

Hermione shrugged again. "It is what it is." A beeping from Draco's watch alerted them that the portkey that would take them to his estate in France was now active. Draco pulled the handkerchief with the small music box inside out and unwrapped it, placing it on the table between them. The group downed their drinks and Hermione, as always being astute in her observations, followed suit. "Well, enjoy your evening lads, Congratulations again Zabini."

Draco eyed his watch as he counted down, the four of them hovering their hand over it in preparation. "In five, four, three, two, one." A strong tugging sensation pulled through his navel and away from the bar.

It was unsettling and too stark a contrast for his brain to bridge the difference between this version of Granger who was evidently a grown woman and the girl from school. Draco tried to recall who Hermione had been dating, he knew it hadn't been Weasley, he remembered an article in The Prophet a year or two ago about his and Luna Lovegood's wedding. He vaguely recalled a conversation he had overheard a few months ago about her and Oliver Wood at the ministry but he hadn't been overly interested at the time so he couldn't say with certainty that it was in regards to a romantic relationship. Frankly, if he had never seen the witch again he wouldn't have cared. He had indeed changed in his time since the war but she was a reminder of a much darker time in his life that he would much rather forget.

"My condolences." Blaise offered up.

"I still don't think it's fair that Draco got to plan this shindig," Theo grumbled.

"If you had planned it, I might not have a wife next week," Blaise smirked back.

Theo lit up his cigarette with a smirk. "I resent that statement. Speaking of which, who did Astoria choose as her bridesmaids again and are any of them single?" He wiggled his eyebrows.

Blaise gave a hearty laugh. "Daphne and Millicent."

"Yikes," Theo sighed.

Gregory snorted into his glass "You never know mate, they might have moved on?"

Draco and Blaise laughed loudly. "They definitely have not," Blaise smirked at their curly-haired friend.

Theo exhaled several large smoke rings, his eyes glistening with delight. "You accidentally charm a witch's robes see-

through one time and suddenly you're an asshole."

"You are an asshole, and it was two witches, three times." Draco retorted.

"It was a small prank, like five years ago. You would think they would have learnt to check after the first time and definitely after the second. Anyway, it's not like anyone saw anything, it was only the top layer and I nearly got expelled. I had detention for a month."

"In any case, I'm pretty sure if you try anything they will likely hex your balls off," Blaise warned with a shrug.

"Can't say I wouldn't enjoy that. I'll go get us another round." Theo laughed standing and wandering off into the crowd.

"I can say I would enjoy witnessing it." Gregory joked after he had gone.

“Cheating on me is easy, but trying to kiss her while she’s got no teeth and a split lip isn’t.” Hermione threw back a shot of tequila.

“Damn Granger,” Theo laughed, handing her a glass of whiskey. “How Slytherin of you.”

This certainly wasn’t the girl he remembered going to Hogwarts with, the controlled bookworm who lived by the rules. Though he supposed it had been half a decade since he had seen her last, he had certainly changed in that time, it was only fair to assume she had too. Yet this version of her seemed wild, she had always been this conservative swot type but now she wore a dress that barely made her mid-thigh, a leather jacket, heels, long dangly chains hung between her cleavage, her hair hung loose around her shoulder in curls.



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His head felt like it was about to split open, beyond his closed eyes the room was far too bright. A groan escaped his lips. Try as he might, Draco could not recall a single explanation for the throbbing in his head. The bar was the last thing he could remember, though somewhat foggy now. His throat struggled to swallow, his mouth was painfully dry.

An annoyed groan came from beside him followed by “Oh my lord, would you shut up I’m trying to sleep.”

That was enough for his eyes to snap open because he knew that voice. He stared in wide-eyed horror, his brain trying to process the sight before him. Despite his thumping

“I think we would all enjoy witnessing that,” Draco chuckled, placing his glass on the table between them. He observed Blaise. There were no signs of doubt in his friend’s expression and for the first time he wondered how it would feel to be so certain of tying yourself to someone forever.

“Look who I ran into,” Theo said when returning a few moments later with a tray of shots and whiskeys with Hermione Granger at his side.

“Zabini. I hear congratulations are in order.” She drawled. “I would say don’t do it but I have met Astoria and she’s lovely, you’re a lucky man.”

“Granger. Should I congratulate you in return, that was quite the performance earlier?” Blaise eyed her with a smirk. Hermione was a few drinks deep already, she gave a nonchalant shrug.

entering the bar had not been one of them. The crunch of the blonde’s face had been nauseatingly loud and naturally captured the attention of their little group as well as over half of the other patrons.

“Is that... Hermione Granger?” Theo seemed far too entertained with the scene before them, his eyes lighting up with glee.

“It seems so.” Draco sipped on his fire whiskey. Blood was covering the blonde’s face and for a few minutes, the two women appeared to be in some heated debate. Despite the drama that had occurred over the past few minutes it was short-lived and the blonde hastily exited the bar through the floo, no doubt to St Mungo’s, the bar settled once more and Draco had turned his attention back to his group.

What did you do?" Venom dripped from his voice, his friend however seemed unfazed. An ear-splitting screech came from the other side of the bed and Hermione shot up to her feet, the blanket wrapped tightly around her, she was looking in horror at her hand. She looked over at the pillow currently covering his genitals and let out another screech.

"Oh for fuck sake, stop screaming!" he snapped at her. If her mouth hung open like that for much longer she would no doubt swallow a fly. Draco observed that she finally seemed to have fallen into shocked silence but the pleasure that brought was short-lived when she lifted her hand, the sunlight glistered off of a large shiny jewel on her ring finger.

Draco launched forward and grabbed a pillow to cover himself. This was not good, his heart began pounding, and he tried again desperately to recall anything that might have led him to this moment. He couldn't even place this room. It certainly wasn't one from his estate in France. How long had it been since the bar?

The double doors to the room flew open again and there in the doorway stood a man who was no doubt to blame for this. He didn't know how but he was certain it was all his fault.

