?" Hermione asked.

"N-nothing. You just…you look divine," Ginny said in awe.

"Oh. Thanks," Hermione said with a small blush.

Her and Ginny had lengthened the dress and lowered the back yesterday. When Hermione hadn't been paying attention, Ginny had added a lengthy slit to showcase her right leg, much to Hermione's chagrin. She did have to admit that the dress did look better with the slit though.

"Can you help me with this, please? These curls won't stay in place," Hermione complained.

"No, no leave it. The stray curls give you this romantic look," Ginny said as she came up behind her.

"Really?" Hermione asked, uncertainty lacing her voice.

Most of her hair was piled on top of her head, but one third of the back spilled down in tight curls down her back.

"Yes. Harry is going to die," she whispered.

"What's that," Hermione gestured to the box in Ginny's hand.

"Oh! Um, I'm actually not sure. Would you believe me if I told you that it was owl delivered to the Common Room with your name on it?"

Hermione turned around on her chair with a frown of confusion.

"Really? Who is it from?"

"I don't know," Ginny replied as Hermione made her way to the other side of the room.

The box was black with a silver symbol of some sort on top. Upon opening it, Hermione was graced with the sight of a silver ribbon with a small green stone in the center.

"A ribbon? Why-?"

"No, I think it's supposed to go around your neck," Ginny interrupted as she removed it from the box.

Hermione lifted her hair as Ginny wrapped it around her neck and tied it in the back, finishing it in a bow.

"It's pretty. I wonder who sent it," Ginny wondered as she studied the box.

"Maybe my parents sent it as an early Christmas Gift or something."

"Maybe it's from a secret admirer," Ginny said, making a kissy face.

Hermione rolled her eyes just before grabbing Ginny's hand and making their way down to the Common Room. Dean's expression when Ginny stepped down was comical. Anyone could see that he was head over heels for her. She wanted Ginny to be happy so Hermione hoped that the two of them would work.

"See you down there, Hermione. Oh and Harry's outside," Dean called as they stepped out.

Hermione slid her wand up her sleeve for the time being just before following them out. Harry's back was to her as he stood in front of the stairs.

"Hey. Are you ready?"

Harry turned around to respond, but paused as soon as he opened his mouth. He blinked before slowly walk towards her.

"You look…beautiful," he whispered.

"Thanks. You look beautiful too," she joked.

Harry laughed along with her as he led her down the stairs.

"Ron will be there. He was released the other day."

"That's good. Did you go to Dumbledore about…?," she trailed off as she looked at Harry.

"I told you, Hermione. I want to make sure that he gets what he deserves and I want to do it myself."

"Harry-"

"I don't want to talk about this anymore, Hermione," Harry said just as they stepped inside the Great Hall.

Hermione looked around in awe at the Winter Wonderland theme. She said hello to familiar faces as they made their way towards their friends. She was easily sucked into the familiar group of girls.

"The Heads went all out this year, huh," Padma said as she looked around.

"I guess they're trying to go out with a bang since it's their last year and all," Ginny added.

Hermione nodded in agreement.

"May I have this dance?"

Hermione slowly lifted her eyes to stare into a pair of intense grey silver like ones. She felt her heart speed up and her skin flush as he

raked his eyes over her. She had barely laid her hand in his before he was gliding into the sea of dancers. She laid her other hand on his shoulder as he expertly moved around the other couples.

"Have I told you that you look amazing tonight?" he whispered.

She gulped before answering.

"No, you didn't," she said as she looked anywhere but him.

She looked back at him in shock when his fingers painfully dug into her waist.

"It's rude to look away when someone is trying to pay you a compliment."

She narrowed her eyes, but continued to stare at him.

"You look…good enough to eat," he whispered as he leaned down towards her ear.

"You hurt, Ron. How could you do something like that?" she tearfully asked.

She was so angry with him. She thought that he at least had some boundaries, but she was beginning to see that Blaise was right.

"You got the message, didn't you?" he asked, eyebrow raised.

"You are…disgusting and-"

"And yet your heart races whenever I come near. You flush like a ripe tomato whenever I glance at you. I wonder how many pairs of knickers have been ruined because of me," he mused with a smirk.

She flung herself away from him in anger, but he only yanked her back so that they were together, chest to chest.

"It's nothing to be embarrassed about, Hermione. I think it's hot," he whispered against her skin.

"Am I interrupting something?"

Hermione turned to face Harry whose eyes were fixated on Draco.

"Not at all," he said as he sized Harry up with a smirk before walking past them, his fingers brushing against her arm along the way.

"Are you alright?" Harry asked.

She nodded with a sigh.

"Come on," he said as he grabbed her hand and wrapped his other arm around her waist.

She laid her arm and head on his shoulder as they began to sway.

"I'm scared, Harry. I don't like feeling scared," she quietly confessed.

"Of Malfoy?"

Yes.

"No, of…what's going to happen. Aren't you?" she asked as she pulled back to look at him.

"I try not to think about it, but yeah… I suppose that I am."

She laid her head back on his shoulder and closed her eyes as they moved. Neither one of them spoke, just swayed and listened to the Weird Sisters belt out on stage. Hermione didn't want this moment to end. She didn't want to deal with petty girls and Death Eaters. She just wanted a normal life with her friends. Hermione would never wish that she was never a witch, ever. But right now, it wasn't looking so bad.

"Can we go somewhere else?"

She looked up to see Harry gazing down at her with a soft expression.

"You want to leave?" she asked.

He nodded with a gulp.

"Okay," she said with a nod before following him out.

They walked through the corridors and she found that she liked being in the main part of the school when there was a dance. It was quiet and the atmosphere was so calming, Christmas in the air.

"I love the holidays," she whispered as they walked past a row of windows.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, it's the only time I can eat like a pig and no one will judge me for it."

She spun around as Harry began to laugh.

"What?"

"I wasn't expecting that," he laughed.

"Sorry," she mumbled, suddenly embarrassed.

"Don't apologize. I love that about you."

She started in surprise as she stared at him and he stared back, clearly not meaning to say what he said. But then his shoulders sagged as they released tension and a thoughtful look crossed his face.

"I love that you put schoolwork above all else. I love that you're passionate about things that mean so much to you-"

"Harry," she whispered in uncertainty as she stared at him like a deer caught in headlights.

"You correct me all the time and maybe someone else would find that annoying, but I don't. I love that you're so smart. You could solve some of the hardest problems within minutes," he continued as he walked towards her.

Hermione didn't move, just blinked as she tried to process what was happening.

"Your curls never stay in place. They're always so wild and sometimes…sometimes when I'm in class I daydream about what it would be like to wake up to such a sight every morning."

He reached out to finger said curls.

"I think about what it would be like to kiss you," he whispered.

"Harry," she whispered.

"I love you, Hermione. I love you so much and I don't care about how Ginny feels about me or how Ron felt about you-"

"Ron? Ginny? Oh my- *me* . It's me. That's why you broke up with Ginny! How could you do that to her?"

Hermione was outraged and confused all at once, her emotions the equivalent of a whirlpool. She shook her head at him, looking at him in an entirely new light as she processed this information.

"I know it was selfish, but for once I wanted to be selfish! I'm so scared that we might not make it out of this war, and I refuse to have any regrets. I'm in love with you, and now this whole thing with Malfoy-"

"Harry, it's not like-"

"Don't lie. Don't! You may not realize it, but I see how you act around him. I see the glances that you give him. You don't even notice that he's competition, but I do and I want you to pick me."

Whatever she was going to say was interrupted by Harry's lips. He wrapped his arms around her and backed her up against the wall as he moved his lips against hers. Harry was nice, attractive. He was safe and he was a good kisser, so why was she thinking about a certain blonde haired Death Eater right now? Why was she thinking about how he made her feel instead? Because even though Harry made her heart race he didn't make it explode. He made her skin tingle, but Draco made hers burn. Harry's kiss may have made her light headed, but one look from Draco made her knees weak. It was with this thought that she pulled away.

The only sound was the sounds of their short breaths as they both panted. Harry laid his forehead on hers as his fingers traced patterns on her back.

"Harry I…I need time. I'm sorry, but I c-can't-," she broke off with a sob as she ran.

She ran all the way to the Gryffindor Common Room, and she didn't stop until she had made it upstairs to her door. She burst in and plopped down onto her knees, her face in her hands. Of all times, of all times Harry wanted to do this! She couldn't deal with this right now. How long had he felt this way? How had she been so oblivious? So cut up in the sharp turn that her night had taken, she didn't hear him approach her trembling frame.

"What did he taste like?"

She spun around as she heard his voice. He was leaning against her door, a blank expression on his face. When did he get in? When did he close the door?

"How did you get in here?" she hissed.

He didn't respond, he merely walked towards her, a dark look gracing his features.

"You didn't answer my question."

Her eyes widened as she remembered what he'd asked.

"You saw us," she said as she slowly raised her eyes to meet his.

"I did," he said with a smirk.

"We are not together, so you have no reason-"

"Do I get a kiss?" he suddenly asked.

"What?"

He gently bent down to grab her hand and pulled her up. He gave her a gentle look, one that began to soothe her nerves.

"I just want one too. I realize that I haven't been on my best behavior and…I'm sorry for that. You just drive me crazy," he whispered as he leaned in.

She took a step back, but his hand on her waist stopped her. He brushed his nose against hers.

"Relax. I'm not going to lay a finger on you," he whispered as he brushed his lips against hers.

He smelled divine, it was intoxicating. Surely, he had been created for the sole purpose of trapping unsuspecting girls like her. Hermione inhaled and closed her eyes.

"Crucio."

Forgive me

Chapter 9

Disclaimer: I own nothing

Her eyes widened in a mixture of shock and fear as she collapsed on the floor in a fit. Hermione had read all about the Cruciatus curse, had even seen it performed, but experiencing it was something else entirely. Never in her life had Hermione felt pain like this, and she never wanted to again. She sunk her teeth into her lip as she blurrily watched Draco step over her. Her trembling hand reached out to grip his pant leg, but he snatched his foot away and then it was over. In reality, it probably only lasted about twelve seconds, but twelve seconds was enough, enough for him to get the message across. Her chest heaved as she fought to catch her breath.

She struggled to roll over on her stomach, resisting the urge to spew chunks in the process. Before she even got the chance to attempt to stand up, she was being hauled up by her hair and staring into the eyes of one angry Draco Malfoy. It was here, between the wall of her dorm and Draco's body that she realized for her to be the Brightest Witch of Her Age, she was incredibly stupid. Blaise had warned her. Blaise Zabini of all people, the boy who rarely gave a rat's ass about anything, had actually taken time out of his day to *warn* her and what had she done? She had basically thrown it back in his face by ignoring his warning all together. He'd said that Draco was the closest thing he had to a friend so clearly he would know Draco a lot better than she.

Her eyes followed Draco's finger as he raised it towards her before balling it into a fist and promptly putting a fist sized hole into her wall, causing her to jump in surprise. He suddenly turned away from her and began pacing her bedroom. His shoulders heaved in barely contained fury as the air around them practically crackled with his magic. After a long time he finally spoke, so quietly that she could barely hear him.

"Was I not perfectly clear when I said that if he so much as touched you again I would string him up by his balls?"

When she spoke her voice was hoarse, as if she had been screaming.

"You have no right, none. We…this…this *thing* isn't anything and if you believe differently then you really need to be medicated," she snapped with narrowed eyes.

Her voice came out firmer than she expected because inside, her heart was pounding. For the first time this year, she was genuinely scared of Draco and what he might do. His lips pulled up into a cruel smirk.

"You clearly don't care too much for Potter-"

"You will not touch him," she hissed as she started towards him.

He grabbed her wrists with his right hand before flinging her onto her bed, his body immediately aligned with hers. She gasped as he settled himself between her legs and brushed his lips against her throat.

"Did I hit a nerve? Is it possible that Gryffindor's princess returns their beloved Saint's feelings?" he hissed.

"You say that like the possibility is a bad thing. After all, his competition *is* you and so far you've bitten me, sexually harassed me and Crucio'd me," she briskly responded.

She ignored how his jaw began to clench.

"How will I ever choose?" she mocked.

Her jaw clenched as he sat up on his knees before grabbing her thighs and pulling her against him.

"You wore green for the Halloween Ball…and now silver. I believe that you are trying to tell me something," he huskily murmured, his eyes darkening with poorly concealed desire.

Her eyes widened as she pushed against his chest. He was changing tactics on her. Her attraction towards him was not a well kept secret and they both knew that she couldn't think straight whenever they found themselves in a compromising position.

"And…you're wearing the ribbon. I assume you like it."

Her eyes widened as she reached up to finger the ribbon Ginny had tied around her neck. She had almost forgotten about it…

"Don't look so surprised. I can be…romantic when I want to be," he whispered as he leaned down to kiss her shoulder.

"Stop," she said through a shaky breath.

"Why, because you like it?"

"Let's end this, Draco. I mean it. I thought that you would eventually tire of this game we seem to be playing, but you haven't. I have though. It's exhausting."

He buried his face into her hair and inhaled.

"That's the problem. You think this is a game, you still think that this is all one big joke and it's not."

He pulled back to look into her eyes.

"I want you, more than I've ever wanted anything. Is it because for so long you've been untouchable? Forbidden? I don't know and I don't care. Call it obsession, love, a misguided attempt at romance, it doesn't matter. Do you know how many times I've wanted to bash Weasley's face in, wanted to snap Potter's neck? Don't even get me started on McLaggen. Whether you believe it or not, you are mine and I have no intentions of letting you go. Merlin, you have no idea of

all the things I've wanted to do to you, especially in front of your stupid sidekicks. I've wanted to see the look on Potter's face when I show him who you belong to, how you react to me-"

"Stop," she choked out as she pushed away from him.

She didn't want to hear this; she didn't want to hear any of this.

"Do you have any idea what you do to me? It's funny really. You're like a drug. I have to say something or do something to you, get some sort of reaction from you or else I'll go crazy."

He crawled towards her as she backed away from him, the hungry look in his eyes scaring her.

"And those damn curls. I've wanted to tangle my fingers in them and give them a good yank on more than one occasion. I imagine what they would look like on my pillows, spread around your head like a halo while you're screaming beneath me, begging for more."

She let out a gasp as her head hit the bed when he grabbed her ankle and yanked her towards him. She clawed at his arm as his hand came up to spread along her throat. A dark look passed over his features, his teeth bared and his eyes blazing.

"I want you, but Potter also wants you. I, however, have no problem bashing his head into a wall, but you don't want that. It seems that we have a little situation on our hands," he hissed.

She gulped as she stared into his eyes. She wasn't stupid; she knew exactly where this was going.

"I swear on Salazar's grave that if he touches you again…I **will** kill him. I don't care about facing Voldemort's wrath, I don't care who I have to go through to do it. I'll break every pathetic bone in his body and personally send them to the Dark Lord myself. I won't stop until your *precious Saint* is nothing but a sniveling mess," he snarled.

Hermione glared at him through blurry eyes as she registered his promise. Promise, not threat because Draco Malfoy didn't make threats. She knew without a doubt that Draco would murder Harry without hesitation. He's probably done it before. Her body shook as he trailed his hand down her chest and to the slit in her dress.

"Call me arrogant but…I know you want me, and I want you. I will gladly strangle Saint Potter in a heartbeat, but if you don't want me to do that…all you have to do is ask," he whispered as he gazed at her through hooded eyes.

Hermione's heart was torn. She knew, she *knew* that if she refused what he was implying Harry's body would probably be found in the Forbidden Forest by morning. It's not that she didn't have faith in Harry, but his skills with a wand weren't as great as hers, and Draco was a Death Eater. He could probably make *her* look like an amateur. But she wasn't that type of girl, the type to… To what, sacrifice herself for someone she cared about? Save her best friend's life? If Harry was in a similar place as her he'd do it without hesitation. She took in a shaky breath as she reached up to finger a button on Draco's dress robes.

"Draco, leave Harry alone, please. He means a lot to me," she said between trembling lips.

"Prove it," he whispered as he leaned down.

Her jaw clenched and a wicked smirk graced his lips as she slid her hand to rest on his shoulder.

"Kiss me," she breathed.

Draco didn't hesitate as he swooped in and captured her bottom lip between his teeth before pressing his lips against hers. His hands slid down to her waist before hoisting her up to straddle his lap. She inhaled through her nose as he slipped his tongue between her lips before sucking her own between his. She panted as his lips trailed

down her throat. He let out a frustrated growl at the high neckline of her dress before reaching up and ripping it straight down the middle.

"Draco," she gasped in anger.

Her protest went unheard as he nipped at her collar bone and down her chest. One hand pushed her down onto her back while the other hitched her leg around his waist. She couldn't help but to compare Draco to a dark angel, hovering above her with fair skin and hair, a vision in black. Just as he began to lean down her door flew open.

"Hermione, are you-Oh! Oh, Merlin, I'm sorry. I-"

She didn't hear the rest of Ginny's apologies as she quickly retreated and shut the door in a hurry. Hermione sat up and held the front of her dress together as she backed away from him. It wasn't exactly registering that Ginny had just caught her beneath Draco Malfoy and practically topless. She was brought back to the current situation at hand when Draco dragged his thumb across her cheek.

"Come home with me for Winter Break," he stated, breathless

Her brows furrowed in confusion.

"What?" she breathed.

"I want you at my home for the Holidays," he said as if he were talking to a five year old.

"I-"

Her protest was cut short with the pressure applied onto her cheek. Her jaw clenched as she stared into Draco's eyes, his expression practically daring her to object. She gave a short nod.

"Brilliant," he commented as he pressed his lips against hers before sliding off of the bed, pulling her with him.

She looked down at her feet as he straightened his shirt and smoothed his hair down. The last few minutes played inside her head over and over again and she couldn't help but ask herself one question. How had she ended up here? Getting blackmailed by Draco Malfoy was not on her to do list for the day but then again, someone like Draco had their own agendas and made habits of screwing with everyone else's. She was brought out of her thoughts when she felt a brush against her neck.

She looked up to gaze at Draco as he stared down at her with an unfamiliar expression. He leaned down to bury his nose in her ringlets and inhaled before pulling away from her and exiting through her door. Not a minute later her fiery haired best friend slowly walked in, her jaw slack and eyes wide.

"Hermione…?"

Hermione's shoulders slumped as she shook her head and let out a sob.

"Hermione, you've got to tell me what happened. You cried for forty-five minutes straight and you've been silent for at least thirty."

Hermione gripped the pillow tighter in her hands as she furiously shook her head.

"I'm…okay. Just overwhelmed," she replied.

And overwhelmed she was. The night had started out fairly well and somehow it had ended in an emotional….hot and heavy mess. Draco had to be the foulest git to walk this earth. He knew how much her friends meant to her and he knew that she would do *anything* for them, including cavorting with the likes of him. She closed her eyes as she was reminded of the way his lips had felt against her skin, the way his body fit perfectly in between her legs, almost as if…they'd been made for each other. She shook her head as soon as she'd thought that.

"Hermione?"

"I'm fine, I'm fine," she whispered.

But deep down, she could hear a sinister voice in her head, laughing at her, telling her that she was *far* from fine.

"Hermione, I don't understand," Harry pleaded, again.