"You." He growled out.

Theo smiled looking far too pleased with himself. "Good morning Malfoy's. I've brought gifts for the happy couple."

Draco frowned "What the hell are you talking about? What happened Theodore?

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"To Blaise and Astoria!" Draco raised his glass, his friends mimicking his actions. "And a lifetime of happiness for you both." The wizard in question smiled back at him in appreciation. Draco was truly happy for Blaise, he had never known anyone who was so genuinely in love as Blaise and Astoria were and this time next week the two of them would be married.

remember something from last night,"

"We should probably search the room, and see if we can find anything that will help us that it's rather scary." He mumbled.

"You know, when you both look at me like two of them and slowly his smile dissipated. and glared at him. Theo looked between the grinned. Draco lifted his head from his hands activity to start your marriage off with." Theo

"Aw, that will be a sweet little bonding emerged from the bathroom.

Hermione from behind him, finally having myself included." Grumbled the voice of

"Something tells me there will be a line, like he meant it too.

"Just so you know." At that moment, it felt

"When this is all over, I am going to kill you

"Yeah, mate?"

hidden in his hands.

again. "Theo?" he said quietly, his face still

dropped it, letting his head fall in his hands

portkey and replaced it with another one which brought us to fucking America." He growled, slowly looking up at his curly-haired companion. "You kidnapped Granger from the bar, forcing her to come with us and then what...lost the fucking groom?"

Theo shoved his hands in his pockets and nodded dramatically "Yeah that about covers it."

"You must know more than that Theodore. You knew Granger and I.." his voice trailed off, he couldn't bring himself to voice their situation.

Theo reached into his back pocket and produced a folded piece of paper. "I only knew because this was in my room underneath the key to your room" He extended it to Draco, who took it with uncertainty.

Unfolding it confirmed what he was so desperate to deny. It appeared to be a muggle marriage certificate. He let out a groan and



Deydralinne

Draco's head hung in his hands as he sat at the end of the bed. Hermione had locked herself in the bathroom muttering something about needing a minute, frankly, he didn't care, she could stay there. He had found some clothes scattered around the floor that seemed to belong to a male and certainly fit him despite being certain he had never worn anything so horribly muggle in all his life. "So let me see if I have this right." He tried to keep his voice even. "You stole the

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Hermione grumbled, opening the mini-fridge and peering inside.

"I don't recall asking for your help, Granger." Draco snapped, he was met with a cold look of disdain.

"Well, my dearest husband. Unfortunately for the time being we are stuck with each other until we can get back to London and have this whole mess sorted out. I'm guessing this genius didn't think to submit paperwork for the sudden fifth passenger before kidnapping me last night and unless you know where your identification papers are, then we're in this together." Hermione snapped.

Her little speech filled him with dread. His I.D. had been in his suit jacket, which from his very brief search of the room was not in here. He glared up at Theo again who this time at least had the decency to begin looking remorseful.



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TYPESET BY SENNA SLYTHERIN 2023

The story in which Draco and Hermione wake up married after a drunken night out

OK

Then again, the event's following weren't exactly things Draco planned for either. had not been one of them. bachelorette party, watching war heroin, Hermione Granger bounce a witches face off a table Of all the things Draco had expected to bear witness to that evening at his best friend's

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Two Weddings a Man Hunt

TWO WEDDINGS AND A MAN HUNT

were raised with the belief that marriage was sacred. He prayed to Merlin, Salazar, Rowena, Helga and Godric that this was going to be a quick fix otherwise this was going to lead to a very uncomfortable conversation with his mother.
 “Theo?” Hermione gritted out.
 Theo sighed. “Yeah, yeah I know. Imminent death.”
 The grey-haired peppy woman returned with a box of little white and black rectangles. Draco could only assume it was a muggle thing because he had never seen them before in his life.
 Hermione offered a forced smile. “So uh, I... So we really got married last night?”
 The woman stared back at her for a few minutes before laughing “I suppose it is still a surreal feeling isn’t it dear.” Hermione forced a small nod and held her smile, which was clear to everyone but the woman was strained. “Don’t worry darling, that will fade

piled like a beehive and too much make-up sauntered out. She seemed to recognise them because her face lit up in a smile. “Oh, you’re back! I was expecting to see you at some point, I didn’t think it would be so soon.”

“You were?” Draco raised an eyebrow at her.

“Yes of course! You lot have good timing actually, I’ve just finished copying the ceremony onto the extra tapes for you. Wait here, I’ll go get them.” The woman was far too peppy but she disappeared out the back again before they could say anything else. Hermione sighed a deep sigh of disappointment. Draco followed her gaze to a certificate that hung on the wall behind the counter. Indicating that this was indeed a registered chapel. At least, among the muggle world, Draco couldn’t recall any knowledge on muggle to wizarding laws regarding marriage. It probably had to do with the fact that those raised among the wizarding world,

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 silence before a short woman with grey hair of them stood awkwardly looking around in open the door. For a few moments, the three further inside the building as they pushed stale liquor. A chimie sounded somewhere The office inside was dingy and smelt of get this over with then.”
 when no one answered. “Alright, well let’s looked to the two wizards beside her, sighing “Anyone remember this?” Hermione “Instant weddings” hung above the door. the side and a neon flashing signs reading orange with green and pink bells painted on The chapel was a disgusting shade of bright alternative he agreed.
 and because he couldn’t think of an one of those sham fake ones.” She suggested official this is. With any luck it will just be remember us, and maybe find out how could start here, go back and see if they certificate from the ground. “I suppose we Hermione knelt and picked up the marriage

before you know it. Soon enough the very sight of him will drive you to contemplate suffocating him.” The lady joked waving her hand at Hermione as if they were old pals.

“Oh, you have no idea,” Theo muttered.

Hermione accepted the box hesitantly and turned to glower at Theo.

“Now what?” Draco snapped once they were in the empty parking lot once more.

Hermione shifted uncomfortably. “I guess we go back to the hotel and watch the tape to see if that tells us anything.”

“Watch these? Why? Does it move?” Draco picked up one of the rectangles out of the box and shook it expectantly. Hermione blinked disbelievingly at him.

“I’m married to an idiot.” She mumbled before walking away in the direction of the hotel they had left not even thirty minutes ago.

“I think your wife’s angry,” Theo stated casually.

They had congregated in the hotel suite Hermione and Draco had awoken in that morning. Blaise had watched the video of their wedding and exclaimed on several occasions that for two people who were both considered rather intelligent, that they were fucking idiots, the evidence of proper vows was going to add to the difficulty of reversing their little mistake.

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slowly but surely steered the muggles away from the area. When finally the last muggle left their sight she configured a door in the glass of the enclosure through which Gregory burst through. The door disappeared but now they were stuck with a Gorilla Gregory standing next to them.

“Quick before someone comes along.” Blaise hissed.

“Reparifarge,” Hermione whispered. Gorilla Gregory slowly morphed back to regular Gregory much to his relief and just in time because not a moment later, another muggle wandered around the corner towards them.

Gregory glared at Draco, Hermione and Theo. “What the hell took you guys so long? One of the gorillas wanted me as its mate!”

Even Blaise joined them when they burst into laughter.

“We may need to come up with a plan b,” Hermione mumbled and led the way. Draco “The four of them looked at each other. information. Thank you.” of today we will look at offering a reward for on. If the penguins are not located by the end of which we currently have no information of which we currently have no information, what is even more puzzling is the additional fully grown gorilla, have yet to be recovered, what is even more attempts to locate the missing penguins, they addressed the crowd. “Despite the crew’s In front of them, the muggle man know,” Theo whispered. stopped dead. “Somehow I think they the zoo behind him. The four of them interviewing a man in a uniform matching what appeared to be muggle reporters The zoo was crowded and surrounded by has any better ideas?”

secrecy and getting caught... unless anyone the enclosure without breaking the statute of we find an opportunity to levitate them into

found at that moment that he was extra thankful to have her expertise in that manner because there was no way he could have handled the muggle transaction of buying the tickets with as much fluidity as she did. He immediately cursed himself for the thought.

The three men followed her distractedly as she led them through the many walkways. The smells here were not pleasant. The creatures were weird-looking and weird-sounding. There were also far too many people and most definitely far too many small children complaining far too loudly. Hermione came to a stop not far from an enclosure that had several more of the birds they had found in the bathroom at the hotel, unfortunately for them, there were also hordes of people around. Which meant that it was going to be impossible to sneak the penguins back in with the others at the very least. Hermione pulled them behind a large bush in the gardens where they all crouched

memory whatsoever of the previous night or how he had ended up as a gorilla but he had somehow acquired a rather unexplainable tattoo on his left butt cheek of a king muggle playing card wearing a cowboy hat that he spent a long time trying to scrub away in the shower before realising it was permanently fixed to his body.

It seemed to be something that would remain unanswered and after Hermione had ordered them all more food they set about trying to figure out how to get home.

"We will have to get in touch with the embassy," Draco grumbled.

"Sure except, we're in muggle Las Vegas, in a different country, with no knowledge of their wizarding government. Seriously Theo, did you really not plan a way home?" Blaise asked.

"Mate, I don't know what to tell you, okay? I'm sorry!"

has...or rather is...Gregory?" she looked sheepishly between the three of them. Of course, Theodore thought that was hilarious and burst out laughing. Two guesses who would have been responsible if it turned out that was indeed the case.

It turned out that was *exactly* the case. Gorilla Gregory was aggressively happy to see their little group when they arrived at the enclosure. "Alright, how do you suppose we get him out without being seen?" Blaise eyed the crowds of muggles passing by the area. They stood there unsure of what to do next for what felt like hours, in reality, it probably wasn't that long at all but everyone was growing tired, and it really had been quite a day so far Draco reasoned. Gorilla Gregory was growing rather impatient too and banged on the glass at one point rather aggressively. Hermione nearly jumped out of her skin. "I have an idea." She whispered. Discreetly she began casting notice-me-not charms that

"It's a map of the zoo!" she cried out. A frown quickly replaced what little joy had been on her face.

"What." Draco snapped. She met his eyes with uncertainty.

"Well we can't exactly turn up with four stolen penguins and say 'Hey guys, here's the birds that were in a secured enclosure, this idiot thought it would be a good idea to borrow them for a night.' can we?" She jabbed her thumb in Theo's direction.

Theo suddenly sat up, feigning offence. "Hey! You don't even know it was my idea. It might have been *your* idea!" He was faced with three faces staring back at him with expressions that clearly said 'Are you fucking serious.' "Well we don't know, it might have been!"

Hermione rolled her eyes and turned back to Draco and Blaise. "I suppose we could try transfiguring them into stuffed toys or something, sneak them in that way and hope

looking at each other with a type of 'what now?' look.

"Alright. Here's my thoughts." Theo offered. Draco was about to make a remark about how no one wanted his thoughts but Theo carried on before he had the chance. "We cast a notice-me-not charm, turn the penguins back here and sneak away. Eventually, someone will spot them, catch them and return them to the cage right?" It actually seemed to be a not-so-bad idea so that's exactly what they did several minutes later when they failed to come up with an alternative.

"Alright so now where do we go?" Blaise looked to Hermione expectantly, he seemed to have realised they were indeed very out of their element here.