"Please, Harry. Just drop it, okay? We can't…we can't be together. I…I don't want you," she whispered.

She looked up in shock as Harry gripped her arms, a desperate look in his eyes.

"You're lying, I know you are. What did *he* say to you?" he hissed.

"Nothing! He didn't say anything. You led my best friend on, because you were trying to make *me* jealous. Then…then you *dump* her for me! You may be okay with that and even she may be alright with that, but I'm not. That's not okay, and I refuse to let you believe that it is."

She turned her head away as his hand came up to brush against her cheek.

"Hermione. Look at me, Hermione," he pleaded.

She reluctantly gazed at him through the corner of her eyes.

"I love you. Do you understand that? This isn't some stupid fickle romance. What I feel for you is real. I'd do anything for you. You know that, right? You know that I'd give my life for you. I know…I know that deep down you feel the same way. I know you do, but Malfoy…he's messing with your head. He's making you question so many things, I can see it. I know you, Hermione. I know that you think that deep down there's some good in him. I know that you think

that you can save him, but you can't. Do you understand? You can't save someone who doesn't want to be saved."

"I don't-"

"Yes, you do. I can't lose you too, I can't," his voice broke.

"Harry..."

"Before you know it he'll sink his claws into you so deep and…and you'll be gone. He'll take you away from me," he whispered.

"That's not going to happen, Harry. I just-"

Her reply was cut short when Harry pressed his lips against hers. She pulled away and began to back up, but he followed, and so did his lips. She moaned against his mouth as his fingers danced along the small of her back.

"Harry, stop. We can't," she breathed as she pulled away again.

They were on one of the upper floors, a place where students rarely went, only when they wanted to…well, wanted to do what she and Harry were doing, at the moment. It still didn't stop her from worrying about Draco finding them though. He *always* found her.

"Ssh. Please don't ruin this," he whispered against her lips.

She let out a shaky breath when his hands came up to rest just under her breasts. Her head was spinning as she inhaled. Harry's scent was so different from Draco's. Whereas Draco smelt like vanilla and all man in one, Harry smelt like the grass that covered the ground, the tree bark of the Forbidden Forest. There was even a hint of a floral scent, as if he'd been rolling around in a bed of flowers all day. Draco smelt like the perfect combination of enticing and dangerous, but Harry smelt like the earth; warm and homey.

His lips brushed across her neck, and his tongue darted out when he suddenly paused. He pulled away and looked down at her skin, a

horrified expression suddenly working its way over his features.

"What? Harry, what is it?" she breathed as he took a step back, away from her.

"Did he do that?" he snapped.

She had just reached up when it finally clicked inside her head.

"Go ahead, Hermione. Tell him everything we discussed and everything that happened. Divulge all. Of the dirty. Details," he growled.

*And with that he dived in and sank his teeth into her shoulder. A pained shriek left her lips as she bucked beneath him. His hands were pinning hers down beside her and she didn't dare move her head, she was in enough pain as it was. She felt him slowly pull away before mumbling something that she couldn't understand. But if the tingling in her neck was anything to go by, she'd say that it was a spell. Her eyes widened when he pulled back, his lips slightly stained with **her** blood.*

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She had been covering up that mark for days now, because it simply would not go away, no matter what she did. She walked over to the window beside them and looked into the reflection. Low and behold, there was a lovely love bite there with minuscule puncture wounds from Draco's teeth. She didn't understand why it was visible. She'd done a spell to conceal it, had even put on a bit of makeup just to be safe. She slowly turned back around to face Harry, teary eyed.

"Harry…"

"Is that what he meant when he mentioned your… *date* ? **Did he do that to you?** "

Her silence was the only answer he needed it seemed. He flew down the corridor before she could even blink. She ran after him, her pleas falling on deaf ears. His legs were much longer than hers and keeping up with him was proving to be difficult. They probably made quite a sight; her pulling and tugging on Harry's arms, screaming and pleading while he marched on in determination. They had made it down to the first floor, now and she could tell that he was heading to the courtyard where Draco was known to be from time to time, the same exact courtyard where he'd been transfigured into a ferret years before.

"Harry, Harry stop," she cried as she grabbed a hold of his shirt.

The scene they were making had begun to attract unwanted, but not unexpected, attention. He jerked away as if she had burned him before making his way over to the group of Slytherins.

"Oi, Malfoy!"

No sooner than Draco had turned around, Harry's fist flew and connected with the blond haired boy's cheek. Hermione gasped when Draco stumbled before reaching for Harry's throat and shoving him into the tree. Excited students began to crowd around them, blocking her view. She could faintly hear the sound of fists connecting with flesh and harsh words being said over the sound of her rowdy classmates, but she couldn't see a damn thing. She finally pushed her way through the crowd just as Draco's lithe form rose to full height, Harry's crumpled body behind him, struggling to stand.

"Harry," she quietly gasped as she ran towards him.

She was stopped however by a harsh grip on her upper arm. She looked up just in time for Draco's mouth to come crashing down on hers. The gasps and cries of outrage made her want to pull away, but two things were preventing her from doing just that; Draco's hand

on the back of her neck and his tongue down her throat. He jerked away from her to glare at every face in the crowd before pushing past them, leaving her to deal with the stares and whispers.

"He's not just messing around, is he?"

She paused as she set the glass of water on the table beside his bed before sighing.

"No," she whispered as she turned around.

Harry's unruly hair looked even messier against the pillows of the infirmary beds. His face was taut with anger as he exhaled.

"How long did it take you to figure out that he wasn't just messing with you? Before or *after* he practically molested you?" he spat.

She flinched at his condescending tone. She wasn't used to being talked to like that...by anyone.

"Harry…I-"

"Am I correct to assume that this has happened more than once, maybe even more than twice?"

Hermione didn't reply. What could she possibly say?

"...and you made *me* feel like the idiot for being overly cautious. Gods, Hermione. I love you, Merlin knows that I do, but *this* has got to be the most ***idiotic*** thing you've ever done," he stated.

Hermione's fists clenched beside her.

"Really, *this* is the most idiotic thing I've ever done? After everything we've done together, this takes the cake? After that stupid stone and then Azkaban. I suppose that the Department of Mysteries was just a walk in the park, right?"

"But that was different!"

"How! How on earth was that different?"

"Because you weren't alone! You had Ron. You had *me* ! You weren't facing those things alone," he snapped.

Hermione blinked with the realization that he was right. With everything the three of them had done, it had been the *three* of them. Hermione bit her lip.

"He's one of them, isn't he?"

"I don't know," she lied.

She wasn't sure why she did that, why she was protecting him. He turned to look at her.

"Are you lying for him, protecting him?" he said through his teeth.

"No," she answered.

"I don't believe you. I never thought that there would be a day when I would say that, but it's true. I don't believe you, Hermione," he whispered.

Hermione breathed out as she closed her eyes.

"I…I didn't want this in the first place, Harry. You're the one who came to me with this brilliant idea of-"

"Really? That's how you're going to play it, blame it on me?"

"N-no. I just…I *tried* to tell you that I didn't want-"

"But I was under the impression that it was simply because you didn't like him. You never gave me any indication that you had a legitimate reason to be fearful of him, did you? You could have told me what was really going on, but you didn't!"

She flinched, once again, as she realized that he was right, once again. She should have told him the minute it started, but now she was in too deep. Draco was…fixated on her for some reason. She could admit that now, and the thought terrified her to death.

"Hermione…I want you to listen carefully to what I'm about to say."

She looked back up at his harsh tone.

"I don't want you near him, under any circumstances."

Hermione swallowed. *What the bloody hell am I supposed to do* , she thought. Draco wanted her for…whatever in exchange for Harry's safety. Harry was practically forbidding her to go anywhere near Draco. She found that she was caught in the crossfire of a completely different war, and no battle ever ended without some casualties.

"Come for more advice, have you? Or is Draco not as satisfying as you thought he would be?"

Hermione frowned at the sick smirk on his face before sitting down on the floor across from him, the spines of the books pressed into her back.

"When you…warned me about Draco…what did you mean when you said that 'he'd done things that would make us Gryffindors hurl'?"

Blaise's smirk suddenly turned dark as he gently closed his book and set it down beside him.

"What has he done, now?" he questioned with a glint in his eyes.

Hermione thought about not telling him, but Blaise had probably seen and heard about worse.

"He Crucio'd me," she whispered.

Blaise chuckled, startling her.

"Is that all?" he mocked.

Hermione's temper rose as she glared at him with a clenched jaw.

"Is that all? *Is that all?* " she hissed.

"Hermione, I've seen him blow someone's brains across a mirror. I watched as he gouged someone's eyes out while they were very much *alive,* and you're expecting me to be scandalized with the knowledge that he used the Cruciatus Curse on you? Be grateful," he flippantly responded as he returned his attention to his book.

Hermione huffed, but couldn't help but to see where he was coming from once everything he'd just said registered in her head. Had Draco really done those things? *Of course he has.* Blaise would have no reason to lie. Unless, he was trying to scare her for some reason.

"What does he want with me? I mean, he's told me in so many words, but…"

"But you want to hear it from someone else, because you don't want to entertain the idea that he could be telling the truth."

Hermione slowly nodded. Blaise rested his arm on his raised knee as he leaned forward.

"Draco is not right in the head. Surely you must know this by now. Anyone who has seen the things he's seen and done the things he's done is bound to have a few loose bolts. Combine that with the fact that he's a spoiled brat who gets whatever he wants; you've got a psychopath who's never heard the word no before. So listen carefully when I tell you that Draco is relentless when it comes to what he wants. He will drag you by the hair back to Malfoy Manor if he has to, kicking and screaming. Of course, he'd rather not do that, but if it's necessary he will. So I suggest that you might as well

accept your fate, because the only thing that will save you is his un-beating heart."

Hermione stared at him with wide eyes, horrified at what he was telling her. She gulped as she shot up, shaking her head. There had to be another way, another way to stop him. She could hear Blaise's quiet laughter behind her as she fled from the library.

She fidgeted as Dumbledore gazed at her through his glasses. His long, bony fingers were pressed together as he tilted his head.

"Ms. Granger, it has been brought to my attention that you've been involved in a few of the recent…incidents that have occurred. Is this correct?"

Hermione's heart dropped. Did McGonagall know too? This was it. She would be stripped of her Prefect title and she would never be Head Girl. She took in a shuddering breath.

"Y-yes, Headmaster, but I…"

She trailed off as he held up his hand, signaling for her to halt her protests. His eyes held years of wisdom as he leaned forward.

"You are not a troublemaker, Ms. Granger. I believe that you've just been graced with a bit of…bad luck these past few months."

A bit of bad luck had to have been the understatement of the century, but Hermione did not voice this statement.

"I'm very understanding, and I think that you have just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time…often," he said with a small smile.

Hermione's shoulders sagged as she let out a soft sigh of relief.

"As a matter of fact, I happen to have an understanding of a lot of the things that happen within these walls. Do be careful Ms. Granger for these are dark times," he said as he stared at her with a serious expression.

Did he know what Draco was? Or did he suspect just like everyone else? She nodded as she turned around and made towards the door.

Hermione glanced at her friend again as she scribbled on her parchment. Ginny had barely acknowledged her since she'd walked into the common room. Aside from the two of them, there were two other younger students in a far corner. Hermione would say that Ginny was just caught up in her work, but the cold vibe that she was getting from the redhead said otherwise. Hermione paused before turning to face Ginny on the couch.

"Did I do something?" she quietly asked.

"No," Ginny replied just as quietly, but her tone and body language didn't match her answer.

"I can tell that you're upset. I'm not stupid."

"Sure about that?" the other girl mumbled.

Hermione frowned.

"Is this about Harry?" she demanded.

Ginny huffed before slamming her quill and parchment down, turning to face Hermione.

"Of course this is about Harry," she quietly hissed.

Hermione blinked in confusion.

"But you said…"

" *Not that* . Harry is in the infirmary because of Draco and indirectly because of you. You're my best friend Hermione, but if you're going to be with Harry then be with him. Otherwise, don't get him caught up in whatever the hell you have going on with your Death Eater," Ginny sneered before collecting her things and going upstairs.

Hermione swallowed as she stared into the fire. Ginny's words may have been harsh but they were true nonetheless. Harry was hurt because of her. Ron had been hurt because of her. Today when she had been called into the Headmaster's office she was so sure that he was going to tell her that her behavior no longer represented one of a prefect and future Head Girl. That had scared her to death and made her realize that Draco was jeopardizing the things that were most important to her; Head Girl, her relationships with her friends and her reputation. She closed her eyes as she recalled Harry's words. Draco Malfoy did not want to be saved and who was she to try to convince him otherwise. She had to put an end to this…before she lost everything.

Hermione held her breath as she waited. Harry had commented on her idiocy earlier, and clearly she hadn't learned a damn thing. She fidgeted and looked around the darkness. She never liked the dungeons, but she had to put her fear aside for a moment. It was late, really late, at night. Students should be in bed, but she knew that if any students were roaming the corridors when they weren't supposed to, it would be a Slytherin. One was bound to come skulking down the dungeons and into the dorms any time now. Her fingers clenched Harry's invisibility cloak tighter as she heard footsteps.

Speak of the devil , she thought as she watched a Slytherin girl, one she didn't recognize, walk down the dungeon. The girl was statuesque with mocha colored skin and midnight hair. Her ocean eyes practically glowed in the darkness and for a moment, Hermione feared that she could see her. She almost sighed in relief when the girl stated the password and slipped inside, Hermione close behind.

She followed the same route that Blaise had taken when she'd come here before. She didn't like how dark nor quiet it was, but it was practically twelve in the morning. What else did she expect? She stopped directly in front of the door and poked her wand out from under the cloak. With a quiet 'Alohomora', she was inside, softly shutting the door behind her. The cloak dropped around her feet with a soft whisper as she went to stand directly in front of the bed.

Draco Malfoy lay in his bed, completely oblivious to the figure standing before him. As Hermione stared down at him, she couldn't help but to notice that he looked so innocent and childlike when he slept. But this was Draco Malfoy and there was nothing innocent about him. Her heart fluttered beneath her skin as she tightened her grip on her wand. She had practiced the spell before so she knew that she could do it. But would she?

Hermione never thought that she would get to this point, but Draco had driven her here. She was desperate, so utterly and helplessly desperate that she was actually standing in front of her classmate, preparing to alter his memories. She didn't know what else to do, and making Draco Malfoy forget about his feelings for her entirely seemed like the best option. He had hurt her and humiliated her. He'd Obliviated Ginny and had used unforgivables on both of them. He'd made her the subject of harsh whispers and judgmental stares. He'd seriously injured both of her friends and had threatened Harry's life. With these thoughts in mind, Hermione raised her wand.

She had opened her mouth to utter the curse that would make everything go back to normal when his eyelids snapped open. She inhaled in a mixture of shock and fright as his predatory gaze landed on her.

"Come to kill me in my sleep?"

She stumbled back as she heard his voice, not husky with sleep. He'd been awake, probably since she'd walked into the room. She hurriedly raised her wand, the curse on her lips when a white light flew towards her, causing her to duck. Her head whipped around in

shock as Draco's wardrobe flew back into the wall, wooden splinters flying everywhere. Her heart thumped as time seemed to move in slow motion. She had turned around just in time to see Draco throw the covers away from him before gracefully sliding out of bed. He walked towards her like a panther, ready to pounce when she made a run for the door.

She dodged another curse as she ran past the rooms and through the common room. She almost ran into the stone wall of the dungeons if it weren't for her hands. She couldn't see anything, but she didn't want to shine her wand. She was trying to hide from Draco, so that wouldn't be the best idea. She briskly, but quietly, walked in the darkness away from her pursuer. She didn't hear anything, but she knew he was there, somewhere behind her. Her fingers brushed the walls as she stumbled through the dungeons. She didn't know where she was going.

She'd spun around, thinking she'd heard him when a large hand suddenly came over her mouth. She let out a muffled shriek and elbowed her way out of his grip. She stumbled and fell as he let her go, scraping her knees in the process. She sent a curse his way, one he easily dodged before she stumbled upright and ran, not caring if he could hear her. She turned a corner, his footsteps not far behind. She turned another, not a clue where she was going in the darkness. She panted, her eyes darting from left to right in panic. Her hair flew as she spun around then turned again. She almost slipped, but was caught in a tight embrace, causing her to let out a shriek. She beat against his chest and let out a jumble of protests as he backed her into the wall. His hands hooked under thighs lifting her so that he could grind his pelvis into hers.

"Let go of me, let me go," she hissed as she pushed against him.

"I'll let you come…" he murmured, laving his tongue against her collar bone "…anywhere you want."

To emphasize his point, he pressed his hips against hers, letting her feel just how serious he was. Her eyelashes fluttered, and she

jabbed her wand into his chest.

"Everte Statum!"

She fell onto her hands and knees as Draco flew back into the opposite wall. She quickly felt around, trying to locate her wand before he righted himself when his hand suddenly clamped onto her wrist. She sent a fist flying into his cheek and stood. Wand or no wand she was getting out of here. She collapsed again, practically face first as his fingers wrapped around her ankle and yanked. She fought furiously as he crawled up her body, his fingers tangled into her hair. A shudder passed through her when he nibbled on the side of her neck.

Her palm flew into his face as soon as he flipped her over. She hit him, again and again, and kneed him in his gut until his hold loosened. She flew up, but her head hit the ground this time when he grabbed her leg. It may have been dark but she could tell that her vision was hazy. Her head was pounding and she was out of breath. She could feel herself being pushed into an upright position, one arm around her arms and midsection, the other hand over her mouth. She kicked and stumbled as she felt herself being dragged backwards. She wriggled and screamed into his hand, her own hands reaching out to claw at the walls when his arm moved under her own.

Her nails were probably bloody but that didn't stop her from digging them into the stone. She could stand the pain if it meant getting away from him. Surely whatever he had in store for her was much more painful than some broken finger nails and scraped knees. She didn't know where he was taking her, but the supposed to be soothing sounds he was making weren't making her feel any better. Harsh sobs left her lips as he dragged her back into the darkness, not a soul around to save her.

Chapter 10

Guys, GUYS. I last updated in January. Wooooow. I am so sorry. So so sorry. These last couple of months of high school have been so hectic. A little advice from a HS senior; go to class. Lol. I'm serious. Don't make it harder on yourself. You don't know how much I've missed writing, but sadly I had to put it on hold while I sorted some things out, but I am here. I will be updating regularly like I used to and I will try to never go that long without an update again. Anyways, here you go and as always your reviews are very much appreciated. They mean so much to me.

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There will be a small sneak peek into the next chapter at the end of this one. :)

Hermione sat in the now lukewarm water, tracing invisible patterns onto the side of the tub, droplets of water the only evidence as to what she was doing. Her face was somber as she looked around the extravagant bathroom. The tub was about the size of a small pool, and the entire opposite wall was nothing but mirrors, she expected no less from the Malfoys. Draco and she had gotten to the Manor yesterday, and she had yet to come into contact with his parents, but she wasn't complaining. Hermione pushed away from the edge of the tub before sinking into the water, letting the water flow over her, somehow hoping that it would wash all of her problems away.

Hermione didn't know where he was taking her and she didn't know what the hell he had planned. She did know that she was frightened,

*more frightened than she had ever been in her entire life. It sounded crazy in her head, considering all that she had done, but this was different. She was **alone** . She could faintly here him pushing through a door, no doubt an abandoned classroom. He had trouble though due to her resistance. She was proven right when she was dumped onto a desk and, before Draco could even make his next move, she had rolled over onto the floor. She grabbed the first thing she saw, which happened to be an old chair, and hurled it at him. He moved out of the way just in time while she took the opportunity to run to the other side of the room. She could feel his gaze on her as she stumbled her way around the room away from his slow steps.*

"You're bleeding," he stated as he tilted his head to the side.

She hesitantly reached up to touch her forehead. Her fingers met something warm and sticky; blood. Her eyes were too focused on the blood on her fingers for her to notice Draco. Before she knew it, with one stride, his arms were around her and her back came in contact with a desk, Draco's form immediately looming over her own. Her vision was still fuzzy, but she could easily see that damn smirk plastered onto his face as he gazed down at her.

"What…what are you doing?" she croaked.

He had the nerve to look appalled.

*" **Me** ? You come into **my** room, thinking that you can kill me in my sleep like some kind of snake-?"*

"I wasn't trying to kill you," she snapped.

His eyes narrowed at her before he let out a small chuckle.

"I must admit, the idea of it is a good one, but you didn't really think that it would be that easy, did you?"

Her jaw clenched at his condescending tone, as if she were some inexperienced child who knew no better. His expression suddenly

changed, capturing her attention. She flushed at the heated intensity within his eyes as his thumb came up to brush against her bottom lip.

"No amount of magic could make me forget how I feel about you," he whispered.

Hermione felt her heart flutter. She took shaky breaths when he leaned down and brushed his lips against hers. She reached up to push him away, her fingers smearing blood onto his chest. He gripped her wrist before kissing her jaw.

"Why do you continue to push me away?"

"The fact that you even have to ask that questions says a lot," she hissed as she struggled to go past him.

He blocked her path, leaning into her, forcing the desk to dig into her lower back. She swallowed as his hand came up to cup the back of her neck.

"Let me go," she demanded.

"You seem to have a very short memory, mon cheri," he murmured.

She closed her eyes at the reminder of the deal she had made. Her eyes began to burn with that familiar sting of tears threatening to fall. Harry had demanded that she stay away from Draco but…she loved Harry, very much. She wasn't sure if she loved him the way he wanted her to, but she loved him enough to put his life before her own. Maybe in another reality, one that didn't involve dark wizards, she would have had the time to analyze her feelings for him. Maybe she would have been given time for them to grow. Maybe she and Harry could have been together, gotten married even and she would have given him children with high IQ's and unruly hair.

This was a different reality though, one that required her to make decisions that she may not necessarily like. She opened her eyes as

his thumb brushed against her neck.

"I'm beginning to get irritated with you. We have a deal, one that you seem to keep forgetting about. It makes me think that you don't care for Potter, after all," he stated.

"I do. You know I do," she protested desperately.

"Then act like it," he hissed just before his lips came crashing down onto hers.

"I didn't peg you as the suicidal type."

Hermione jerked in the water and spun around to face the bane of her existence.

"What are you doing in here? How did you get in?" she demanded.

He gave her a look as if to say 'really?'. He sat down on the edge of the tub.

"This is *my* house. I know how to get around simple enchantments placed onto *my* bathroom."

She glared up at him as she sunk lower into the water as his eyes rested on her, trailing down to the bubbles which hid the rest of her body from view.

"You've been in there long enough. You can't hide from me forever."

"I can sure as hell try...and who are you to tell me when I'm done bathing? You can't be surprised that I want to avoid you as much as possible. Living the life of a Death Eater, you should be used to it," she hissed.

She could tell how deep her words had cut before he even grabbed her arm and yanked her from the tub, regardless of her protests. She

struggled against him as he backed her up against the wall, his lithe form pressed firmly against her nude one.

"Listen here, my prissy little kitten, I am getting tired of your attitude-"

"Then forget about me," she practically begged.

He closed his eyes and exhaled as he leaned his forehead against hers.

"What do you not understand, Hermione? I… *can't* let you go, I won't. You…are a problem for me," he hissed as he covered her lips with his own.

This was maybe the fourth time that he'd kissed her and each time it got better and better. That was something that she was reluctant to admit. It wasn't fair that someone so awful could evoke such strong emotions from her. She understood that Harry's well being was at stake here, but she couldn't bring herself to play along with her current state of undress. She turned her head away. Draco, taking the hint, backed away and grabbed a towel before rudely tossing it at her.

"Come down for dinner once you're finished," he demanded just before leaving.

Dinner with Draco was a quiet affair. His parents weren't present, thank Merlin, and halfway through, a house elf had appeared, divulging something to Draco that had him excusing himself from dinner, fortunately. She had finished dinner alone, giving her time to observe the dining area and all of its extravagance. As Hermione made her way up the stairs and to what was her room for the break, she heard voices, causing her to pause as she recognized one of them.

"But mother-"

"Let it be, Draco," a softer voice stated in a firm tone.

Hermione frowned in confusion at the topic of their conversation.

"I don't understand why you continue to allow him to do this to you," she heard Draco's soft reply.

There was a lengthy pause before his mother responded.

"I love him, Draco. Even though our marriage was arranged I somehow fell in love with him over the years. Maybe not the man that he is now, but the man that he once was. I know that that man is still in there somewhere-"

" **No!** Are you dim? I don't know what he was like when you married him because Merlin knows I never saw any of this so called great man, but that is *not* who he is now. He is a weak, spineless *coward* and the only thing that matters to him is the Dark Lord's approval."

There was a pause where it sounded like Draco was walking.

"Leave him. Go into hiding and when this is all over we'll find you and you can live with us. Hermione and I…we'll protect you," he almost begged.

Hermione's eyes widened as she processed his words, heart pounding.

"Ah, Miss Granger…The Brightest Witch of Her Age. Malfoys always get the best, don't they?" was her loving reply.

Part of her felt flattered that Narcissa Malfoy thought so highly of her, but the other part of her was filled with dread. If Mrs. Malfoy was thrilled about the two of them then there was no way she would help Hermione get away from her son.

"Do you love her?"

Hermione held her breath as she waited for his response. She had brought the question up some time ago, and he had immediately shot the notion down.

"Mother," he warned.

"You can't blame me for asking. You *do* intend to marry this girl."

Hermione's head shot up as she stared at the door as if *it* had just said that. It was at this point that Hermione decided that she had heard enough. She slowly slid along the wall in shock and quickly ran past the partially open door and straight towards her room. She suddenly felt lightheaded and out of breath. Everything in front of her was swaying and she put her hand on the wall to steady herself. *Marry, marry…he plans to marry me* . Her steps slowed and she suddenly had the urge to vomit. Before she knew it, her knees had hit the ground and her head soon followed.

When Hermione first woke up she immediately knew that she was not in her bed. It took a minute before everything finally came back to her; the manor, Draco's mum…marriage. She went to move before realizing that she was being restricted in some sort of way. Her eyes drifted downwards to see a familiar fair, muscular arm wrapped around her waist. It was then that she finally noticed the moving chest that was pressed against her back. Hermione looked over shoulder and came face to face with a strong jaw line and sinful lips. She suddenly had the urge to stroke his face before she quickly squashed that urge. She wiggled, trying to get out of from under his arm with little success. She squirmed again, but soon stopped upon hearing an angelic sigh.

"Keep that up, sweetheart and I'll have to do something about it," he breathed against her neck, causing goose bumps to erupt over her skin.

"Let go of me," she demanded.

"Why? So you can roll out of bed and hit your head again?"

He sat up, allowing her to do so as well.

"I fainted; it wasn't like I did it on purpose."

"I don't care. Do you know what it was like to see you sprawled out on the floor like that? You were so still I thought you had been cursed," he seethed, almost worriedly.

Her eyes narrowed.

"Now why would you think that?"

"Are you forgetting where you are? You can't just wander around here like you're Pansy Parkinson or something," he snapped.

She bit down to keep from firing something back as she stood up beside the bed. She crossed her arms over her chest and she took in the room. It was grand, like everything else in the bloody mansion, but the color scheme indicated that it was a boy's room; it was very dark. She assumed it was Draco's since there was nothing personalized about it to confirm that theory. Her eyes rested on him as her lips thinned into a straight line.

"I…I heard you and your mother. I briefly heard what you were talking about," she quietly stated.

He propped himself up on one elbow as he raised an eyebrow at her.

"…and?"

"You intend to marry me."

He chuckled as he rolled over to sit on the edge of the bed, his back facing her.

"I don't intend to marry you. I *am* going to marry you," he stated with conviction.

She looked at him incredulously.

"You expect me to go along with this, with no say at all?"

"You have a say, you can say yes."

"Draco," she snapped as she stormed over to him.

"Sweetheart," he replied as he gazed up at her through his lashes.

"You can't be serious. If…if I had known that, I'd-"

"You'd what? You would never have agreed to this? You would have tried to find another way?"

"Yes."

She took a step back as he stood, his tall frame towering over her own. Her heart sped up as his lips curved into a smirk. She went to back up again when he leaned down, but his arms came up to encircle her waist, preventing her from going anywhere.

"Hermione, Hermione, Hermione…," he murmured against her ear.

Her hand came up to push against his chest.

"I know something that you don't. Want to know what it is?" he chuckled.

She nodded.

"I never needed your cooperation. I was simply being generous for your sake and the minute that I lose all patience…Potter's head is mine," he purred as he pressed his lips against her neck.

She jerked away from him as his words sunk in, but he held her in place. Her hand came up to slap him as he gripped her hair in between his fingers. He backed her up into the wall as he pressed his lips against her own. Her hands twisted into his shirt, trying to get

a good grip to shove him away. She had wanted to ask him about something else. She turned her head away, but his lips just traveled down her neck.

"Draco…Draco, stop."

"Can't get enough of you," he whispered against her skin as he lifted her.

"I want to ask you something…about your father," she rushed out.

All of his movements stopped, and he raised his head to give her a hardened stare. He exhaled in agitation as he set her back on her feet before striding away from her. Note to self, mentioning his father was the equivalent to a cold shower.

"What about him?"

"I also heard what you mentioned…about him and your mother. Does...does he hurt her?" she quietly asked.

"That's none of your business," he snapped.

"You intend for me to become your wife, so I think my future mother in law's well being is my concern."

It took everything in her to get that sentence out without puking, and she was sure that Draco knew that.

"Forget it. That's one thing that you won't get out of me," he replied.

"He does hurt her, doesn't he?" she pressed.

"Leave it alone, Granger," he snapped.

She knew that she was walking on thin ice, but she didn't care.

"How long? Since Voldemort returned? Why does she-"

"I said **shut up** ."

She braced herself as he made his way over to her. His eyes were blazing and his chest heaving as he towered over her.

"Do *not* bring it up again. Are we clear?"

She stared up at him and was about to respond when Draco's door was opened, startling her and only seeming to irritate him. Her eyes widened as a vaguely familiar tall figure stepped into the room. His long, fair hair was a startling contrast to his dark clothing, and his sharp features only made his hardened expression that much more intimidating. His startling gaze narrowed on Draco before shifting to her, causing her to take a step to the side, closer to Draco. His lips pulled into that phony smile she had seen on more than one occasion.

"Draco…the house elves informed me of your guest, but…I was hoping that they were mistaken. Unfortunately, they weren't."

His lips curved into a sneer as he finished, his eyes once again landing on her. She glared at him from around Draco's shoulder.

"This is my wing and as far as I'm concerned I can bring whoever I want into my wing of the manor. If that is all then you will have to excuse us. We have business to attend to."

Draco grabbed her wrist and led her out of the door, past his father. She could feel his eyes on her as they made their way down the hall, and when she looked over her shoulder she was proven right.

She didn't see Draco's father again until three days later.

She toweled her unruly hair as she stepped out of the bathroom and into her dimly lit room. She was irritated with Draco, yet again, with his complete lack of respect for her privacy. He seemed to be under the impression that he could waltz into the bathroom anytime he

wanted just because it was technically his. She heaved a sigh and had just dropped the towel onto the floor when she was almost startled into a heart attack.

"You're not sleeping with my son."

She jumped and let out a short scream as the room was illuminated to reveal Mr. Malfoy sitting in the chair at the desk in the corner of the room. He sat there with a glass in his hand and a calculating gaze on her. She put her hand on her chest in an attempt to calm down her heart.

"You aren't sleeping with him, so what is it that he's gaining from you?" he seemed to say to himself.

She stared at him in caution, desperately wishing that she had her wand. Draco had pried it away from her as soon as they had gotten there. She wrapped her arms around herself, suddenly feeling exposed even though she was fully clothed, as his gaze swept over her.

"I am reluctant to admit that your beauty surpasses many of the Pureblood witches of your age, but…you are not sleeping with him, so why are you her?" he asked again.

"I've been asking that myself since day one," she whispered.

He suddenly stood, causing her to straighten and take a step back.

"I do not know why you are here and I do not care, I just want you gone. Draco does not listen to a word I say anymore-"

"I wonder why," she interrupted.

Her flippant remark was immediately responded with a harsh slap. Her eyes watered as her hand came up to touch her cheek. She winced as her fingers came in contact with the sensitive skin.

" *Do not* interrupt me, Ms. Granger. I do not know of your purpose in Draco's life but for your sake I hope he hurries up and gets you out of his system and soon, or when this finally comes to blows, I will come for you first on the battlefield," he hissed.

Hermione's jaw clenched as she glared up at him.

"What's stopping you, right now?" she snapped.

His hand came up to wrap around her throat.

"You're right. What *is* stopping me, right now?" he murmured.

Her hands came up to dig into his hand as her feet dangled above the ground.

"What's stopping me from ending your filthy existence? As a matter of fact, what's stopping me from taking what you treasure most and leaving you here broken and bloodied for Draco to find?"

He roughly dropped her and stepped back.

"Do well to remember that there is nothing stopping me from putting that mouth to good use the next time you decide to open it for a smart retort."

She coughed and fought to catch her breath as he exited the room.

"Then act like it," he hissed just before his lips came crashing down onto hers.

She made a noise of protest, but Harry's face popped into her head, halting all of her movement. Harry, she was doing this for Harry. Her hands hesitantly came up to rest on his shoulders. He sat her up as he wrapped her legs around his waist. Hermione had to find another way, she absolutely had to. She couldn't keep kissing a man who, not five minutes ago, was chasing her down the dungeons and

throwing her into walls, no matter how much of a good kisser he was. It wasn't worth it, but until she came up with something else that didn't get curses blasted at her, she would kiss Draco for as long as need be.

"Get. Up! **Get up** !"

Hermione jerked awake and whipped her head around, wondering what the hell was going on. The last thing she remembered was showering again after her disturbing encounter with Lucius and collapsing into the sheets. Her eyes landed on Draco, standing beside her next to the bed, a thunderous expression on his face. His teeth were bared like a mad man and his eyes were practically glowing in fury.

"Wh-what's going on?" she spluttered in confusion.

He grabbed her chin and turned her cheek towards him. Once she realized what he was looking at she jerked away.

"Who did this?" he demanded.

"Draco, quiet down-"

"Who was it? Who *touched* you? Was it my father?" he roared.

She leaned away from him as she gazed at him in caution.

"You seem to already know the answer," she slowly answered.

He turned around and threw the nightstand across the room, causing her to jump and almost fall off of the bed. The dresser and mirror were next. By the time he was done, the entire room, aside from the bed. was destroyed.

"I'll kill him. I'll murder him with my bare hands," he screamed.

Her eyes widened at his words.

"Draco, no. I'm just as upset as you are, but you can't kill him. He's your *father* ," she said as she slid out of bed.

Deep down she was tempted to agree with him, but he was still Draco's father and despite what he said, she was sure that killing him would affect Draco, no matter how much he denied it. He spun around and advanced on her.

"You think I care? He could be the bloody Minister of Magic himself and I'd still slit his throat. He touched you. Look at you, he harmed you."

Her eyes widened in surprise as his hand came up to brush against her cheek. His finger trailed down to her neck and his eyes softened as they took in what was no doubt finger shaped bruises.

"Draco-"

His lips covered her own in a bruising kiss; it was heated and completely savage. He was angry, feeling threatened and Merlin knows what else. His hands ran up and down her body as he bit and suckled at her lips.

"Mine. You're mine," he whispered against her mouth.

"Draco-"

"He won't touch you again. He won't come near you ever again. I'll keep you safe, I'll always keep you safe," he whispered against her neck.

"Draco, it's okay. I'm fine," she protested as she pushed against him.

Her eyes widened as he shook her.

"I'll kill him. I'll kill anyone who so much as looks at you wrong. You know that, right? That I'd kill for you?"

He held her face in his hands as he gazed into her eyes with enough intensity to scare her.

"I'll kill anyone who hurts you and I'll kill anyone who takes you away from me," he hissed.

Her hands trembled as her breathing increased. He kissed her again as he wrapped his arms around her.

"I'd burn this entire country to the ground looking for you. I would not stop until you are in my arms again," he whispered.

Hermione's body trembled as he leaned in to peck her lips. His hand rose to brush a few curls away from her face as he gazed down at her.

"I will never let you go."

Hermione slowly lowered her head, a dreaded feeling washing over her as she did so. Her eyes widened at the small collection of blood on the manor floor. She quickly backed up and watched in horror as her bloody feet made tracks along the floor. Her heart was beating at a record rate as she began to tremble. She looked up again and saw light coming from an open door at the end of the hall. By the fancy, intricate designs and initials on the door, she guessed that it was Narcissa and Lucius' quarters. Hermione hesitantly walked around the blood and slowly made her way towards the room.

As she walked she noticed that there was more blood, in smaller amounts, the farther she went, on the floor and some along the walls as if someone had dragged a bloody hand along them. As she got closer she could recognize the sound of harsh sobbing, as if the person couldn't get their breaths out fast enough. Was Draco hurt *? Hermione's stomach turned at the thought of Draco being this severely hurt because surely whoever the blood belonged to was gravely injured.*

" **What have you done?** *" she heard Narcissa cry.*

Chapter 11

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"I will never let you go."

"Draco," she stated, softly, in warning.

She tried her best not to focus on the nonsense that he was spewing; her focus was to calm him down before he did something that he regretted. She was talking to him as if he were a scared and wounded animal. She wrapped her hand around his.

"I'm okay."

He slowly exhaled.

"He hurt you," he stated.

"So do you," she fired back.

His jaw clenched.

"That's different," was his reply.

"How so," she scoffed.

"It's not...purposefully. It's just...you're mine, and I get so angry and...," he nearly screamed, trailing off with a huff.

Hermione squared her shoulders before shoving him away from her.

"I'm a person, not a piece of property. I belong to no one but myself," she stated.

"Silly girl…," he murmured as he reached out to finger a ringlet "…you've always been mine. Whatever God is up there put you down here just for me."

She pushed her way past him with a huff.

"I'm…trying to cooperate with you, for Harry's sake, I truly am, but you are making it *so* difficult."