"You heard the zoo owner mention the extra gorilla right? I think we should probably head there next. I don't know for sure, but I have a feeling that it probably

shaped puncture maker on top. Blaise mimicked her actions with curiosity and after an odd cracking sound, a small opening appeared. The rest of them followed suit and gave each other a dubious glance before sipping cautiously on the red drink. Fizzing bubbles instantly burst against Draco's throat and tingled in the back of his nose, a sweet taste danced across his tongue, unlike anything he had tasted before. Theo spluttered and the liquid shot from his nose before coughing to try and exhale any of the foreign liquid from his airways. Draco found that as he carefully swallowed his, the tingling pops carried on down his throat but he remained blissfully free from choking. He also found that he rather annoyingly liked the taste and sensation. "Merlin Hermione, I know you told me you would kill me when this was over but I thought you would at least wait until we were

of it indicating that it was self-cooling but that seemed a bit beyond what he would have thought muggles capable of. He could see no liquid inside, in fact, the entire top of it appeared to be closed, yet Hermione was definitely sipping something from it. The amount of things he did not understand in this world made his head hurt. Hermione caught him frowning at her drink and raised an eyebrow. Silently she returned to the small icebox and after unburdening herself of her own cylinder, retrieved four more from inside.

Hermione handed one to each of them and grabbed her own. Draco frowned down at the cold object in his hand because as far as he could see there was no way in which he could sample the liquid inside. Theo lifted it to his lips, shaking it when nothing fell out.

Laughter sounded from the returning witch. "No, like this." Hermione demonstrated the movement of an oddly

"Wait, please tell me you aren't saying this is permanent?" Draco felt his chest tightening. "Well I don't know that it's permanent but it might be *incredibly* difficult to get out of. It definitely *won't* be quick or quiet at the very least. The only case I know of the dissolution of marriage in the wizarding world had to go before a council for voting. Did you two seriously not think this through? The two most responsible overthinkers I have ever known didn't even do a little research before jumping off the deep end?" Blaise threw his arms out beside him. "I can't say I recall," Draco said through gritted teeth. "Where's Gregory anyway?" Blaise looked around. Theo, Draco and Hermione looked at each other in uncertain silence for a minute before Blaise clicked on. "You fucking lost him?"

"To be fair Zabini, we also lost *you* but we got there in the end." Hermione retorted, turning back to the drawers.

"Well, that's fucking fantastic Granger. Gold star on your detective skills." Blaise snapped in her direction. While she didn't appear bothered by his mood it mildly irked Draco.

"Oy. Watch it." He growled. Blaise snorted at him in disbelief. "She is the reason we managed to track you down at all. None of us know what the hell to do here." Draco reasoned.

"Can I just point out that it's Malfoy now, not Granger?" Theo piped from his corner. The three of them turned to glare at him again.

"No, it is definitely still Granger. Regardless of how difficult it is to end this, I have no interest in changing my name to Malfoy." Hermione hissed.

home.” Theo gasped, his coughing finally subsiding.

Hermione dramatically rolled her eyes at him. “Well take smaller sips then you idiot.”

Blaise seemed to be observing his own drink in a pleased manner. “Coca-Cola?” He read the words on the side. “I like it.”

Draco silently, and reluctantly, agreed.

“As much as it pains me to suggest this, I think it would be wise for us all to stay rather close tonight. Given that it took us an entire day to track us all down, something I’m rather not keen to do again tomorrow. We can transfigure some of these pillows and the chairs into extra beds but at least this way there will be no chances of certain people wandering off and getting lost.” Hermione glared at Theo, indicating that the ‘certain people’ she was referring to was in fact him.

Realising that all four of them were glaring at him Theo rolled his eyes. “Oh honestly.

“I might believe you if you weren’t grinning right now.” Blaise glowered.

“Look in any case it’s getting dark out and I think it’s probably undesirable to go traipsing around the city without any clue on where we are going, especially when that clearly worked out so well for us last night. Zabini, I know you would like to get back to England quickly but I think it’s obvious we will be here for at least one more night. Now that we’re all reunited, we can spend the day tomorrow coming up with a plan on how to get us all home and Malfoy and I divorced, I’m guessing it’s not as simple as getting an annulment.” Hermione sighed, cracking one of the red cylinders and taking a sip.

“A what?” Draco raised an eyebrow.

“It doesn’t matter. It’s obviously a muggle thing.” Hermione shook her head.

Draco eyed the cylinder in her hand, it had to be the oddest-looking cup he had ever seen, perspiration had gathered on the side

“You know your mother is going to kill you right?” Blaise raised an eyebrow at him.

“We are hoping we can rectify this unfortunate incident rather quickly and quietly, and preferably without her ever finding out.” Draco groaned.

The way the Blaise was staring at him now in disbelief was filling him with dread again. “You’re an idiot.” He finally threw out.

Theo snorted in the corner “That’s twice in less than three hours he’s been told that.” He remained seemingly unfazed when Draco and Blaise glared his way.

“What do you mean?” Draco asked.

“Even if it occurs in the muggle world, marriages are binding between witches and wizards. There’s a reason this type of thing just doesn’t happen in our world.”

“What?!” Hermione screeched, apparently having caught the conversation and turned to stare at Blaise with wide eyes, the colour draining from her face.

“Idiot.” Blaise snapped, falling into the armchair.

“Excuse me?” Hermione glared his way, clearly growing tired of the man’s attitude.

Draco sighed, he may as well get this over with now. “In the wizarding world, it isn’t an option. It’s automatic. For all legal accounts and purposes, you are technically a Malfoy, no matter how temporarily.” Draco groaned. A sudden realisation hit him that Hermione had also probably already appeared on the Malfoy family tree. Merlin, *please* don’t let his mother go into the study anytime soon.

“That’s archaic!” Hermione exclaimed in horror.

“That’s tradition,” Blaise mumbled rubbing his temples.

“I don’t know if this helps anyone but I found a map? It’s small and has funny-looking pictures on it.” Theo held out a folded piece of paper. Hermione was already rushing forward to examine it.

turning a brilliant shade of red that would put the Weasleys to shame.