He was silent for a moment.

"Potter. Bloody Potter," he stated in poorly hidden anger.

"You knew why I went along with this. Did you think that your charming ways would win me over?" she incredulously asked as she spun around to face him.

His fists were clenched and his eyes were hard as he stared her down.

"I know you're attracted to me. That's more than enough to work with," he whispered as he took a step towards her.

She inhaled as she backed up. Her reactions towards him were not a secret. Only a blind person could be in the presence of Draco Malfoy and not be affected.

"Attraction means nothing if you've got a rotten personality. I won't deny that there are all sorts of ways to win over a person's body, but you will never have my heart or my soul."

They both stared at each other for quite some time and right when Draco opened his mouth to speak, he was interrupted. She watched as his face briefly twisted into an expression of pain before he schooled his features back to a blank expression and clutched his forearm. Her eyes widened as soon as she realized what was happening.

"Draco…?"

She took a step forward, but halted as soon as he held up his hand towards her. He took a few deep breaths before straightening up.

"I have to go."

She watched, in a bit of fear, as he made his way towards the door.

"Draco-"

The only response she got was the slamming of a door.

Hermione didn't know how long she had been pacing the room, but if the nubs that were once her nails were anything to go by, she'd say at least half an hour. *Merlin, how long did these bloody gatherings last?* She was scared for Draco, and that was something that she wasn't afraid to admit. No matter who he is or what he's done, she would never have wished this fate upon her worst enemy. She

scrubbed her hands down her face again and blew out a breath. Harry had been insistent upon convincing her that Draco could not be saved, that he was a lost cause. For a short while she had believed that too. But now, seeing firsthand what he had gotten himself into, she knew that she had to try. She'd never forgive herself if she gave up on him and he ended up in Azkaban or…dead.

She didn't know why, but the thought of Draco dead, no longer here to rile her up and keep her on her toes, struck something in her. She finally took a seat on Draco's bed and even though she was seated, her legs would not stop shaking. Soon after he had left, a house elf had come and retrieved her, moved her to Draco's room while they repaired hers. She rested her elbows on her knees and blew into her hands. She had just lowered her head when the door was opened.

Hermione looked up to see Draco waltz into the room. At first glance he appeared unharmed, but then she noticed a bruise on his cheek bone and a cut at the corner of his mouth. She jumped up and walked towards him, a million emotions swirling around inside her. He raised an eyebrow at her as if to say 'what'. Hermione exhaled before her hand connected with his cheek. The force of the slap turned his head. She walked away from him before he got a chance to right himself.

"And just what was that for, sweetheart?"

"For you being a complete idiot. You're insane, positively stupid!"

"…Were you worried about me?" she heard him sweetly ask as he came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her.

She spun around and shoved him away from her. She didn't realize she was crying until he looked at her in concern. Merlin, what was wrong with her? Maybe her period was coming on soon. That was the only logical reason as to why she was crying over Draco sodding Malfoy.

"We can help you Draco, you and your mother. You know we can," she begged.

He rolled his eyes with a scoff as he turned away from her.

"Is it so hard for you Gryffindors to imagine that someone might have actually *chosen* this? That not all of us were forced into it?"

She shook her head. That *was* a hard concept to grasp for her. She couldn't understand why anyone would want this.

"Draco…"

"Enough," he snapped.

Hermione bit her lip and brought her hand up to her mouth as she thought. She had to do something, anything. She couldn't go on turning a blind eye to what he was doing and pretending that she was okay with it. Her eyes widened as a figurative light bulb went off inside of her head. She slowly walked towards him, uncertain.

"Wh-what about me?" she quietly asked.

He regarded her out of the corner of his eye.

"What are you on about?"

"I mean…what if…what if I stopped fighting you? What if I agreed to try and make this work if you gave it all up? We could go to Dumbledore together…"

He turned to fully face her now, a skeptical look upon his face.

"…You would do that? *For me?* "

Hermione carefully thought about this while he regarded her. Would she? Could she really do this?

"Well…yes. We're both intelligent, something I admire greatly in a partner. When you're not being a complete arse you're somewhat pleasant to be around and I know that you can be…romantic when you want to be and…you're not…bad looking," she finished lamely.

She found that what she was saying was actually true. She realized that if circumstances had been different (i.e. her not being muggle born or him being raised differently) she would have been interested in Draco for quite some time now. It was just too bad that he had been a complete arse throughout the entirety of their school days or else she would have found herself smitten with him ages ago. He was, sadly, about the only boy in the entire school who could match her in marks and anytime they exchanged insults she could almost feel the cogs in her brain being oiled.

There was never a dull moment. Of course, Hermione couldn't just forget everything he had done and said. He had Crucio'd her for Merlin's sake, that wasn't something she could just look past. He'd also hurt Ron and Harry too and obliviated Ginny. Hermione rested the palms of her hands on each side of her head, suddenly torn. Dear Godric…

"Hey," he whispered as he gently grabbed her wrists and pulled her closer.

Her heart began pounding and she wasn't sure why. He used one of his hands to tilt her head up by her chin.

"Are you saying…that if I gave it all up, turned my back on Voldemort and went over to the light, you would try to make this work between us? You would stop resisting me? You'd be mine...completely?"

She opened her mouth before slamming it shut. If she said yes there would be no going back for her. Ever. She closed her eyes, no longer able to deny that a part of her *wanted* this. Merlin, it was like she was being torn in two.

"Y-yes," she whispered after some time.

She gulped with anticipation as he backed her up towards the couch in the corner of the room. The fire in his eyes was undeniable.

"You mean that?"

"Yes."

"You promise?" he asked as he laid her down, his body immediately aligning with hers.

"Yes," she breathed just as he fiercely pressed his lips against hers.

He consumed her, but what else was new. She hated to admit it, but whenever she was kissing Draco she didn't feel like Hermione Granger. She felt like a normal, giddy teenage girl who was trapped in a lust filled fog. Her fingers dug into the muscles underneath his shirt as his tightened on her waist. Hermione could only think one thing as she enjoyed the attention that Draco was giving her. *Harry, forgive me.*

" *Draco!* "

Hermione sat up in bed with a fright, whipping her head around, trying to find the cause for her sudden arousal from sleep. She rested her head on her hand in confusion upon finding nothing. She turned her head to question Draco, but found his side of the bed empty. After they had fooled around for a while, they had found themselves on the bed where they talked for hours on end before eventually passing out. It was hard to say who had collapsed first.

" *Draco!* "

Hermione's eyes widened as she heard it again. Her heart clenched upon hearing the anguished scream and it clenched more when she recognized the voice as Narcissa's. Hermione threw the covers off of her as if they were on fire and made her way out of the door. She looked down the darkened wing, a chill going down her spine at the

eerily quiet manor. She took a deep breath before making her way down the hall in a hurry. *Had something happened? Was somebody hurt?* She found herself in the opposite wing of the manor as she asked herself these questions. She slowed as her feet landed on something wet, warm and…sticky.

Hermione slowly lowered her head, a dreaded feeling washing over her as she did so. Her eyes widened at the small collection of blood on the manor floor. She quickly backed up and watched in horror as her bloody feet made tracks along the floor. Her heart was beating at a record rate as she began to tremble. She looked up again and saw light coming from an open door at the end of the hall. By the fancy, intricate designs and initials on the door, she guessed that it was Narcissa and Lucius' quarters. Hermione hesitantly walked around the blood and slowly made her way towards the room.

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" *What have you done?* " Narcissa cried.

Hermione's thoughts went blank, her voice caught in her throat as she entered the room. The end of the beautiful bedding was a bloody mess of handprints and the floor fared no better. Her eyes followed the blood to the form of Lucius Malfoy, barely alive, his hands desperately clutching at his throat, but it was no use; the blood just kept pouring out. She sucked in a breath and covered her mouth with her hand as she watched Narcissa's hunched over form trying to heal him with her wand, but it wasn't working. Hermione wasn't stupid. She knew who had done this.

Draco sat in an arm chair on the other side of the room, a vision in black as he ran his fingers through his hair with one hand and a curious looking dagger in the other. His eyes were as cold as ice as he took in the scene before him, the scene he had caused. His eyes found hers and his lips curved. Hermione hesitantly took another step into the room as Draco made his way over to her, his hand outstretched. She jumped as he rested his hand on the back of her neck and pulled her in for a quick kiss.

"Are you not satisfied?" whispered against her neck.

"Wh-what?" she mumbled in shock, not taking her eyes off of the scene before her.

"I took care of him. He won't hurt you ever again," he whispered as he raised his head to gaze into her eyes, brushing a stray curl away from her face.

Her eyes widened as she stared at him.

"Draco…he-he's *dying* . You can't just-."

"Why not? Come," he ordered as he begun to gently pull her from the room.

"Draco! What are you doing? You can't just leave him and…and your *mother* ," she cried in anguish as she looked back at Mrs. Malfoy, a poor mess of blood and tears as she desperately tried to save her husband.

"He's not dying, sweetheart," he responded in a patronizing tone.

She watched as he held up the dagger and gently ran it along her cheek.

"I've spelled this dagger, you see. Once cut with this, you cannot be healed, at least not with magic, but the best part is the second spell.

It replenishes your blood *just* when you are on the cusp of bleeding out," he chuckled.

"That's…," Hermione trailed off as he ran the tip down her neck and towards her chest.

"Ingenious? Diabolical?" he questioned proudly.

"Cruel. That's cruel," she fearfully whispered.

He suddenly snatched the blade away from her.

"A fitting punishment, no," he questioned with a raised eyebrow.

"What about your mother? Draco, she's a mess," Hermione whispered.

Draco closed his eyes and blew out a breath, seemingly in thought before he summoned a house elf. Hermione looked away as she heard him whisper to the elf to take Lucius down to the dungeons and to speak of nothing that he saw. Draco had to hold his mother back as she tried to stop the elf from taking her husband away. Hermione turned her head and watched in horror, but not surprise, as Draco pointed his wand at Narcissa and murmured a quiet 'Obliviate'. She didn't know what other spell he had cast but, soon after Mrs. Malfoy had collapsed in his arms, and she watched as Draco gently tucked her into bed.

Hermione wrapped her arms around herself as Draco came and wrapped his arm around her waist, leading them down the wing.

"Draco, the blood…"

"The House Elves will take care of it," he stated.

Hermione found that she was expectantly quiet as they walked throughout the manor. She had just witnessed a little bit of what Blaise had warned her about and she was not embarrassed to admit that she was frightened. She wanted to talk about this, they needed

to talk about this, but where would she even start?Draco had slit his father's throat and used a cursed dagger to keep him alive as he continued to bleed for Godric knows how long. Draco probably planned to have his father die of starvation. Hermione wasn't even trembling, she just felt numb.

"Why?" she quietly asked as they entered his room.

"You know why. Besides, do you think my father would have just sat back and watch me become a betrayer?"

Hermione remained silent for he had a point. Lucius would have hunted them both down, but still…

"And I couldn't just leave my mother to bear the brunt of his anger."

"Draco…I get that, believe me I do, but there were so many other options," she whispered.

Draco sat on his bed and pulled her closer before tucking a curl behind her ear.

"You are so…naïve," he murmured.

Hermione frowned at the use of that word in regards to her.

"Aside from outright murder, there was no other choice," his voice was firm, telling her that there was no room for argument.

"Draco I-"

"Isn't this a way of proving my loyalty to Dumbledore? I got rid of Lucius," he said as he leaned in to kiss her.

Hermione desperately wanted to tell him that it didn't exactly work like that, but for once in her life, she was speechless. She didn't know what else to say in regards to what had taken place tonight. So instead she accepted his kiss and tried not to think about the fact

that the hands that were currently trailing down her backside were the same ones he'd just used to all but kill his father.

Hermione leaned more into his side, hoping that she could just disappear. The station was packed with students bidding farewells to their parents and other students who couldn't wait to reunite with their friends. Upon their arrival, many had paid them no mind, at least not at first. Many had merely glanced at them in slight confusion, probably wondering who the girl was in the arms of Draco Malfoy. However, it didn't take them long to recognize her as Hermione Granger and it seemed that once a few placed her face, they just had to tell their friends. Hermione wasn't ashamed to be walking with Draco, not at all since they had reached their agreement, but she didn't fare well with unwanted attention.

Once they boarded the train the two of them found an empty compartment where they sat. Draco immediately pulled her legs into his lap and leaned in to place a small kiss on her lips. Hermione raised her hand to lightly push against his chest.

"I need to find Harry," she stated.

She could feel Draco's arms tighten around her.

"Why?" he asked through clenched teeth.

"You know why," she huffed.

He heaved a sigh before letting go of her. She could feel that he wasn't pleased that she was leaving to go talk to Harry. She rested her hand on his arm as she turned his head to face her, eyes boring into his own.

"I made a promise, Draco. I intend to keep it," she reassured him just before brushing her lips against his own and leaving.

It didn't take her long to find Harry. She guessed that he had been looking for her too. As soon as they spotted each other Harry approached her and grabbed her wrist, pulling her into an empty compartment and immediately shutting the door and drawing the curtains. He spun around to face her.

"How was your break? Ginny said that you decided to go home instead of coming with us to the Burrow."

Hermione fidgeted at the lie that she had told Gin. She pulled away as Harry tried to wrap his arms around her. She repressed a sigh as she walked around him and towards the window, watching the scenery fly by.

"Harry…I have to tell you something."

She felt Harry come up behind her and rest his hands on her shoulders.

"What is it?" he questioned.

"I didn't go home for winter break…I went to Malfoy Manor," she whispered.

The silence was deafening, and it wasn't long before she felt Harry back away.

"What?"

She slowly turned around and almost flinched at the look that greeted her. Harry was furious, that much was obvious.

"Draco and I…we came to some sort of agreement," she started.

"What kind of agreement?"

Harry's voice was flat as he took a step towards her.

"We're together, he and I. He's going to join us, Harry. He's going to turn his back on his family and Voldemort. He's giving it all up, because I agreed to give us a chance-"

"How gullible can you possibly be?" Harry hissed.

"Excuse me?" Hermione asked with a frown.

Harry breathed into his fist as he began to pace.

"Hermione, do you honestly believe that he'd do that?"

"I do, Harry. I know that he feels very strongly about me and I used that to our advantage, to get another supporter on our side."

"And you? What about you? Do you feel very strongly about him?" he sneered as he turned to face her.

"Harry, please…," she pleaded.

"Well, do you?" he nearly shouted.

Yes.

"I don't know, okay? I'm not sure how I feel about him, but I do know that I couldn't just turn my back on him. It would have eaten me up inside if a year from now he ended up worse off. I would have constantly wondered was there something I could have done to prevent it."

Harry was silent for quite some time before finally speaking.

"Fine. Have it your way, then," he bitterly stated before turning to leave.

"Harry, wait…"

She approached him.

"I really don't want to talk about this anymore, Mione. I just hope you know what you're doing."

"Harry, I'm sorry. I know how you feel about me and I'm sorry that I can't give you what you want," she whispered.

"I know that you feel something for me, Hermione. I know you do, but Draco has clouded your judgment. You aren't seeing things clearly."

"Believe it or not, Harry I do make my own decisions," Hermione retorted, offended.

Harry said nothing for a while before turning around and pressing his lips against hers. Hermione reached up to push him away, but Harry grabbed her wrists in his hand and rested his other hand on the back of her neck, keeping her in place. The kiss was very short, but breathtaking nonetheless.

"I'm not giving up on you, Hermione. Remember that and when Draco betrays you, because he will, I'll be there; waiting to catch you and to curse him to bits."

Hermione could only stare after him as he exited the compartment.

"Harry, told me Hermione."

Hermione sighed and rolled over onto her back. If he told Ginny then there was no doubt in her mind that Ron knew as well. She was *so* looking forward to that conversation.

"Hermione, are you sure this is the best idea?"

"I think…this is my only option…" Hermione slowly answered "…the only way to keep everyone safe and happy."

"...but what about you? Isn't your happiness and safety important?" Ginny questioned as she sat beside her friend.

"Of course it is, Ginny but I am not the one who has to save the world, now am I. My life isn't nearly as important as Harry's and…I don't *hate* Draco."

She didn't know why she couldn't just be honest with everyone and with herself. She was drawn to Draco. Despite everything, there just seemed to be something in him that called to her. Hermione sat up and leaned back on one hand, her unruly hair covering half her face. She stared at her bedding as she picked at it with her free hand.

"Sometimes I wished that I did, but I don't. He's gotten underneath my skin somehow. I'm not sure when it happened, but it did and what's done is done."

Ginny didn't respond immediately at first.

"So you care about him."

It wasn't a question and even though Hermione's response wasn't needed, she confirmed it anyway.

"Yes, I do. I really wish that I didn't because then maybe things would be much simpler."

"I think I have to disagree with that."

"Why?" Hermione questioned as she looked up.

"I've seen the way he looks at you, Hermione…" Ginny whispered. "I don't think he's the type to have given up so , who knows..."

"Ginny," Hermione warned.

Hermione didn't want to go down that road; she tried not to think about what would happen once all of this was over. It was obvious that it was nearly impossible for her to escape from Draco's hold.

She knew that the moment she proposed this *lovely* idea. Hermione tried not to think about what Harry had said on the train. Draco wouldn't betray her. They made a deal, she made a promise. He had her now, which was all that should matter to him. Draco knew that if he didn't leave it all behind like they had agreed on then he would lose her. He wouldn't risk it.

"I'm sorry, by the way," Ginny said.

"About what?"

"About what I had said to you not long before we left for winter break."

"…You're my best friend Hermione but if you're going to be with Harry then be with him. Otherwise, don't get him caught up in whatever the hell you have going on with your Death Eater…"

"Oh. Right. Forget about it, Ginny. You were right. I needed to make a decision."

"...but I could have been nicer about it. I felt terrible when you said that you weren't going to be coming with us to the Burrow. I thought that you were angry with me or thought that I didn't want anything to do with you."

Hermione realized that Harry hadn't told Ginny all of the details of how she and Draco had gotten together. She didn't know that Hermione went to Malfoy Manor for the break.

"Ginny, it's fine. You had every right to be upset with me."

"Still. I feel like a stupid bint for being so harsh. Of course this has been difficult for you and I wasn't even thinking about that."

Hermione pulled Ginny into a hug.

"Don't worry about it."

Hermione jumped as she felt someone run their fingers along her shoulder as they walked past. She was just about to look up when the person spoke, causing her to sigh in relief.

"I always knew that you were a smart girl."

Hermione raised her head to look at Blaise as he pulled the chair out and sat across from her. He stretched his legs out under the table and crossed his arms over his chest. Hermione shifted uncomfortably as he gazed at her.

"Um…what are you on about?"

An unsettling grin spread across his face.

"Why, you and Draco, of course!"

The tall, dark and handsome Slytherin spread his arms out as if he had just won the lottery. She stared at him as if he were a mad man.

"It's all the latest gossip. You see, it turns out that you and Draco were in fact having some scandalous affair and the two of you have decided to hide your love no longer."

"What?" Hermione nearly shouted as she stood.

Blaise let out a chuckle.

"Relax, I'm just kidding, but back to my original statement. I'm glad to see that you've finally made the right decision, the wisest decision."