“Unbelievably stupid,” Blaise mumbled as he snatched Theo’s room key from his stiff hands and stormed out into the hallway. Silence ensued as Gregory awkwardly stared at the floor and Draco and Hermione looked anywhere but at each other. Eventually, Theo broke the silence with another one of his incoherent mumbles.

“Oh shut up Theo.” Hermione snapped before storming into the bathroom and slamming the door.

Draco sighed and walked over to his friend. He tried to ignore the feeling of pride as he nudged his friend with his foot, rolling him onto his back so at the very least he wouldn’t suffocate. He smirked down at his friend who stared back at him expectantly. “You deserved this,” Draco stated before going to find and help Blaise.

Gregory stared wide-eyed at him. “You’re rather scary, you know that? Brilliant.. but scary.” He slowly cautioned a glance her way. Draco had to agree as he stared down at one of his oldest friends lying face down on the ground mumbling incoherently.

“What does he mean *again* ? Please, please for the love of Merlin, tell me you two did not have sex last night.” Blaise pinched the bridge of his nose in exasperation.

Draco couldn’t bring himself to deny it. While the thought made him dizzy with regret and created a tightened feeling in his chest, while he had no memory of it occurring they had both woken up very naked and very much in the same bed. Hermione was as quiet as he was and after being met with several minutes of silence Blaise opened his eyes, looking bewildered between them.

“I can neither confirm nor deny that claim.” Hermione finally offered, her cheeks



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As it turned out, Blaise wasn’t much help either. Theo had apparently locked him in the bathroom until he could calm down but he had very little memory of anything other than Theo shouting through the door that Draco and Hermione had gotten married and suddenly the birds had appeared to ‘put him in a better mood’. Unfortunately for Theo, they hadn’t seemed to have done that because he had ended up with a second punch to the face before Hermione opened

You're all acting as if the world's ending and I planned it." Blaise's eyes grew comically large. "Theo, I'm supposed to be getting married in less than seventy-two hours and we have no idea how to get home!" He yelled.

"Regardless, I think Granger is right," Gregory stated.

"Malfoy," Theo mumbled in correction but quickly looked away as Draco and Hermione both shot warning looks his way.

So with that settled, Hermione got to work with making extra beds. "Theo, go get the pillows from your room."

"You Malfoy's could always use that room if you would prefer the privacy to fornicate again." Theo quipped. Hermione though, had clearly had enough and Theo had clearly not thought it through because her wand was still in her hand, a moment later his body fell stiff to the ground in a body-binding curse.

the door to check what birds he was talking about. She shut the door again quickly and shook her head in shock. "Those are penguins." She had announced it like that meant something to the rest of them.

"Did you two honestly get married?" Blaise eyed them as he held a bottle of cold water against his now-swollen knuckles.

"They sure did. The ceremony was beautiful too, it's a shame you missed it. Hermione has a thing that you can watch it on though." Theo chirped with a smile despite holding his own bottle of cold water against his face. Blaise looked positively ready to kill him.

"Penguins belong in a zoo, does anyone remember going to a zoo last night?" Hermione asked, seemingly to no one because no one answered her and she didn't seem to be listening anyway. She had moved on to searching the drawers of the bedside tables.

Blaise frowned at him in annoyance as he entered Theo's room, throwing the pillows he had gathered up back onto the bed. "I just don't get it, man. You're the careful one. The responsible one. All of this crap I expect from Theo, but you got married, Draco. On a whim. Granger was raised in this world, I don't expect that anyone has taken the time to explain the seriousness of marriage in the wizarding world. Believe me, I thought it was rash and honestly entirely unexpected but I would have thought you would have thought it through, even a little, somehow decided that this was a mutually beneficial arrangement but it seems as the days gone on, the opposite has become obvious. You haven't left yourselves many options to reverse this Draco, especially if you two have already consummated."

Draco groaned at the thought "Please don't.."

"Oh hey, guys. Nice to see ya. Congratulations on the nuptials. Excuse me." He spat snarkily as he pushed past Draco and stormed toward Theo, who realised far too late what was about to happen.

There was a loud smacking sound as Blaise's fist collided with Theo's jaw.

There was a loud bang that woke Draco with a start, panicked, his eyes flew around the room to find the danger, they landed on the *very* angry-looking witch in the doorway and he swallowed nervously. She however was too busy glaring down at the sprawled-out form of Theo who had at some point been released from his bindings but had remained on the floor. Theo stared wide-eyed back up at her, colour draining from his face as he tried to cover under his blanket. “You.” The witch growled. “Astoria?” Blaise stared in shock at his fiancé. “Theodore Euripides Nott, I swear to Merlin, I will kill you.” Astoria ground out. “Astoria? What.. How are you here?” Hermione spluttered from her place on the bed.

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thrown a blanket over him but it seemed they all were rather reluctant to reverse the body-binding curse.

Hermione was still shut away in the bathroom which frankly, allowed Draco to relax slightly. Blaise claimed one of the transfigured beds and immediately settled down to sleep, Gregory had done the same. Being locked in small spaces with a group of animals had not allowed either of them to get much sleep the night before. Draco looked between the queen bed and the couch. He chose the couch. There was no way he was getting into that bed again. He allowed the darkness to suck him into the world of sleep, praying that tomorrow would bring some solutions.



the man Hermione was now talking to with a Draco looked from the object on the desk to A knock on the door interrupted them. nearby.”

must have our wands and I.D's somewhere too. And I still had my bag, which means we stupid suit jacket over your shirt last night felt. “Malfoy look you were wearing that Zabini.” Hermione looked as disgusted as he “Okay so Goyle was with us then but no another so long as they live.

Granger pledging to love and cherish one horrifying to watch and hear him and backround lying across several chairs. It was behind him and Gregory was in the could see a smaller version of Theo standing of himself and Hermione on the screen. He with the images of a very intoxicated version on the face of a black box and he was met clear that they all had. Images started moving last hour had taught him anything, it was ask if she had lost her damn mind but if the

trolley of food. The food smelt divine and his first bite confirmed that this was officially his new favourite meal.

“Theo, how far away is your room?” Theo had just been about to take a bite of one of the burgers but set it back down again with a disappointed sigh after examining her expression. It was only five minutes after the two of them disappeared down the hall before they returned again, this time not empty-handed. Hermione tossed his jacket at him and began ruffling through her bag.

Draco felt a sense of relief as his hands wrapped around his wand. There was another key too, it wasn't like the one they had used to get back into this room, instead, there was a blue tag hanging from it with the name of what Draco could only assume was another hotel and the number 7 on the other side. Hermione's eyes were wide with delight, rudely she snatched it out of his hand before hurrying back to the desk. “This is only a few

Astoria looked up at her as if she had grown a third head. "Because you freaking owled me Granger?!" She shrieked.

"Malfoy," Theo mumbled in correction.

Astoria's eyes flew back to him. Marching forward she yanked the pillow out from under his head and started whacking him repeatedly in the face with it. "I—" Whack. "Don't—" Whack. "Want—" Whack. "To—" Whack. "Hear—" Whack. "A—" Whack. "Damn—" Whack. "Word—" Whack. "Out—" Whack. "Of—" Whack. "Your—" Whack. "Freaking—" Whack. "Mouth—" Whack.

"Ow! Ow! Okay! Merlin! Okay!" Theo's hands flew up to protect his face from further assaults.

"I owled you?" Hermione asked in astonishment.

Astoria stood and straightened her dress and smoothed her curls again. She looked around their group in bewilderment. "Yes, with a very confused and scared owl, you

Blaise sighed and offered his friend a look of sympathy. "Look, I'm just saying, I think you should consider the possibility that this may be permanent. You haven't left yourselves much wiggle room in an already incredibly small opening to get out of this." Draco helped gather the pillows in silence, in the words 'this may be permanent.' Burned in the forefront of his mind. He hadn't wanted to think about that possibility, the possibility that he may be tied to Granger forever. Granted she was an attractive woman but she also made his blood boil. They had too much bad history, it was a recipe for disaster, it was bloody Granger for Merlin's sake.

He wished he could recall what had led them to the stupid decision to elope in the first place. It seemed they had all agreed that enough had been said because no one said a word for the rest of the evening. Blaise had shoved a pillow under Theo's head and

doors down!" she exclaimed, turning around again. "Let's go." She grabbed her bag and was halfway out the door. Theo sighed again as he put his burger down for a second time, untouched.

"I'm just saying, I know you're her husband and all but it's blatant favoritism." "Serves you right." Draco snapped back, following her out of the room.

"Oh for goodness sake, just bring it with you." Hermione snapped over her shoulder. For such a short witch, she moved fast. She was practically bouncing as she opened the door to a dingy, cheap-looking hotel room. A constant thump was coming from the other side of a door leading off the room. Draco raced forward and tried to open the door to no avail. Checking the coast was clear he cast a quick *alohomora*.

The door flung open to reveal a very aggravated-looking Blaise and several very strange-looking black and white birds.

"Theo, I swear to Merlin mate. Statue of secrecy or not, one more word and I'll Avada you right now." Draco snapped, storming off after the witch.

By the time they made it back to their hotel room, he was sweating from the hot Las Vegas sun, his stomach was rumbling and his headache was returning. Hermione however seemed driven by the need to get to the bottom of the events of last night, he didn't blame her for that but unfortunately, he was rather out of his depth here. Hermione was busy stuffing one of the black rectangles inside a larger silver rectangle box while he rifled through the small ice box she had been looking in earlier. "Do muggles not eat?" he grumbled when he was faced with what appeared to be bottles of water and some small red cylinders.

Hermione rolled her eyes and walked to an object on the desk, asking it for some cheeseburgers and fries. He was tempted to

“No...” Draco whispered in union with Hermione. Astoria tutted. “Well, might I suggest you come up with some kind of plan before returning to England? At the very least it is going to be a lengthy process and if you go to Narcissa with a ‘we will see what happens’ attitude she very likely will put both your heads on a spike.” Draco looked up to find Hermione was already looking at him, they shared a look of dread before averting their gaze. Astoria seemed to mean right now by the way she stood and motioned for Blaise, Gregory and Theo to move, leaving Hermione and Draco awkwardly slumped on opposite sides of the table alone. “I don’t want to be married to you.” Hermione snapped. Draco raised an eyebrow at her. “Yes, because it’s been a secret long-time dream of

to your head, he isn’t going to murder you simply for being his wife—”

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that,” Draco grumbled but fell quiet again under Hermione’s glare.

“From a logical standpoint, your magic would become weaker should you break your vows. Your next marriage would be weak at best—”

“Blaise’s mother was married seven times.” Hermione snapped.

“Yes. She was also widowed seven times Granger, it’s not the same as divorce.” Blaise retorted with a dramatic eye roll.

“Malfoy.” Theo didn’t even flinch when the five of them scowled in his direction.

“Look I’m just saying, it’s unlikely without any solid grounds other than the fact that you were drunk and did it on a whim, that the application will be accepted. So I ask again, have you two given any thought as to what you will do if that’s the case?”

as they made their way downstairs. “I think I’d prefer that,” Draco mumbled. “I don’t think it will matter if Astoria skins us all alive for being late,” Gregory reminded. “I don’t think it will matter if Astoria skins dead from the daggers Draco glared his way. shrugged. If looks could kill Theo would be calmed down by the time we get back?” Theo worse, who knows, maybe she will have “Well, I suppose that could have gone up and fell to pieces on the floor. Draco swallowed as the envelope tore itself

Eloped?
do I make myself clear Draco?
BRIDE come see me as soon as possible,
kill me? I demand that you and your new
they catch wind of this! Are you trying to
press are going to have a field day when
the hell are you? Eloped! My son! The
I was mistaken about that as well! Where
staying at the chateau but it turns out that
even involved! I thought you were to be

Theo seemed far too eager as he linked arms with Hermione upon entering the foyer. “Sorry we’re late, we received a very loud red congratulations from your mother-in-law about your marriage.”