Hermione heaved a sigh before lowering herself back into her seat.

"I'm not really sure about that, but I had to do something. Draco isn't evil, and I refused to let him ruin his life so I figured, he gives up being a Death Eater and he gets me in return," Hermione responded with a shrug.

Blaise stared at her with an unreadable expression upon his face before his lips curved into a faint smirk.

"Is that so…," he murmured with a soft chuckle.

"Is that all you came here for? To gloat that Draco finally got what he wanted and that I never stood a chance?" she questioned with a frown.

Blaise's smirk grew as he gracefully stood and pushed his chair back in. He rested the palms of his hands on the table and leaned in closer.

"You said it, not me," he whispered just before turning around and exiting the library.

"Draco, come on. I'm trying to concentrate…," Hermione protested for the umpteenth time.

"I'm trying to give you something better to concentrate on," he murmured against her neck.

Some kind of way, Draco had talked her into studying in his dorm. She was still trying to figure out how he had accomplished that. She sighed as he rolled her over and began to plant feverish kisses along her neck. Hermione had said that she would give them a chance and she meant that, but they needed to sort some things out first.

"Draco, wait. We need to talk."

Now it was his turn to sigh as he pulled back to gaze at her. She reached up to brush a strand of hair away from his face, her chocolate eyes catching his icy ones.

"I can't just pretend that I'm okay with everything you've done. You… you used the Cruciatus Curse on me simply because you were

jealous. You've injured both Harry and Ron and you obliviated my best friend…"

He rested his head in the crook of her neck. She ran her fingers through the silky strands of his hair.

"I…admit that I overreacted when I saw Potter kissing you, and for that I am deeply sorry. I try my best not to hurt you, ever, because I refuse to become anything like my father. but…"

He raised his head and ran his finger across her lip.

"I'm not sorry for hurting your friends. I am just sorry that it hurt you in the process to see them like that. I won't make any promises but I'll try my best to do better."

Hermione fought the urge to sigh in frustration. After all, he *was* trying and he did apologize which was more than she ever expected from him. It wouldn't be fair of her to expect him to turn over a new leaf just like that.

"That's all I'm asking for..."

His response was a fierce kiss. She wrapped her arm around his neck as she deepened it. Her body was vibrating with so many feelings as Draco grabbed her legs and wrapped them around his waist. She arched her back as he ground his pelvis into hers. Her eyes rolled upwards as his lips gravitated towards her neck.

"Draco…," she breathed.

"Yes?" he questioned, his breath fanning against her skin.

"I'm proud of you for doing this, for rising above what you were taught."

"I'd do anything to have you," he whispered against her collar bone, lips curling just the slightest against her skin.

Chapter 12

DISCLAIMER: I OWN NOTHING

Hermione held her breath as she did her best to make her footsteps as light as possible. She felt like a bloody ninja, skulking about the school in the middle of the night. Part of her couldn't believe that she was actually doing this, but another part of her knew that Harry was right; Draco was Draco and while he had somehow slithered his way into her heart, she couldn't be foolish about this. She couldn't just easily accept that he would try and change his entire way of life, even if it is for *her* , the object of his unhealthy desire. As Hermione followed her—she didn't even know what to call him. The words Draco and boyfriend didn't exactly go together, at all. As she followed him in the darkness she thought about the conversation she'd had with Harry that prompted this impulsive decision.

"I'm telling you he's up to something. I know that you're trying to save him and trust him and all, but…"

She watched as Harry pulled the Maurader's Map out of his school bag and held it out towards her. She hesitantly took it as he continued.

"I've been watching him for a while and he goes to the Room of Requirement just about every time he has free time. He'll be in there for about an hour, sometimes more. Lately, he's been going more frequently and staying longer."

Hermione tucked a curl behind her ear as she glanced around the busy corridor. Since she and Draco had returned from winter break together, the biting stares and judgmental whispers had yet to stop. She looked away as Daphne Greengrass through her a particularly nasty look.

"What are you saying?" she asked.

"I think he's doing something for Voldemort. I know it's not what you want to hear, but I think he assigned Malfoy a task, an important one by the looks of it."

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Hermione didn't want to listen to him, but if she was being honest with herself, deep down she'd had a feeling that something was up for a while. From that very first moment that she had seen the Dark Mark plastered onto his skin, Hermione's mind had been into overdrive. Draco was so young and while Hermione didn't doubt that Voldemort would start recruiting as young as Draco, she had a feeling that Draco was given the mark for a very specific reason. The eerie silence brought Hermione back to the present. She slowed, realizing that Draco's footsteps could not be heard. She frowned in confusion as she walked forward, peering into the darkness for any sign of him.

She sharply inhaled as a muscular arm wrapped around her and a hand came up to cover her mouth. *Of course* .

"Why are you following me?"

She shuddered as his warm breath ran across her skin, leaving behind goose bumps. Her eyelids fell close as he ran his lips across her cheek. The hand that was covering her mouth gently moved towards her chest, running past her stomach and towards her thigh.

"I know that you've been going to the Room of Requirement almost every chance you get. I know that you are in there for quite some time and as of late, you've been going more frequently," Hermione told him.

His silence was the only response she needed. She spun around in his arms to meet his unreadable expression with an equally stony one.

"You're doing something for *him* , aren't you?"

He slowly backed her up against the wall, splaying his hands across the surface to cage her in. His eyes seemed to glow in the darkness as he tilted his head to peer down at her. She suddenly felt very small.

"Hermione…I know that you're trying to help, but I don't want you involved in this anymore than you already are."

"It's a little too late for that, don't you think?" she fired back.

His exhale was loud and heated, reminding her of a dragon. She could hear him tapping his hands against the wall, deep in thought.

"You don't understand…," he whispered, almost brokenly.

"Then help me to understand. If not me then at least go to Dumbledore. He will help," she whispered.

Draco was silent for quite some time.

"I wasn't entirely honest when I said that I chose this…," Draco murmured.

"I don't…what-?"

" ***He's going to kill me*** ...e's going to kill my parents."

Hermione's heart stuttered as she processed his words with wide eyes. Of course Draco would be given a task that when failed, would result in his death. She shouldn't have been surprised, but still…

"He won't, I promise. Dumbledore can help you…you can trust that he will keep you safe," she reassured.

"How can you be sure?" Draco questioned, almost angrily.

"He's the greatest wizard in the world. He's more than capable of keeping you safe from Voldemort."

Hermione paced outside of the entrance to Professor Dumbledore's office. Draco had insisted that he go alone. Hermione had wanted to protest, but she realized that she couldn't do this for him. If Draco wanted to break away from Voldemort's clutches and the Malfoy legacy, he had to do it himself. Hermione perked up and pushed herself off of the wall as the Griffin began to move.

"What did Dumbledore say?" Hermione prodded.

It was late, she was tired and Draco had been in Professor Dumbledore's office for almost an hour. The corridor was quiet, but oddly peaceful as they began to walk back to their dorms.

"It's taken care of," was Draco's only response.

"What does that mean?"

Draco shook his head, signaling for her to drop it. Hermione huffed before grabbing his arm, bring him to a halt.

"Whatever Voldemort ordered you to do was obviously important or else your life wouldn't be on the line. So tell me, how is it taken care of?" she demanded.

"There's a broken vanishing cabinet in the Room of Hidden Things. I've been fixing it because it has a twin in Borgin and Burkes…"

Hermione's eyes widened as she put together the pieces of what he was telling her.

"If you got it working then…," she trailed off.

"Professor Dumbledore instructed that I continue to fix the cabinet as planned. The night I let them into the castle there will be an ambush waiting for them in the Room of Hidden Things. I'm supposed to notify Dumbledore the day before," he explained.

Hermione blinked, the thought of Death Eaters in the school terrifying her.

"You were going to let them in the school," she mused in horror.

He took her shoulders, gazing into her eyes with a tormented expression.

"Hermione, you know that I didn't have a choice."

Hermione slowly nodded while she pulled away from him.

"I know, I know, but…you were going to let them into the school" she slowly repeated in disbelief.

"Hermione…," Draco said as he reached out towards her.

Hermione stared at him with an emotion she couldn't even begin to identify. She was trying to wrap her head around the fact that Draco was going to let Death Eaters — other Death Eaters — into the castle. Innocent lives would have been lost all because of him. She heard Draco sigh.

"You can't tell Potter. Professor Dumbledore made it clear that he isn't to know. None of you are actually, but I had to tell you. He doesn't want to risk you all interfering and getting hurt. The Order will take care of it."

She slowly nodded, signaling that she understood as she looked up at him.

"You sure it will work?"

Draco reached for her hand and sent her a crooked smile when she didn't pull away.

"Everything will go exactly as it should," he reassured.

"This is absurd! It feels like we're children all over again," Hermione complained.

She tried her best to focus on her studies, but she couldn't get over what she had recently learned a few nights ago. Nor could she get past that Ron was just on the other side of the common room and was acting like she didn't even exist. His behavior wasn't shocking in the slightest, but Hermione thought that he had moved past that kind of behavior. Then again, she'd begun publicly dating a Death Eater and probably the only man Ron hated more than Voldemort himself. She understood his anger, but she had been hoping that he'd be at least a little understanding. She should have known that'd be too much to ask.

"You can't be too hard on him for acting the way he is. Half of Gryffindor hates you now and the other half only tolerates you because Harry and I are still on your side. They still trust you because we do," Ginny explained.

Hermione was sure that there was a pained look upon her face because that was certainly what was in her heart. She knew that people would lash out, but she couldn't let it get to her. There was a far bigger picture than they understood. Their anger wasn't their fault, because they didn't know the whole story.

"Let's not even get started on Slytherin. You do realize that they are one step away from ambushing you during your patrols, right?"

That got Hermione's attention.

"What?" she asked as she looked up in shock.

"I wanted to tell you this earlier, but Neville told me that he overheard some of the Slytherin boys talking about…finding you during one of your patrols…and…"

Hermione didn't need to hear anymore. She wasn't stupid.

"Neville lost it apparently. I don't think I've ever seen him so worked up. He threatened to go to Dumbledore and have them expelled."

Hermione brushed a few strands of hair away from her face with a sigh. She knew that making this deal with Draco would stir up trouble and potentially put her in minor danger, but she didn't expect… *this* . An assault? The fact that there were guys in this school who would even think about doing such a thing made her want to spew. Hermione could remember the day after they returned from winter break like it was yesterday.

"I'm impressed, Granger…"

Hermione looked up from her book to come face to face with Lavender. She squinted as a biting breeze passed through, ruffling her unruly hair. She suppressed a sigh as she closed her book with a soft thud.

"Impressed with what, if I might ask," Hermione responded.

"I didn't think you had it in you to let it be known that you're spreading your legs for a Death Eater."

Hermione stood, her anger flaring.

"You shouldn't talk about things you don't understand."

"Oh I understand perfectly. You are so stupid that you can't even see that your snake of a boyfriend is using you. When your dark lord wannabe is done with you, he's going to pass you around his Death Eater friends like a used rag. Then when You-Know-Who finally gets

his turn, they're going to toss you back to us. By that point, Harry and Ron will want nothing to do with you because you'll be nothing but a Death Eater's whore. Oh, wait…you already are."

Before Hermione knew it, she had fisted a chunk of Lavender's stringy hair and yanked her head back. She took pleasure in the other girl's gasp of pain.

"The only whore here is you and you know it. Don't displace your own insecurities on me, because you and I both know Ron is only with you for the sex. Don't make me give you another broken nose," Hermione snapped before shoving the other girl away from her in disgust.

Hermione grabbed her school bag before walking back towards the castle. Her behavior surprised her, greatly, but she couldn't let Lavender just say those things and get away with it. She groaned with a grimace as she realized that Draco's behavior had begun to rub off on her. She had never been one for violence, but Lavender always knew how to get under her skin.

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That same afternoon Ron had confronted her about hurting his girlfriend. Hermione had scoffed, she'd hardly say she had hurt the gir,l but either way she had told Ron the whole story of what had happened. It wasn't too shocking when Ron stated that there was truth to Lavender's words, just disappointing.

"I think that someone should be with you at all times, either me or Harry or even Draco," Ginny offered.

Hermione looked up in alarm.

"No, no, no, I can't tell Draco about this," she responded as she frantically shook her head.

"Why not?"

"Are you mental? He'd hunt them down and castrate them or something. He's already so…protective. I don't need it getting any worse," Hermione explained.

"Hermione, you have to do something. There are people in this school who want to hurt you, I mean seriously hurt you," Ginny emphasized.

"We'll figure something out, just don't tell Draco."

Hermione walked through the corridor with caution. Her wand was tightly clutched in her hand, ready for whatever might occur. Her conversation with Ginny earlier spooked her. Every shadow and noise put her on the defensive. Luckily, she didn't have the lower half of the castle tonight, but she wouldn't put it past Slytherins to stalk her all the way up here. She realized that she was near the Room of Requirement, the Room of Hidden Things, where the cabinet was. Hermione stared at the wall, that same unfamiliar emotion bubbling up inside of her.

She knew that Draco didn't have a choice, she understood, but Hermione guessed that if it were her she would have rather died than risk the lives of innocent people. She always knew that she and Draco were two very different people, but she was now just beginning to realize just how different they were. With a sigh, she continued on down the corridor. It wasn't long before she began to hear footsteps rapidly approaching her from behind. The person clearly didn't care if she was heard, because the footsteps weren't quiet in the least.

Hermione braced herself before spinning around, wand at the ready when she was tackled to the ground. Her wand clattered loudly

against the stones beside her head as her assailant began to wrap their small hands around her throat. With wide eyes, Hermione came to the realization that her attacker was a girl. She reached up and shoved the palm of her hand against the girl's face, knocking her on her butt. She could hear the other girl's groan of pain as Hermione reached over to grab her wand. Hermione gasped as a sharp tug on her tresses yanked her back.

As a reflex, Hermione grabbed the other girl's hair and shoved her into the wall, trying to get her to loosen her hold on Hermione's hair. She groaned as she was pushed towards the other wall, her feet almost stumbling over something on the ground; her wand. Hermione used her free hand and punched the girl in the stomach, hard. The other girl loudly coughed and made a sound as if she were going to hurl as Hermione felt around for her wand. Just as her fingers wrapped around the familiar piece of wood, an arm wrapped around her throat, cutting off her airway.

Hermione coughed as the other girl's grip tightened. The positioning that the two of them were in gave her attacker the upper hand. Hermione had to make a choice and fast. She could either try to disentangle herself from her attempted murderer or take a chance in the dark and try to use a spell with what little breath she had left.

"Not so powerful now, you mudblood bitch!"

Hermione slowly lifted her arm and aimed as best as she could. She deeply inhaled as the girl flew back onto the stones. Hermione coughed and used the wall to pull herself up as the sound of hurried footsteps faded into the background.

"What?" Ginny exclaimed as they hurried down the corridor.

"You heard me correctly. She tried to kill me! She ambushed me in the dark like a coward and tried to choke me to death."

Hermione had never been so infuriated and afraid all at once in her life. The fact that *she* of all people actually had the gall to pull a stunt like that was baffling. Did Draco have some magic dragon in his pants that made girls attempt to kill their competition where he was concerned?

"...and you're sure it was her?" Ginny questioned.

"I heard her voice when she stupidly thought that I was about to die-!"

Hermione cut herself off when she spotted just who she was looking for. Apparently, she spotted Hermione too because she immediately turned and went in the other direction. Hermione sprinted through the crowd of students, leaving a worried Ginny behind as she chased Pansy all the way into the Prefect's bathroom. She dropped her bag just inside of the door and yanked her wand out of her back pocket.

Hermione cautiously walked further into the bathroom and ducked just as a spell flew her way. She turned to face the other girl. Hermione steadied herself as she stared at Pansy in caution. The other girl was highly upset, that much was obvious. The both of them just stood there, on opposite sides of the bathroom, staring at one another. Hermione finally decided to break the silence.

"I would ask you why…but that would be a dumb question."

"You're right, Granger. It would be," Parkinson hissed.

"Well I'm going to ask anyway. Why?"

"Why? *Why?* " the other girl shrieked.

Hermione took a step back at the other girl's unsettling behavior. She lowered her wand a fraction of an inch as Pansy began to sob.

"I don't understand, I don't understand," she whispered over and over again.

"Understand what?" Hermione asked.

"You!"

Pansy let her head fall into her hand as she continued to sob.

" **I love him** … ," she shrieked "…I have loved him for as long as I can remember."

"It's Draco. You couldn't have honestly expected-"

Pansy's head snapped up, eyes blazing.

"That he would end up with me? Yes! I did. Do you want to know why? Because he always comes back to me. **Always** ! Our parents have talked about a marriage for *years* ! But then you…you come into the picture and everything changes. He develops this…this *stupid fixation* on you that I never understood. For years he has had this constant need to seek you out. I tolerated it…"

Hermione began to side step as Pansy's voice dropped and she began to step forward, her eyes crazed.

"I looked the other way because I figured this was just some dumb fetish he had developed for *virginal bushy haired* **mudbloods** who wouldn't know the first thing about pleasing a man. I even drank Polyjuice Potion to look like you for him!"

Hermione's eyes widened as this new piece of information. Her eyebrows furrowed in disgust.

"Why would I do such a thing, you wonder? Because I would do *anything* for him, because I love him and anyone can clearly see that you don't. You can hardly even stand him and somehow you've got him trailing after you like a *bitch* in heat."

Hermione raised her wand just as Pansy threw a curse, but it was blocked by a third party. Hermione turned her head to face Theodore Nott as he gently pushed her behind him. They watched as Pansy

fell to her knees and let out uncontrollable sobs. Hermione stared at the young witch in pity and even a little sympathy. Pansy loved Draco, so very much, and no matter how much she wanted Draco to feel the same way he just…didn't. Once upon time Hermione knew a fraction of what that was like when she had a crush on Ron.

She hardly noticed that Nott was gently pulling her out of the bathroom and into the corridor.

"Are you alright?"

She looked up at him and nodded.

"Yeah, I am."

She looked around and took note that the corridor was empty. Her eyes returned to the boy in front of her.

"She…she really wanted me dead. Are *all* of them like that?" Hermione asked in disbelief.

Nott chuckled, a deep, rich sound with a shake of his head.

"No, just Pansy. She's unbelievably stupid and naïve. She's convinced herself for years that Draco has felt the same way, but he just didn't know how to show it. I guess you could say that this has been a rude awakening for her. She's not handling it too well," he laughed.

"This isn't funny. I actually feel bad for her," Hermione argued.

"Well don't. Come on, let's get you to class."

Hermione took her school bag from him and reluctantly followed him down the hall, unaware of the eyes following them.

Chapter 13

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"You know you really don't need to walk me everywhere," Hermione complained.

Nott threw her a look as they neared the Gryffindor entrance and she flushed with shame. She realized that she was acting extremely ungrateful. Pansy tried to *kill* her and Nott was simply looking out for her. It was odd, but he *was* one of Draco's close friends…or whatever it was that Slytherins had.

"Sorry."

"No need to apologize, I get it. I've been following you around for days now, but remember, you were the one who didn't want to tell Draco. It's either him or me, because you know if Blaise found out he'd snitch because he's Draco's bitch," Nott said with a small smile.