Hermione frowned. “How does she even know?”

“Malfoy family tree.” Blaise sighed.

Hermione blanched. “Oh my god no. Harry—” Hermione choked out, panic settling in across her face.

“What?” Theo cocked his head to the side.

Astoria steered her towards an armchair in the lobby just before Hermione collapsed. She looked up at Draco in horror, her fingers lingering near her mouth. “Harry lives at Grimmauld Place, it used to belong to Sirius Black. You and your parents were on the family tree. Oh my god, It would have changed there too.”

The six of them sat in awkward silence in the booth of a diner, picking at food on the plates in front of them.

“Okay, I’m just going to say it. Have you two discussed what you’re going to do if you get denied the divorce, which honestly is quite likely?” Astoria blurted out.

“Why is it unlikely?” Hermione eyed her.

“There’s no danger to yours or Malfoy’s lives by remaining married. You both exchanged the vows without a wand pointed

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mine to be married to the insufferable know-it-all bookworm that is you.”

“Guess you hit the jackpot then.” She retorted sarcastically.

“If they deny the divorce there should be no reason for our paths to become intertwined. I am quite content with my life as it was, we should continue to live it separately.” He offered sympathetically.

Hermione looked somewhat relieved. “I agree. Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that.”

“I don’t think it’s wise for you to attend the audience with my mother either. With any luck, you will become widowed yourself after she finds out the true nature of this... arrangement.”

Hermione smirked at him and Draco observed that her eyes glistened when she was being playful. “Now, now Malfoy, it’s not fair to tease me with such a wonderful prospect.” Draco snorted.

sharp tapping on the window pulled their attention to a large owl. Draco’s stomach dropped. He recognized the owl immediately as his mothers. What’s more, he recognised the red envelope attached to its leg as a howler.

“Oh no.” Blaise quickly silenced the room and let the bird in before it could draw too much attention.

Gregory transfigured a lamp into a bird perch, which the poor thing collapsed onto. Draco took a deep breath before reaching for the envelope. It immediately burst with the sound of his mother’s voice screaming at him.

Draco Lucius Malfoy!

Would you care to explain to me why the hell the family tree is telling me that my one and only child has eloped?! To one Hermione Granger no less?! No note! No letter! No invitation! No warning of any kind that you two were

Astoria insisted on her and Hermione having dinner alone tonight to talk.



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The next day he was even more delighted when she failed to make an appearance at the hotel restaurant for brunch. Astoria mentioned that she had gone to do some emergency shopping. Later he had returned to find that a fresh set of clothes had been brought for everyone, much to everyone's relief.

He had decided to explore the hotel pool that afternoon but had quickly come up short when he saw Hermione laughing with a man poolside. She was practically naked, save for the tiny scraps of fabric covering the

woke up we had... in Theo's words... misplaced Blaise and Greg, when we eventually found Greg, he had been transfigured into an ape at the zoo and was trapped in the enclosure."

Astoria shook her head in amusement. "I see."

It was quick work to tidy the hotel room and group each person's belongings as none of them had much.

"Right, well I suppose we should work out who's staying where," Blaise said after it was done.

"Mrs Malfoy and I will be staying in the honeymoon suite," Astoria emphasized the name Malfoy, her tone left little room for argument. "What you four idiots decide between yourselves, I couldn't care less about." Blaise looked like he was the only one who would dare argue in any case but didn't.

"Well, I guess that explains the cash in my purse," Hermione mumbled.
 "I see," Astoria smiled sweetly. "Was there anything else mentioned?"
 The man, who Draco could now see was wearing a tag pinned to his coat jacket with the name 'Todd' smiled in return. "No manam."
 "Thank you, Todd, that has been most helpful." Hermione smiled, graciously accepting the key from him. They made it inside the elevator once more before Theo burst into laughter again, taking Blaise with him. Hermione and Draco tried to refrain but quickly they too were in fits of laughter at Theo's single struggled word of 'family'. Even Gregory began to chuckle in amusement.
 Astoria looked at them all, clearly confused. "Would someone like to fill me in?"
 Hermione wiped a tear from her eye as she tried to steady her breathing. "Well, when we

minimum allotment of her more private areas. He watched the man flirt shamelessly with her before deciding to have some fun.
 "Hello, my darling wife." He smirked as he slid up beside her. Draco noticed with glee that the man appeared suddenly embarrassed. Hermione only rolled her eyes. "Don't remind me." She had muttered before stalking off inside.
 "I'm so sorry man, I didn't know she was married." The man, with what he could only assume was baby oil coating his skin, bumbled, throwing his hands up to show Draco he meant no harm.
 Draco frowned at him. "She's wearing a pretty massive rock on her finger, you moron, not that I give a crap, she's not my responsibility."
 Draco started thinking though as he walked away from the man wearing baby oil, that thing was rather impressive, it would have cost a small fortune, he could only assume he had

brought it from a muggle shop somewhere nearby, though with what money? Goyle's? No, that doesn't sound like something he would do. He was a Malfoy after all. More to the point, why was she still wearing it? Why was he still wearing his? The thought hadn't even occurred to him to remove the wedding band on his finger, in fact, if he was being honest, he had forgotten all about it until just now.

Hermione was noticeably absent from dinner that evening too, Draco rationalized that it didn't bother him but it did. It was rather rude to be fair. Instead, he made another toast to Blaise and Astoria wishing them the best for their wedding the next day.



"We should arrive a few hours before Astoria and Blaise's wedding. If we are quick we might be able to at the very least get the paperwork to apply while we're there." Hermione volleyed. Draco only nodded in response.

They had walked back to the hotel together in the silence of what appeared to be their temporary truce.