She nodded trying hard to ignore that last part.

"Right. Well, thanks for walking me back," she murmured.

With a comical salute, Nott was off down the corridor. As soon as Hermione stepped into the common room she was ambushed.

"Malfoy is looking for you and he wants to see you *now* ," Ginny rushed out with a huff, face as red as her hair.

Hermione reared back and stared at the other girl with wide eyes.

"Come again?"

"Malfoy came by not too long ago, looking for you. He seemed…well to put it simply he seemed pissed. Extremely pissed."

Hermione ran her hand through her hair, the other on her hip.

"Do you think he knows about Pansy?" Ginny quietly asked.

Hermione shook her head.

"I don't know, but I guess I need to find out, don't I? Did he say where he would be?"

Hermione didn't understand what would make Draco so upset. It was possible that he had found out about Pansy, but even then…that shouldn't make him *that* upset.

"He said he would be at the Black Lake," Ginny hesitantly answered.

"The Black Lake…," Hermione repeated with a scoff "…you don't think he's going to drown me do you?"

Ginny stared at Hermione with a horrified expression.

"Gin…relax. It was a joke. Here, take my bag to my dorm. I shouldn't be gone too long."

Hermione exited through the portrait and made her way towards the stairs. Hermione thought about her experiences where Draco's wrath was concerned and pondered on what upset him the most. It was when she neared the Black Lake did it finally hit her; *jealousy* . With an exasperated sigh she realized that he must have been told about how much time she and Nott were spending together and immediately jumped to conclusions.

As Hermione approached a tree that faced the lake she felt a presence. She spun around and had her wand at Draco's throat just as his arms circled around her. He looked down at her with that damn smirk.

"You're getting better at this," he whispered with pride.

"Why did you demand that I meet you out here? And why did you scare Ginny half to death while doing it?" she questioned.

Her breathing increased as his hands made their way down the curve of her backside. She leaned back as he leaned in.

"It's always straight to business with you. Have you ever thought about putting *pleasure* …"

She gasped as he lifted her and hooked her legs around his waist, pressing her pelvis against his.

"…first," he whispered as he captured her lips with his.

She wanted to enjoy this, but she was beginning to understand Draco very well and she just knew that he didn't draw her out here so they could frolic in the leaves. She was proven right when her back suddenly connected with the forest floor and Draco was hovered over her, a palm splayed across her chest and eyes hardened.

"What have you and Teddy been up to?"

Hermione rolled her eyes and attempted to sit, up but Draco's strength prevented her from doing so.

"I'm waiting…"

"It's nothing. He's just…being a bodyguard of sorts."

"Why?" he demanded.

Hermione remained quiet.

"Need I remind you that I know of other ways to get information from you," he whispered as his eyes trailed down the length of her body.

Hermione glared at him with piercing eyes.

"Your psycho ex-girlfriend tried to kill me."

"I don't have ex-girlfriends…," he started.

"Yes, I know, only conquests. Either way, Pansy tried to kill me," she explained.

Draco let up, an unreadable expression on his face.

"First, during my patrols and again in the Prefect's bathroom."

"Nott protected you. That's why the two of you were in there," he mused to himself.

"You saw us?" she questioned as she sat up, an incredulous expression on her face.

Draco remained quiet, but stood nonetheless. Hermione stood with him and stared at him in anger.

"You saw us coming out of the bathroom and assumed the worst. Didn't you?" she fired.

Draco turned around to face her.

"Teddy isn't your friend," Draco responded.

Hermione crossed her arms over chest.

"He's your friend," she pointed out.

Draco shook his head with a humorless laugh.

"Slytherins don't have friends. Teddy has fancied you for years, so trust me when I say that he isn't your friend. He's just as bad as I am and he would steal you right from under my nose given the chance."

Hermione was pretty sure that he was only saying these things because he was jealous, but another part of her had to acknowledge the fact that he knew Nott much better than she and he could be telling the truth.

"Then why hang around him?" she questioned.

"I like to keep my enemies where I can see them," he shrugged with a smirk.

"That's an awful way of thinking. You Slytherins really are something else, the lot of you."

Draco shrugged with a nonchalant expression upon his face, unbothered by her disgust with his house.

"Pansy told me something, something that…was a bit disturbing to say the least," she said.

Draco raised an eyebrow, signaling for her to continue.

"She said that she drank Polyjuice Potion to look like me…for you."

Draco scoffed.

"You question what I say about Teddy's true intentions but *that* you believe," he mused with a shake of his head.

"It wasn't like she said this while we were arguing and she was trying to upset me. She told me this while she was bearing her soul to me. She loves you, Draco, much more than I ever could and I actually feel sorry for her," Hermione confessed.

"Well you shouldn't. She's nothing but a stupid, lying little slut," Draco coldly responded.

"That's an awful way to think of someone you grew up with," Hermione snapped.

"What do you not understand? I didn't mislead her into anything. However she feels now is no one's fault but her own. I was always clear about my intentions regarding her and every other girl. It's her own stupid fault for kidding herself into thinking that I would ever feel the same way."

While his words were harsh, they were still true nonetheless. Draco's sexual activities had never been a secret and everyone knew that no girl could ever tame him, no matter how many tried. It was Pansy's fault for kidding herself, but what Pansy said had also been true; Draco always did go back to her. The two of them had been on and off for as long as Hermione could remember so maybe Draco was partially at fault here as well.

"Pansy will never harm you ever again, I'll make sure of it," Draco said as he rested the palm of his hand on the back of her neck.

"Draco, no. Just...leave it alone. Don't you think you've hurt her enough?" Hermione snapped.

Draco sighed with a small smirk before reluctantly nodding.

"I'm serious," she warned.

"Okay," he said, hands raised in surrender.

"So, it's been brought to my attention that I've been a bit of a tosser."

Hermione looked up in surprise. Her schoolwork laid out in front of her. She blinked.

"No…not really. It's not like I didn't deserve it," Hermione murmured with a small chuckle.

Ron pulled the chair out opposite of her and hurriedly sat down.

"You didn't deserve it, Hermione. I…was confused and angry, but I was mostly angry at Malfoy, still am actually. I kept thinking that he had done something to you, put you under some spell and…I was angry at you, because you're so smart Hermione and I kept thinking 'how can she be so stupid'. Then I realized that you're much smarter than I am. You've always been able to see things that I never could and I felt so bad about how I'd treated you."

"It's okay."

"No, it isn't. I need to trust you."

Hermione didn't want to tell him that she didn't feel so smart as of late. Draco…was unlike any force she had ever encountered. He knew how to get under her skin and make her second guess *everything* . With just one look from him, she could suddenly feel so small and insignificant, even stupid. She wanted to believe that Draco was changing for her, but she had to be smart about this. She couldn't shake this terrifying feeling she'd had and she'd had it for a couple of days now.

Ron suddenly perked up.

"I dumped Lavender."

Hermione's expression remained neutral, but inside she was celebrating. She *hated* Lavender.

"What she said to you wasn't right and I told her so. Plus, she's not very active, just lays there like a pillow," he added.

Once Hermione understood what he was referring to she made a noise of disgust as Ron laughed.

"You're awful," she hissed as she joined in with his laughter.

"I'm not sure about this," Hermione said, uneasy.

She reached up to finger the blindfold around her eyes, but Draco lightly slapped her hand away.

"Stop it."

She sighed in frustration. Hermione didn't like not knowing. Somehow, Draco had not only convinced her to come to his dorm room, but to also put on a blindfold. She was currently sitting on the edge of his bed, listening to him fiddle around the room. She was a bit uneasy. She could hear him nearing her and the closer he came the faster her heart beat. She felt him lightly rest his hands on her knee caps.

"Trust me, okay?" he quietly asked.

She exhaled before hesitantly nodding. She felt him slowly lift her right leg before first removing her shoe and then her knee high sock. He set her leg back down before moving to the other and repeating the process. She sucked in a harsh breath once his large hands began to trail up her legs, his fingers dancing along her skin as he did so. Once the tips of his fingers reached the edge of her skirt she immediately reacted, halting his hands with her own.

"Draco," she panted in warning.

She felt his lips graze her cheek.

"Trust me. I promise I won't do anything you won't like," he whispered.

His room was silent as Hermione's mind buzzed. She took a deep, shaky breath before giving him a quiet 'ok'.

"Lay down," he commanded, his voice making it incredibly hard to disagree.

It took her a minute before she slowly leaned back until her back connected with the surface of his bed, her hair fanned around her. Her heart was going a mile a minute as his fingers continued along their path underneath her skirt. Air started to escape her nose at an alarming rate as his fingers hooked onto the side of her underwear and began to pull them down at an agonizing rate. Her mind went completely blank as he let her underwear drop to the floor and lifted her right leg over his shoulder.

"Draco…I-"

Her sentence was cut short as her back arched and her lips parted into the shape of an 'O'. She let out an embarrassingly high pitched gasp, her fingers twisting into the covers as his tongue went to work between her legs. Her chest heaved up and down as she stared into darkness, craving to see him, desperately wanting to rip the blindfold off…so that's what she did. She struggled to lift her head as this unfamiliar pleasure coursed through her entire body. Her eyes rested on his fair golden hair before locking onto his irises when he lifted his head an inch to look up at her.

"Draco," she moaned as he slid the palm of his hand up to rest on her stomach and forced her back down onto her back.

She stared up at the ceiling without seeing, her eyes staring at nothing as sounds she'd never made before escaped her lips. She reached down to clench her fingers in Draco's soft hair as tightness

began to build within the pit of her stomach. He picked up the pace, his tongue moving and twisting at an impressive rate as her leg tightened around his shoulder. Her upper back arched, her lower back still being held down by Draco's hand, as she saw stars. She lost count of how many times she chanted his name as her body shook with her release. Draco didn't relent one bit until she had completely quieted, only then did he lift up to crawl over her.

She briefly thought that this was what being high felt like as he traced her collar bone with his index finger.

"You took off the blindfold."

She absent mindedly nodded, struggling to catch her breath. He buried his nose into the crook of her neck.

"I thought that you needed to relax. You're welcome," he said.

She could practically hear the smirk in his voice. She let out a refreshing sigh as he rolled over to lay beside her, playing with her curls.

"Sleep," he softly commanded.

Hermione walked into the Great Hall the next morning feeling much better than she'd had in quite some time. She bit her lip with a blush as she forced herself to tone it down some. Ginny was always glowing after she did anything along those lines. Hermione didn't want to give herself away. As she made her way to her table she noticed that many of the Slytherin students were whispering amongst each other and throwing looks at her. She looked away and sat down, ignoring whatever was going on. She figured they were still talking about Draco and her.

She dug into her food and lifted her head with a smile when Ginny came to sit across from her. However, one look at Ginny's face had her pausing.

"What's wrong?" Hermione asked.

"I assume you told Draco about Pansy the other day," Ginny replied.

"Yeah…I did. How did you know?" Hermione asked in confusion.

Hermione hadn't gotten around to telling Ginny what had happened at the Black Lake the other day.

"Pansy's in the infirmary."

"What?" Hermione shouted, drawing attention to herself as she stood.

Ginny reached out to try and force her friend back down, but Hermione's head had turned to glare at a certain Slytherin who had just stepped into the hall. She approached him, hair flying behind her as she reached out and shoved him against the hall doors, taking note of the eyes that followed the couple. With one last scathing look at him she exited the hall, anger coursing through her.

"Hermione."

She ignored him as he followed her.

"Hermione," he said more forcefully as he gained on her.

She was brought to a halt as he grabbed her wrist and spun her around to face him.

"Don't touch me," she snapped, jerking away from him.

"What is wrong with you, you silly bint?"

"I just heard that Pansy is in the infirmary," she said.

Draco was silent as he straightened up and looked down at her with hardened eyes. Hermione shook her head, eyebrows furrowed.

"I knew it," she hissed before walking away from him.

"You didn't really think that I was just going to let her get away with it did you?" he snapped as he grabbed her again.

"Yes, I did because you *told* me you would. You lied to me! You looked me in my face and lied to me," she sternly stated.

"That *bitch* tried to kill you! You're compassionate, I get it, but this is one of those times where you have to let that go. She tried to *end* you. She's lucky I didn't end her."

"You don't get it…," she whispered as she shook her head "…it's not even about that. You told me that you wouldn't do anything, that you would leave it alone and I trusted you to keep your word. You went behind my back and did it anyway."

She shoved past him and made her way up the stairs.

"You and he…?"

"It was one of the best experiences of my life. I was so happy this morning and then within a matter of minutes it was completely ruined," Hermione complained.

"Don't you think you should cut him some slack? It's not like Pansy pulled some harmless prank. She was out for *blood* and asking Draco to not react is like…is like asking Fred and George to not be mischievous little shits," Ginny explained.

Hermione let out a sigh before lifting the pillow from her face.

"I know, I know, but... Was it stupid to think that he would keep his word? I just wanted to put this whole thing behind me."

Ginny was silent for a while before answering.

"No, it's not stupid at all. I get it. You want to trust him and he told you that he wouldn't do something, but he did it anyway. I'm sure I'd be a bit peeved too, but it's Draco-"

"So that makes it excusable? It's *Draco Malfoy* , so that means that I don't have the right to be upset, because it's who he is?" Hermione incredulously asked.

Hermione hopped off of Ginny's bed. Ginny hurriedly ran to the other side of the bed.

"No, that's not what I meant-"

"Then what did you mean, Ginny because to me it sounds like you're saying that I have absolutely no right to be upset with him about anything, because I know who I'm with, that I knew who he was before we started dating," Hermione interrupted, folding her arms over her chest.

"I just meant that…," Ginny trailed off as she struggled to correct her mistake.

Hermione looked at her expectantly.

"Well…yeah," Ginny said with a shrug.

Hermione's facial expression spoke for itself, because Ginny quickly continued.

"I'm sorry, but it's true. You should know that this is going to take a while and expecting him to change so suddenly is just…," Ginny trailed off, suddenly unsure.

"Crazy? Unrealistic? I didn't realize it was crazy for me to think that he wouldn't lie to my face, that he wouldn't go behind my back and do something that we both agreed he wouldn't do. If he had had no intentions of just staying out of it then he should have at least given

me an 'I'll try' or 'You couldn't possibly ask that of me', not 'okay', this way I wouldn't have been blindsided," Hermione snapped.

"Hermione…"

"You're supposed to be on my side," Hermione snapped.

"Well I can't when your side is completely irrational," Ginny snapped back.

Hermione reared back as if she had been slapped.

"What the bloody hell is your problem?" Hermione mused aloud before turning around and exiting the room, the door slamming behind her.

She walked down the corridor, her mind buzzing with so many thoughts. Was Ginny right? Did she not have any right to be upset with him simply because she knew who she was with? Maybe, but that didn't mean that she was supposed to just put up with his crap because he was Draco sodding Malfoy. She turned the corner and frowned as her eyes landed on the last person she wanted to see. She immediately turned around.

"Wait, Hermione."

"What?" she snapped.

"I want to talk to you…please," he pleaded.

She stared down the hall for a minute before reluctantly turning around. She looked up at him as he stared down at her with those piercing eyes of his.

"I'm sorry."

"What?" she asked, taken aback.

"I said I'm sorry. You were right. You had every right to be upset with me. I told you that I was going to leave it be and I didn't," he said as he leaned against the wall.

She stared at him, skeptical. This had to be a trick.

"I'm being truthful, I promise," he softly chuckled.

"Well…thank you. That means a lot. I really needed that, right now," she whispered, thinking back to her fight with Ginny.

"Why, what's wrong?" Draco asked with a frown, reaching out towards her face.

"It's not important," she quietly answered.

"Okay. Well, I wanted to make this up to you. I have a surprise for you tomorrow night out near the hut," he whispered as he looked down at her.

"Hagrid's hut? Why way out there?" she questioned.

"It's a surprise. Blaise will lead you out there while I make sure that everything is perfect."

"Draco you don't-"

She was cut off as he placed his fingers on her lips and leaned down.

"I do. Surprisingly, I actually felt bad about what I did, about how it made you feel. So yes, I need to do this. I really want to prove myself to you" he whispered.

She smiled up at him as he leaned down and covered her lips with his own. She rested the palm of her hand on his chest as he rested his on the back of her neck.

"What are you doing to me?" he whispered against her lips.

Hermione found herself thinking the same thing.

"Just hear her out, Hermione," Ron pleaded for the umpteenth time.

She let out a heated sigh as she scanned the shelves for a particular book. She was trying to finish up some schoolwork, but Ron had been bugging her for about half an hour, begging her to talk to Ginny. Hermione didn't have anything left to say and this was what she told him.

"She's made her feelings perfectly clear. What else is there to talk about?"

"Hermione…you know how Ginny can be sometimes. Are you forgetting that we share the same DNA? She's a Weasley," Ron said as if that excused the whole thing.

Hermione sighed. Maybe she was being a bit harsh, but then again…maybe not. This stupid insignificant fight was causing too much stress. She wished that Harry was here, he would know how to get her to make up her mind, but he was off with Dumbledore. She and Ron were supposed to be keeping an eye on things.

"I don't have time for this right now, Ron."

"You don't have time for this? What, is reconciling things with my sister not important enough to you?" Ron asked, angered.

She turned to face him.

"You know what? It's not. I'm sorry, but right now both you and I have more important things to do than worry about some stupid fight that *she* caused. I did nothing wrong so therefore I refuse to lose any sleep over it," Hermione said with a shrug.

"Hermione are you really choosing *him* over your best friend?"

"I'm not choosing anyone over anyone. I simply cannot deal with this right now. We got into a fight. It's going to take a while for me to get over what she said. She'll survive," Hermione snapped, returning her attention to the shelves.

Ron was silent for quite some time before walking away in a huff. Hermione rested her hand on the shelf before heaving a tired sigh.

"Sounds like I missed a good catfight."

Hermione looked up, startled. She narrowed her eyes before turning back around.

"Eavesdropping will get you nowhere and I'd hardly call it a catfight. Just a stupid spat," she whispered.

"Well if it's not that big of a deal then why is everyone making it one?" he questioned.

She exhaled.

"What do you want, Blaise?"

He leaned against the bookshelf with a Malfoy worthy smirk gracing his lips. His obsidian eyes drank her in as if studying her.

"I just stopped by to make sure that you didn't forget about this evening. Draco would murder me if I let you forget," he answered.

"I didn't forget."

"Good. Teddy will be accompanying me, as well," he said.

"Nott? Why?" she asked as she turned to face him.

"He's a nosy bugger, that's why," he answered with a shrug, his eyes suddenly interested in something else.

"I think the whole thing is ridiculous to tell you the truth. Draco doesn't have to do this."

"...but he does. He's trying to get back into your good graces ten times over. I must say that I'm surprised. He never feels regret for anything he does."

"So he told me. Where is he anyway? I haven't seen him all day," she mused.

"He's getting everything ready for this evening," Blaise said with finality.

She nodded as she grabbed the book that she had been searching for.

"I'm not putting that on," Hermione argued as she crossed her arms, jutting out her hip.

Blaise practically breathed fire as he let out a frustrated sigh while Theodore simply ran his hand through his jet black hair and glanced up at the sky. Blaise pressed his hands together before tapping his nose against them as he stepped towards her.

"Hermione we have to hurry. We can't be late or he *will* skin us alive. So put on the damned blindfold," Blaise snarled.

Hermione raised her eyebrow.

"Well, I'm not going anywhere with that attitude," Hermione said, amused at Blaise's frustration.

"Okay forget the blindfold. Just close your eyes. This way you can open them anytime you want…," Theodore proposed.

Hermione stared at him, thinking before giving a slight nod. Blaise clapped once.

"Okay, let's go, *now* ," Blaise pressed as she held onto Theodore's arm and shut her eyes.

"This better be good," she said as they began to walk at a slow pace so that Hermione wouldn't stumble over something.

"It will be," she heard Blaise say.

"You do realize that if I was allowed to see then we wouldn't have to walk so slowly. This pace is going to take forever," she complained.

"She's right, you know. We're going to be late," Theodore agreed.

"No we won't. Everything will be fine."

It was a bit nippy out and getting cooler as the evening wore on. She guessed that it was cloudy out. The wind was blowing slightly, she assumed that it was going to rain and she told them so.

"Draco prepared for the rain. Don't worry," Theodore told her.

He said not to worry, but ever since Hermione had stepped outside with them she had done nothing but worry. That feeling that she had almost told Ron about was stronger than ever now as it practically chewed at her from the inside out. She'd been trying to ignore it, force it to the back of her mind, but it was practically impossible, now. It was becoming more and more relentless the further they got from the castle. Maybe one of her friends was hurt. Maybe it was Harry? She mentally shook her head. Why would one of them be hurt? She didn't know why one of them would be in trouble, but she did know this; *something was very wrong.*

She opened her eyes. It *was* cloudy out. Both Blaise and Theodore were in front of her, Blaise being much further so neither one of them noticed that she had opened her eyes. With a start she realized that they were not going in the direction of Hagrid's Hut. Her eyebrows furrowed in fearful confusion as her heart began to speed up. She looked around, searching, trying to figure out what was going on. Her

gaze zeroed in on Theodore as she caught the movement of his left arm. Her eyes widened as she followed his lead, discreetly letting her wand slip out of the sleeve of her shirt and into her hand. She prepared herself just in time.

"Protego," she shouted as she dived to her left, blocking a curse from Blaise and dodging the one from Theodore.

She rolled to her feet and shoved her hair away from her face as the three of them moved to opposite positions. The three of them stared at one another for quite some time, waiting for someone to make a move. With a flick of her wrist Theodore's wand was in her hand and before he or Blaise knew it she had stunned him. She backed up as she lifted her wand towards him. Hermione stared at him in caution.

"Hermione…"

"Zabini…"

"Back to the last name, are we? I guess that's what happens when you try to kidnap someone," he mused with a cruel smirk.

"Why?" she whispered.

She knew why. They both knew that she knew why. Hermione didn't want to believe it. Blaise's only answer was a gesture over his shoulder towards the castle. Her eyes followed and she let out a quiet gasp just as the Dark Mark appeared above the school, right above the Astronomy Tower. She blinked and shook her head in disbelief as she stared at the ground.

"No," she whispered.

"Yes," Blaise said.

She lifted her wand higher along with her head as she took another step back. She glanced at Nott's unconscious form before resting her eyes on the only person standing between her and the school.

"Let me go."

"Why?" Blaise asked, his eyes dancing with amusement as he stepped closer.

"I can take you," she threatened as she tightened her grip on her wand.

"Want to bet?" he offered, his smirk disappearing.

No. Hermione didn't want to bet. She had never been more afraid of Blaise than in this moment. Right now, standing in front of her, with the dark clouds overhead and the silhouette of the school behind him, Blaise looked like a tall, dark version of Draco. *Different devils of the same hell* , she thought in anger. Suddenly, Blaise lowered his wand and stepped aside. She stared at him, not trusting him *at all* .

"Go on," he said with a smirk.

"Why are you helping me?" she questioned.

"I'm not. I'm helping Draco, but that doesn't mean that I can't make it more challenging for him…and fun for me."

She slowly walked past him, turning around to walk backwards as she kept her eyes on him. It would be just like a Slytherin to curse her while her back was turned.

"He'll have you in the end," he whispered.

Hermione knew that too. She'd known for quite some time that she had been fighting a losing battle, but she would be damned if her friends went down with her. Once she was far away she turned around and ran like hell for the castle.

Don't forget to review :)

Chapter 14

It's here, it's here! Hahahahahaha! I first want to say that I definitely took inspiration from the book's version of The Battle of Astronomy Tower rather than the movie's. In the movie all we saw was Bellatrix taking part in vandalism so...yeah.

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Warning: I own nothing

Double Warning: Domestic Violence (from both parties?)

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"Please, please, please…," she pleaded to herself over and over again.

She recognized that she was mildly in shock. What had Draco done? Why had he tried to have her taken away from the school? All the way to the school this feeling overtook her like no other, a feeling she couldn't identify. Was it betrayal? That would be the most expected emotion, but it wasn't like she was *in love* with Draco, far from it even though she had done things with him she'd never done with anyone else. Still, somehow he had wedged his way into her heart. She had trusted him. Yes, that was it. She had put so much faith into him, had foolishly believed every candy coated lie that had slithered from his lips and now she didn't know what to think. Her feet slowed as she sucked in some deep breaths and forced herself not to cry. Whatever had happened, she had to make sure that her friends were okay. Ron, Harry…Ginny. She had to make sure that no one had been hurt or worse.

As she entered the school she faintly heard noises on the upper floors that sounded like fighting. She tightened her fist around her wand. First thing first, she needed to locate her friends. As she ran up the stairs she nearly collided with someone. Luckily, they grabbed her shoulders before either one of them could fall. She looked up and sighed in relief.

"Neville what-"

"There are Death Eaters in the castle," he rushed out.

Hermione took a step back, feeling as if she had been sucker punched right in the gut. So she had been correct in her assumptions. Where was Professor Dumbledore?

"The Order is here as well. We're trying to get the younger students to safe places," he rushed out.

"Where's Ron and Ginny?" she asked.

She noticed that Neville had a slight bruise forming on his jaw.

"They're around here somewhere."

"Harry…?"

Neville gave an apologetic shrug.

"I don't know. No one has seen him," he quietly stated.

A loud bang from the floor above them had them both turning their heads upwards. Her head lowered and she ran past Neville with a 'thank you'.

"Wait, where are you going?" Neville asked, worried, as he caught her arm.

"I have to go find Harry…and Draco," she whispered that last part.

Neville's face darkened, an expression that startled her because it was rarely seen on his face. He exhaled.

"Hermione…I know you probably don't want to hear this, but-"

"I know…Neville. I know that there are plenty of things that I didn't want to hear that I probably should have listened to, but I'm paying for it now. We all are," she interrupted.

Neville took a step towards her.

"This isn't your fault, Hermione."

"It is. I foolishly trusted him and so many others did because I did. I don't like having that much influence that much…power. At one point I did, but now, knowing what can happen when my judgment is clouded and my faith is put into the wrong hands…," Hermione trailed off with a shake of her head.

"Do you want me to come with you?" he offered.

"No…," she answered immediately "…this is something that I have to finish myself."

Neville stared at her with an unreadable expression before pulling her into a hug.

"Please be safe, Hermione."

"I will," she said as she pulled away.

There was a brief moment where they both looked at each other and knew that this might be the last time that they see each other for a while. Forever, if Draco had his way. She turned and ran up the stairs towards the Astronomy Tower. If her gut feeling was correct, Draco was the one who had cast the Dark Mark above the school.

Blaise nonchalantly strode through the corridors, watching and listening to the drama unfold before him. Draco had really outdone himself. He was, dare he say it, impressed. After letting Hermione go and dragging Teddy somewhere where he wouldn't be accidentally killed —idiot—, Blaise found that he was quite bored. At this time he *would* have been keeping an eye on Draco's pet, but on a split decision he had suddenly decided to make it a bit more entertaining. Of course, he wouldn't let Draco know the truth. He just might literally castrate him. He took a step back, dodging a measly stray

curse from some fifth year before stunning the kid. This particular corridor was very lively.

He snaked his way up the stairs, passing by Death Eaters and students like a shadow, and almost laughed at his luck. Just the person he had been searching for…

"Weasley," he called.

The fiery female spun around with wide eyes and lifted her wand, a curse on her lips. Blaise lifted his hands in surrender.

"Slow your roll, I come in peace."

"Liar! *Your* best friend let the Death Eaters in," she hissed, taking a step forward.

"I assume Draco told you this himself?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

Ginny opened her mouth before closing it with a frown.

"Well…no, but-"

"Don't go believing everything you hear. Professor Dumbledore was in on this, but something went…wrong," he said with a frown.

He suddenly shook his head.

"Draco had a feeling about this which is why he ordered Nott and I to get Hermione out of here, but…," he trailed off.

"But what? Is she okay," the red haired witch frantically questioned, her anger suddenly forgotten.

Blaise's frown deepened.

"I'm not sure. I don't want to get your hopes up. She was hit-"

"Where is she?" she pleaded as she grabbed his sleeve.

"Weasley…," he protested.

"Take me to her, *now* ," she demanded, her anger returning.

Blaise stared at her before reluctantly nodding.

"Let's go this way. It's clear," he said, leading her away from the hall he'd just come from with his hand lightly on the small of her back.

This particular hallway was quiet, but below she could still hear bangs and the sounds of curses being thrown. How had things gone downhill so fast? Well, she already knew the answer to that. Hermione took slow and sure steps wondering where the bloody hell Draco and Harry were. She shook her head. She was hanging around Ron too much. She had just turned the corner when she heard a distinctive laugh a few corridors over. She spun around, heart pounding as she identified that laugh. *Bellatrix* … Surely Draco would be with his mental aunt.

She began to sprint down the hall with a purpose, but was forcefully and painfully stop. She gasped in agony as something collided with her gut. She felt an arm wrap around her waist before she was thrown backwards. Hermione landed on her back with a loud 'oomf' and saw stars as her head collided with the stone floor. Her chest heaved as she fought to catch her breath, but every inhale caused a sharp pain to shoot throughout her body. Through the agonizing haze she heard *his* voice.

"You mind telling me…why the *hell* you are still here?" his words came out slow, his voice thick with poorly concealed anger.

She heaved as she pushed herself up to sit on her bum. She slowly lifted her head to glare up at him from her position. He stood before her, impeccably dressed from head to toe in black. His hair was perfectly in place as he stared down at her, eyes as icy as she had

ever seen them. She slowly stood as they both stared each other down. As he gazed at her, daring her to make her move, she found that she wasn't afraid of him. What more could he possibly do to her? Completely forgetting about her wand, Hermione hurled her fist towards his face. She hissed as he caught it in his hand before spinning her around and pinning her against his chest.

She placed her leg in between both of his and slid it forward, taking him with her, but he put all of his weight on his other leg and spun her around, pinning her in between the wall and himself. She struggled as he pressed her into the stone.

"Are you done?" he hissed in her ear.

"Get off of me," she snarled.

She threw herself away from him as soon as she was free.

"Why are you still here?" he repeated.

"What? Are you disappointed that your boyfriend didn't do what he was told?" she mocked, referring to Blaise.

"Are you going to answer me or not?" he demanded.

"I don't owe you a damn thing!"

He said nothing, but he didn't deny the implications in her tone either. As she stared at his face that feeling of betrayal bubbled within her chest.

"I trusted you," she whispered.

"That's…unfortunate," he responded with a smirk.

"Where is Harry?" she demanded, trying to ignore the pain she felt at his dismissive response.

"Don't know, don't care," he shrugged as he stepped forward.

"Where is Professor Dumbledore, then?" she asked as her eyes darted around while she stepped back.

"Dead."

She halted her movements as her heart skipped a beat. She blinked and looked at him in confusion. She couldn't have heard him correctly.

"What did you just say?"

"I said he's dead," he repeated.

"How?" she asked, her throat closing up.

The words Professor Dumbledore and dead didn't go together. They just didn't.

"He fell off of the Astronomy Tower. Of course…he only fell *after* I killed him," he said as he casually waved his wand around as if he were talking about the weather.

Hermione's eyes widened as what he just said sank in. She stumbled backwards as she stared at him as if he had a second head.

"No, no that's…impossible. That is impossible. Dumbledore is the greatest wizard in the world and there is no way that he fell to the hands-."

"Dumbledore was an old and blind fool, nothing more," Draco rudely interrupted.

The slap echoed throughout the corridor. Draco lightly touched his jaw as Hermione stared at him, tears threatening to spill over, chest heaving. She couldn't remember a time when her emotions had been so all over the place in her life. She was going into shock… again.

"You never told him anything that day you went to his office, did you? You never intended to join us. You played me like a fiddle. Merlin, how could I have been so incredibly stupid? I vouched for you. I defended you against *everyone* ," she cried as she backed up, fire in her eyes.

Draco glared at her and twirled his wand in between his fingers as he stepped forward.

"You know, today has made me regret so many things, but my biggest regret by far would have to be that Professor Dumbledore, the greatest wizard in the world, fell to the hands of a lying, manipulative *son of a bitch* like you."

Hermione barely had time to duck as the curse sailed past her head. Before she could right herself she found herself on her back. She socked him right in the nose and rolled them over before wrapping her hands around his throat. He shoved his hands against her chest, causing her to fly back. She had barely landed on her back before she was up and upon him once again. Frustrated, she noticed that he was simply evading her; ducking underneath her arms and weaving in between her fists. It barely counted as defense. She shoved him away from her.

"Fight me! Fight me, Draco! Can you only take people down when they're not expecting it? Are you a coward too? Do you only get your lapdogs to do your dirty work?" she threw at him.

His eyes narrowed before he yanked off his jacket, letting it fall to the ground. He loosened his sleeves before rolling them up as he stepped towards her. Her heart sped up as he gazed at her, amusement dancing in his eyes, like a cat playing with a mouse.

"I had hoped that it wouldn't come to this, but I must admit that the image of dragging you back to my manor by that curly hair of yours does get me going," he said with a smirk.

"You're sick," she threw at him.

"...and yet, this sick man had you purring like a kitten," he sneered, just before he lunged at her.

She threw herself to the side and spun around just in time to throw her arms up, blocking his fist. She threw her palm up and hit him right under his chin. Her small victory was short lived as he tripped her and shoved her onto the ground. His fingers caught her hair before throwing her against the wall. She panted as he pinned her hands against the wall beside her head. He ran his nose up her throat. The only sound throughout the corridor was her deep breaths and the faint noises coming from the other parts of the school.

"Is this how it's going to be, Hermione? We fight until I eventually knock you out —because I will— and I have to throw you over my shoulder and carry you back to my manor. Don't you want to keep at least *some* of your dignity?" he mocked against her throat with a chuckle.

"I hate you. I hate you so much," she hissed.

He let out an arrogant laugh as he pulled away and tilted his head.

"No you don't, and that's what makes you so mad," he sweetly replied.

She brought her knee up as her tears finally spilled over and was satisfied when he bent over in agony. She turned to run past him, but gasped as she landed face first on the floor. She struggled as he crawled up the length of her body and flipped her over before pinning her down, his hand around her throat. She gasped for air, her body useless as he pinned it down with his own. She could feel her head becoming light as tears ran over her skin and she knew that it wouldn't be long before she was unconscious. She couldn't lose like this; not without knowing that her friends were going to be okay, not without apologizing to Ginny, not without knowing that Harry was at least alive.

"I knew I would win, sweetheart. I always do," he whispered, brushing his lips against hers.

Hermione felt her eyes closing as his words reached her ears. Yes, Hermione knew it too.

"Let her go, Malfoy!"

Her eyes found their strength and flew open as she heard his voice. She watched as Draco slowly lifted his head, his expression darkening. He loudly exhaled and she suddenly inhaled at an alarming rate as Draco removed his hands. She barely had time to catch her breath before she was suddenly lifted and pinned against Draco's chest with a knife at her throat.

"One wrong move, Potter and I'll spill her blood all over this damn corridor," Draco threatened.

Hermione inhaled as she tried to lean back away from the knife, pressing her head against Draco's chest. She wanted to see Harry for herself, see that he was okay, but her position only enabled her to look at the ceiling.

"You wouldn't do it, Malfoy," her best friend argued.

"Oh you underestimate me, Potter. What you don't understand is that I would rather see her dead at my feet than in the arms of another, especially someone like you," Draco hissed, his icy tone sending a chill down Hermione's spine.

"Harry-"

"Shut up," Draco snapped as he dug the blade further into her skin.

She let out a pained gasp as it began to sting, indicating that he had cut her.

"Drop your wand, Potter. Drop it!"

Hermione's heart dropped along with Harry's wand as it clattered against the stone floor. She closed her eyes and continued to catch her breath as Draco spoke.

"Kick it over here, now."

She heard Harry do just that. Draco began to move forward, taking her with him and she let out an anguished sob as Draco stomped on the piece of wood, the sound echoing throughout the corridor. Draco backed away, pulling her with him as he spoke.

"Now, this is what's going to happen. We are going to walk out of here and you are going to let us. Hopefully, we will never have to cross paths again," Draco said.

Hermione panted as she shimmied her wand out of her sleeve, where she had stuffed it, and into the palm of her hand. Just as they reached the corner of the corridor she tossed it, underhand, far enough to land a few feet in front of Harry. Draco threw her around the corner with a snarl before digging his wand into her back.

"Move, now," he ordered as he looked over his shoulder "I'm very tempted to throw you down the stairs for that."

Her mind whirled as they ran through the corridors. Harry had to be catching up to them soon. She needed to stall. She suddenly stopped and spun around to face him.

"Are you deaf? I said move," Draco hissed as he stopped himself from running into her and gripped her arm.

"Make me," she spat.

Draco tilted his head as he stepped towards her, towering over her small frame. He had just opened his mouth to speak when a curse sailed past them, grazing Draco's arm. He clutched his arm and let out a hiss as he spun around and fired. Hermione dove out of the way as they battled. Her eyes darted around looking for anything that

could distract Draco when she heard a curse that made her leap up in horror.

"Bombarda Maxima!"

She watched as the wall next to them began to crumble, forcing Harry away from she and Draco. She was pulled back as she covered her eyes.

"Harry," she cried as she hurriedly backed away from a piece of stone.

She coughed as dust filled her lungs and her vision. She could faintly hear her name being called from the other side of the rubble. Her eyes finally rose to meet Draco's.

"Anything else you want to try?" he asked, his lips curling over his teeth.

Before he knew it, Hermione had spit in his face and took off running. The corridors were a blur in her vision as she flew down them. She needed to get downstairs or maybe even outside. She had to find Harry. Draco's footsteps sounded like thunder in her ears as he followed her. She sharply turned into another corridor, almost falling in the process. Her nails scraped against the wall as she hung and continued down the hall. She saw a stairway up ahead and contemplated jumping to skip a few steps. The odds were not in her favor as it began to change.

"No, no, no," she whispered as she sped up.

She was going to jump, she had no choice. She pushed off, hair flying behind her, but she barely made it three feet into the air before her arm was caught and her chest hit the cutoff of the staircase, feet dangling. She looked up in fear as Draco began to pull her up. She reached up to dig her other hand into his. She wasn't going back up there with him, she just wasn't. She would rather *die* .

"You're not getting off that easy," he hissed.

She panted as she look back and forth between him and the oncoming staircase. She struggled harder as she felt herself being lifted. The world was suddenly spinning and she found herself on her back just in time for the stairs to connect.

"Let go," she shrieked as he gripped her shirt.

His feet were planted on either side of her as he lifted her up, their noses brushing against each other.

"Let's take a second to go over the facts here…," he began as he stood, taking her with him.

She struggled against his iron grip as he pulled her down the stairs, feet dragging along the stone floor.

"I have a wand, you do not. You are currently separated from your holier than thou wannabe knight in shining armor and his stupid sidekick. Your Headmaster and safety net is dead and the school is currently crawling with Death Eaters. So, one could say that I am the only thing keeping you from harm," he coolly explained.

"Yeah, from everyone but you," she spat before reaching and grabbing the knife he had tucked into his belt.

Her attack was cut short as he grabbed her wrist and pushed against her. She panted as she pushed harder, the knife aligned with his chest. She glared up at him in a mixture of anger and frustration as he looked down at her with that damn smirk gracing his lips. She gasped in pain as he pushed harder, causing her to step backwards, further down the stairs. With a snarl he ripped the knife out of her hand. She let out a pained hiss as her hand was sliced open before falling down the last few steps. She struggled to stand as she clutched her hand against her stomach.

"Trying to kill me, darling? How'd that work out for you?" he mocked as he glided down the steps.

She pushed herself onto her knees, biting her lip as a sharp pain burst through her knee. She forced herself to stand as she gripped onto the wall and began to limp down the corridor.

"Did you really think that you would be able to get away from me?"

His voice echoed off of the stone walls, bringing tears to her eyes. Yes, she had really thought that she could. *You still can. Run.* She shook her head at her own thoughts. *Yes, you can. Run now* ! Hermione took a deep breath before sprinting down the corridor, the pain in her knee forcing the tears to spill over. She had to fight through it because if he caught her now, she would never see Harry again.

"Harry," she screamed.

It was probably pointless, but she had to try. Hermione took back what she thought earlier. She *was* scared, scared for her life. She was afraid of what she would have to endure if Draco got her back to his Manor. She could hear his footsteps gaining on her and in the spur of the moment she spun around, her fist catching his cheek before she turned back around and took off. She practically flew down the staircase, running into a few Death Eaters. She paid them no mind as she flew past them too. She heard Draco's voice behind her.

"Don't touch her, she's *mine* !"

She let out a shriek as a curse sailed past her head. She was on the ground floor now.

"Harry," she screamed again.

"Hermione!"

In her relief at hearing his voice she stopped, forgetting her predicament, but was immediately reminded when she was tackled to the ground. She dry heaved as the wind was knocked out of her. She kicked back as he lifted her, his arms constricting around her. She threw her body to the side taking them both down.

"Hermione!"

Suddenly Draco's weight was gone and she was helped into a standing position. She looked down at Draco's twitching form before looking up at Neville.

"Hermione, you've got to go. They've gone out down to Hagrid's hut. They have a Portkey. I told Harry that I'd find you, you need to hurry," he rushed out.

She nodded before glancing down at Draco again, who was slowly making his way onto his feet.

"Be careful, Neville. He won't hesitate to kill you," she hurriedly whispered before running outside.

The wind whipped her hair past her face as the rain came down. She squinted her eyes, it was dark, she could barely see. She began to run in the direction of Hagrid's hut, her bad knee making its presence known.

" **Hermione!** "

She spun around in horror, her hair clinging to her face. She could make him out a few yards behind her; his shirt torn and his face bruised. She hoped that Neville was alright. She turned and ran for her life, desperately trying to fight through the pain in her leg. The drenched ground made her struggle all the more and she feared that she wouldn't make it. When she could see the hut, she cried in relief.

"Harry!"

"Run, Hermione," she heard Ron scream.

She picked up her pace and saw that Harry was running towards her, hand outstretched. Ron and Luna were right behind him. Where was Ginny? She heard Draco's footsteps right behind her as she and Harry began to close the distance between them. She stretched out her hand, wincing as she put all of her weight on her legs and leaped.

So...where's Ginny? One more chapter to go and then sequel time!

Fall from Grace

Hermione could hear…yelling. She could hear lots of yelling and feet smacking against the ground. No, they were brushing against something. Grass. She could hear feet brushing through grass. She winced as her body began to wake. Her head was on something, it wasn't soft, but it wasn't hard either. Her eyelids were heavy as she forced them open, struggling to take in her surroundings. She stared up at…the stars? Where was she? She could faintly hear curses being thrown and she heard the sound of someone getting hit with one before collapsing. She began to sit up when she was pushed back down.

She turned, startled, to face Luna as the blonde girl put a finger to her lips before pointing. Hermione slowly turned around. She sharply inhaled as she stared at a broad back up ahead. He stood stock still with his wand clutched in his fist, searching, searching for her. A nightly breeze blew by, ruffling his fair hair. Hermione felt her heart stutter as he turned his head, the moonlight glinting off of his eyes, making them glow. Hermione glanced around and realized with a start that they were at the Burrow. She and Luna were hidden in the tall grass at the edge of the pond. How had she not noticed before that they were practically *in* the water?

Hermione felt as if she were going to be sick as Draco turned and began to walk past them. Hermione held her breath and practically choked Luna's hand with her own as they both sank further into the grass. Where were Harry, Ron, and Ginny? Why was it so…quiet? Once Draco was out of sight, Luna tugged on her hand and they began to move as quietly as possible. As they moved, Hermione fought to remember what had happened. She remembered being at the school, she remembered the Death Eaters and…Dumbledore. She brought her hand to her forehead when Luna suddenly cried out, shoving Hermione away from her.

Hermione landed in the pond with a loud splash. She sat up just in time to see Luna collapse into the grass. Draco stood before her, his wand aimed directly at her chest. They stared each other down as she slowly rose, her eyes flickering towards Luna's still form.

"She'll be fine," Draco said.

"Forgive me if I have a hard time believing anything you say, right now. For all I know, she's dead," she fired back, glancing around.

Where was Harry?

"I'm trying to cut back on unnecessary murder, but if that's what it will take…," he trailed off.

She narrowed her eyes at him as he pointed his wand towards her eccentric friend. She had known that it would eventually come to this. She would do anything for her friends. She glanced at Luna again before looking around the yard. Her eyes rested on the Burrow, wondering if she would ever see it again. Was she giving up? No, but she refused to put her friends in anymore danger.

Everything that had happened, happened because of her. If she hadn't been so quick to trust and believe in Draco then maybe she could have seen that he was up to something. Maybe she could have stopped him and things would be very different, right now. Hermione had to take responsibility for the fact that she was partly at fault for all of this.

"Where are Harry and Ron?" she asked as she walked towards him, resigned.

He tilted his head with an amused smirk.

"You don't remember…," he mused to himself.

"Spit it out."

"We landed here. Weasley, Potter, and I fought while you and Luna ran off," he explained as he spread his arms out.

She blinked, remembering.

The world spun around her, twisting this way and that. She landed on the ground hard, Draco's form tumbling over her own. She winced as her head connected with the ground, creating a painful throb. She collapsed just in time for a curse to sail over her head, aimed at Draco. She struggled to get on all fours, her vision swimming. An arm found its way around her torso, pulling her away from the fight.

"Hermione, you have to stay awake."

Luna's voice sounded so far away. Hermione fought to keep her eyes open, she really did, but everything hurt. The last thing she saw as Luna dragged her away was Ron being stunned.

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"Why is no one else here?" she demanded, skeptical.

"They're at Hogwarts, I suppose," he answered.

"Putting their lives in danger trying to fix what *you* started," she hissed.

He caught her wrist in an iron grip before her hand connected with his cheek. She clenched her jaw in anger as he glared at her, leaning in. Her heart fluttered as he pressed his chest against her own. He raised his wand to trail it down the side of her face, giving her goosebumps.

"I could have you eating out of the palm of my hand if I wanted to. Don't make me do something that you won't like," he threatened.

Hermione shuddered as she eyed his wand out of the corner of her eye. Draco had said some time ago that he would not force her into anything thing, but…people change their minds all the time. He tightened his arms around her just as she heard a groan coming from the yard. She looked over Draco's shoulder to see a figure struggling to stand.

"Hang on tight, sweetheart," Draco whispered.

She heard Ron scream her name just as everything began to spin.

Hermione opened her eyes just as everything began to settle. She looked around and immediately recognized where they were.

"What are we doing here?" she asked, uneasy as Draco let go of her.

Knockturn Alley made Hermione's hair stand on end. Everything about this place screamed 'stay away' and Hermione was always more than happy to do just that.

"We're waiting…"

She waited for him to continue, but it soon became obvious that he wasn't going to elaborate.

"That's all I get?" she snapped.

He turned to face her with a hardened expression.

"Yes," he firmly stated, leaving no room for discussion.

She stared at him as he turned away, his eyes searching. Hermione leaned against the wall as her eyes watered. She didn't know what was wrong with her. She was acting like a stupid fifteen year old girl who had gotten her heart broken, but that was preposterous. She

and Draco's relationship, if you could even call it that, was nothing but an unhealthy mutual attraction and constant fighting. It was completely toxic and dysfunctional. She hated his guts half the time and the other half she really just wanted him to throw her on a table and have his wicked way with her. Still…

If she was being honest with herself, she had to admit that a part of her had wanted him to change. She had wanted him to… *choose her*. She had stupidly even started to imagine a life with him. She shook her head. She was an idiot. Why did she ever think that he would give it all up? No, she didn't think that they would just run off into the sunset together, but…. She shook her head again. This wasn't making any sense! Why was she feeling like this?

"Why did you do it?" she quietly asked him as she stared him down.

They were alone. She figured that now was a good time to ask him. He was quiet for quite some time and for a while she thought that he hadn't heard her…or decided not to answer at all.

"I didn't trust Dumbledore nor the order to give me what I wanted," he said.

"You could have trusted me," she replied as a light wind blew by, reminding her of the weather.

He let out a humorless chuckle before turning around to face her.

"You really did believe that they would let you be with me. They would have never trusted me. They would have never accepted me and they would try to convince you that I could never be trusted every chance they got. Eventually….you would listen."

"That's not true."

Even as she said it, she could taste the lie on her tongue. She didn't want to admit it, but Draco was right. They would never have accepted him. She looked down, her hair covering her face and with

a shock, she realized that…she *wanted* to be with Draco. She had wanted to be with him. All this talk of getting him to change and join them was just an excuse so that she could be with him without… judgement, without feeling like a traitor. She had been lying to her friends and herself this entire time. If he had joined the light side things would have been easier. If he had joined the light side then she wouldn't have had to feel guilty about how she felt about him. She felt a raindrop land on her arm.

She loved the way that he made her feel when they touched, when they kissed. He never backed down whenever she raised her voice like Ron and Harry did. His eyes would light up and he'd step forward with that damn smirk, challenging her. She loved that her heart would speed up whenever he was around, the adrenaline that coursed through her veins whenever he so much as looked at her. She was addicted to the dangerous and exciting drug that was Draco Malfoy.

She felt him run his fingers down her arms.

"I want you," he whispered.

He is a murderer , she thought in anger. And yet, she did not push him away as she looked up just in time for his lips to cover hers. This kiss was nothing like their previous encounters. It was slow and passionate and the complete opposite of their relationship. What they had was reckless and poisonous in every sense of the word. There was no taming it.

"That's all I've ever wanted. Everything that I've done, I did so that I could keep you," he murmured against her lips.

She turned her head away, tightly closing her eyes as she fought with herself. She could not, *would not* , forget everything that he had done. Yes, he had apologized for hurting her and her friends, but everything that he did tonight completely negated that. He killed their Headmaster. He had let Death Eaters into the school. She looked

down at the gash on her hand, a reminder of what had taken place between them tonight. He had betrayed her.

"No," she whispered as he turned her head towards him.

"Yes," he said just before crashing his lips against hers.

Their clothes were soaked as they wrapped themselves around each other. Her fingers clawed at his back as his lips seemed to suck all reason out of her. These were the same lips that had uttered the killing curse, ending their Headmaster's life. The same ones that had uttered the Cruciatus Curse the night of the Winter Ball. The hands that clutched her were the same ones that had hurt Ron…and Harry, and countless others. Hermione…was a disgrace. *My how the mighty have fallen* , she bitterly thought.

A loud bang forced them apart. They both looked down the alleyway through the downpour as loud voices and hurried footsteps could be heard. Hermione took a step towards the noise as she heard familiar voices.

"Remus," she whispered to herself.

He should be at Hogwarts. Why was he here? Her question was answered a soon as she heard Harry's voice. They were looking for her. A tight grip on her arm reminded her of Draco's presence. More footsteps could be heard and she slowly turned to face him. His eyes glowed in the darkness and his hair was plastered down to his head with the rain.

"They're here for me. You're ridiculously outnumbered and you know I'll put up a fight. I'd choose wisely if I were you," she said.

Draco glared past her before returning his eyes to her own. He had murdered Professor Dumbledore, the greatest wizard who had ever lived. If he was caught, they would never let him go and he knew that. They stared each other down as his grip tightened on her arm before he reluctantly let go.

"This isn't over," he said between clenched teeth.

She lifted her chin, the rain falling into her eyes.

"I know that."

A proud smirk graced his lips as the voices and footsteps grew louder.

"Congratulations, Granger. You won…for now," he praised.

She looked past him as her heart sped up. She had to do this. He was absolutely lethal to her soul.

"I want nothing to do with you, Draco…," she lied "…you're a monster."

The footsteps were dangerously close now as Draco leaned in.

"You want to know what I think," he whispered, his lips a hairs width away from her own.

She said nothing, but she was sure that she wasn't going to like whatever it was that he had to say.

" *I think that you are in love with this monster* ."

His words were slow and they lingered in the air long after he had said them. Hermione's heart skipped a beat as she stared at him. He backed up, his eyes never leaving hers before disappearing into the darkness. Even after he was long gone and arms found their way around her, she still stared ahead, frozen. Voices drifted around her and she was aware of her feet moving. She didn't know how much time had passed, but later in the night, she found herself sitting on a bed. Worried voices could be heard outside of the door.

"Hermione…"

She slowly blinked before turning to face Harry. He was knelt before her, resembling a worried parent. He reached up and brushed her hair away from her face.

"What did he do to you? What did he say? Are you okay?"

"Fine. Kiss me then," he replied with a shrug.

Hermione stared at him, taken back. That was the last thing that she was expecting.

"What?" she whispered.

His face suddenly grew serious as he took a step towards her.

"Kiss me," he huskily answered in a dark tone.

His eyes were glued on her lips as she contemplated what she would do. Should she? It wasn't like he stole her favorite quill, it was her wand for Merlin's sake. Besides, it was just one stupid kiss. It wouldn't mean anything.

"You'll give it back?" she nervously asked after a few minutes.

"Yes," he answered with a smile.

With a mental sigh, she walked towards him. She looked up at him, practically jumping out of her skin. He swooped down and claimed her mouth with his own. She couldn't stop herself from moaning into his lips even if she wanted to. He tasted better than anything she could have imagined. She wasn't sure how she would be able to even sleep tonight. She didn't know how long they stood there, wrapped up in each other, but she found herself letting out a small moan as he dug his fingers into her waist. It was then that she decided she'd had enough. They both stood there, panting, before she finally held out her hand.

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"You are the complete opposite of everything that I was brought up to be, everything that I was taught. Your very existence combined with your intelligence is a complete contradiction of what I was raised to believe in. You are far too gentle, compassionate, sweet, and far, far too…innocent."

He turned to face her again as he said this, a look of wonder on his face, as if she were the enigma.

"...and that, my little Gryffindor, is what makes you such an easy target. It's what makes you so…irresistible. You confound me."

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"I'd be careful not to jinx my team if I were you. Just your luck, we'll beat you…again," she stated.

He grinned before standing up and making his way over to her side of the table. She tilted her head to watch him out of the corner of her eye as he stepped behind her.

"Want to bet," he purred.

"I don't make deals with the devil."

The soft laugh that escaped him sent a shiver down her spine and she jumped when she felt his lips brush the shell of her ear.

"Oh, Hermione. You flatter me," he whispered.

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"Get some rest, Hermione…"

She nodded before handing the mug back to him and gladly sinking into the covers.

"This doesn't change anything," she murmured, drowsily.

His fingers came up to stroke her hair as he leaned down to place a kiss on her forehead.

"Whatever helps you sleep at night," he whispered.

"Ginny, he makes me feel things that I've never felt before. I liked Ron, you know that, but this is so...different. He's made me think of things I never have before, things that I don't want to think about, to tell you the truth. He's foul and demented, but there's this part of him that's...kind of inviting and playful," she shrugged. "He just does whatever he wants without a care, and while that scares me, a part of me...envies it..."

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"I came to collect that second condition now," he said with a smirk.

Her eyes widened.

"Draco-"

Her protest was cut short as he leaned over and captured her lips in a mind blowing kiss. She could hear the gasps and exclamations of shock all around them but she couldn't bring herself to focus on that. She couldn't concentrate on the fact that Draco Malfoy was kissing her in front of the entire school.

"We can help you," she whispered.

An arched eyebrow was the only evidence of his surprise at her statement.

"Help me," he chuckled.

"Yes! Whatever it is that they threatened you with-"

"You are an idiot," he interrupted in amusement.

She inhaled as if she had been slapped.

"Why? Because I believe that you can be saved? Because I don't think it's too late for you," she hissed.

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"No amount of magic could make me forget how I feel about you."

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"Are you saying…that if I gave it all up, turned my back on Voldemort and went over to the light, you would try to make this work between

us? You would stop resisting me? You'd be mine...completely?"

She opened her mouth before slamming it shut. If she said yes there would be no going back for her. Ever. She closed her eyes, no longer able to deny that a part of her wanted this. Merlin, it was like she was being torn in two.

"Y-yes," she whispered after some time.

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"What are you doing to me?"

"I hate you. I hate you so much," she hissed.

He let out an arrogant laugh as he pulled away and tilted his head.

"No you don't and that's what makes you so mad," he replied.

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*" **I think that you are in love with this monster** ."*

With tears in her eyes, Hermione gave Harry a small, reassuring smile before wrapping her arms around him.

"I'm just overwhelmed. I'm fine, Harry."

The lie hit her right where it counted and she tightened her arms around her best friend. She shut her eyes and buried her face into his shoulder, Draco's words playing on a loop inside of her head. Hermione wasn't fine. In fact, she was far from fine.

Draco was right. She was in love with a monster.

Stay on the lookout for *Monsters and Mudbloods.* Catch you on the flip side :)

FINAL UPDATE

This is a Final Update.

I felt that this was necessary because there are some new readers who are a bit confused.

Curls and Bruises is DONE. It's over. No more Curls and Bruises. This particular fanfic is over with.

However, the story line is not.

MONSTERS AND MUDBLOODS IS NOW POSTED.

- slytherindoll