Draco had penned a quick response for his mother

Mother,

I am currently in the States after some unforeseen events. I would rather have this conversation in person, between the two of us if you please. I will come to see you after Blaise's wedding. Please try to be a little less dramatic, of course, I am not trying to kill you.

Draco

The bird took flight and Draco took pleasure in knowing that he wouldn't have to see his 'wife' until the following day as

he rejoined your group to collect his winnings."

"His winnings?" Hermione parroted.

"Yes ma'am, it was mentioned that he had been rather successful on the blackjack tables at the casino down the street, the amount in the safe is..." he paused to check his notes "\$683,110.00 US dollars. This was what remained after securing the three suites and providing very generous tips for the staff." He offered a warm smile.

"Three suites?" Draco asked.

"Yes, Mr Malfoy, suite 217, suite 223 and the honeymoon suite in preparation for the arrival of one Mrs Astoria Greengrass and her new husband Mr Greengrass." The man slid a key towards them with what Draco could only assume were the keys to said honeymoon suite. Blaise muttered something under his breath but Draco missed it.

"Oh, don't you want to stay with Blaise?" Hermione asked.

Astoria stared at her for a few moments. "Are you telling me you would like to continue staying with literally any of these guys?"

Hermione quickly stood upright grabbing her bag and was halfway out the door. "Nope, you're right."

Astoria narrowed her eyes at them. "We will meet up for lunch in an hour. Be waiting in the foyer and I swear I will skin you all alive if a single one of you is late or missing." She followed Hermione out the door leaving them in silence once more.

"Your wives are scary as hell," Gregory stated staring at the door.

Draco groaned. "Please don't.." he mumbled.

Fifty-two minutes later, just as they were getting ready to head down to the foyer to avoid the wrath of Astoria Greengrass, a

woman from the wedding chapel in Las Vegas. Unlike her peppy older counterpart, Sharlene was less than impressed by the requests being put forward to her by Hermione.

"I don't understand." Her voice was full of judgment. "Has no one explained the process to you?" Her eyes darted between the two of them.

"Clearly not," Hermione growled through gritted teeth.

Sharlene offered her a withering look back. "You will need to fill out these forms here." She dropped a stack of papers on the desk between them. "Once submitted they will be added to the roster for your hearing which will take place twelve months from the date of submission. From now until said hearing you will need to abide by the requirements set out on the third page. Failure to do so will result in automatic denial of your request." Sharlene droned on with annoyance, flicking

the pages open to the third page. Sharlene's voice hummed in the background as she continued talking but all words fell far from Draco's mind because he had begun reading the list.

Parties are required to cohabit throughout proceedings.

Parties are required to provide evidence of cohabitation.

Parties are required to attend weekly marriage therapy sessions with their assigned

mind healer.

Parties are to provide a minimum of three testimonials in favour of dissolution of

marriage each.

Parties are required to take part in unannounced interviews performed by a

ministry-appointed well-fare worker.

Parties are both required to be present at the scheduled hearing.

The only thing Draco could think was "Well, fuck? Hermione obviously felt the

extra transfigured beds had created. She had a point and Draco would be glad to put as much distance between her and himself as possible.

The concierge, however, wasn't as helpful. "I'm sorry Mrs. Malfoy, we have no extra rooms available." Draco suppressed a shudder at his address of her. Hermione sighed in disappointment. "The rooms you secured for the week were the last ones we had."

"Week?" Hermione frowned.

"Yes ma'am. You paid the charges for all suites until Friday." The man had responded.

Hermione visibly relaxed a little. "I already paid?"

The man frowned at her. "Yes Ma'am?"

Hermione looked back at their little group before turning back to the man behind the counter. "I didn't say anything else did I?"

The man looked between them all. His eyes softened towards Hermione, a playful glint

Draco internalized his relief that even in her deep sigh that escaped her at its conclusion. said nothing on the matter other than the remained silent and unlike her husband-to-be learning of the tape's existence. She had wedding between Draco and Hermione after also, unfortunately, insisted on watching the head from both Blaise and Draco. She had suggested looking around at the mess the they have any extra rooms," Hermione we need to be and when. Maybe also check if that we have a solution and all know where should probably go see the front desk, now stuck here for another two nights. "We way home, it meant that they would all be despite the relief he felt knowing they had a have made it to the wedding. However, possibility had been high that they wouldn't help otherwise, or that without Astoria, the forward thinking to find an owl, he would hate to think how they would begin to seek inebriated state, Hermione had had the Draco internalized his relief that even in her deep sigh that escaped her at its conclusion.

Eventually after being passed from person to person for a while they had found themselves in front of Sharlene. A young witch who eerily reminded Draco of the

Theo and Gregory had left in record time as well leaving Draco and Hermione to deal with the mess that was *their* marriage.

Hermione didn't seem to hear her properly and nodded absent-mindedly.

They had all been far too eager to step through the floo which had pulled them, twisting and turning in all directions for what felt like an eternity. Hermione had swiftly thrown up what little breakfast she had eaten into the nearest ministry official's trash can. Astoria and Blaise had both whisked away to begin getting ready for the wedding. Astoria paused only briefly to grip Hermione's arm before she left stating that she expected to see her present at the wedding ceremony.

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same way because she promptly threw up again into the trash can beside the desk.

Sharlene wrinkled her nose in disgust. "You're not pregnant are you because that will likely result in a denied application as well."

Hermione and Draco glared at her. "No, she isn't bloody well pregnant." Draco snapped.

"Peckory?" Gregory repeated. The man continued with an amused smile. "Your husband claimed that Mr Peckory had been rather inescapably trapped into spending the evening with some estranged family members—" a small snort of amusement forced its way past Draco's lips. Hermione appeared to be struggling to refrain from laughing herself. Gregory muttered something about Draco being an asshole while Blaise and Theo both erupted into fits of laughter. Astoria frowned at them, clearly confused. Being the professional that he was, the receptionist continued undeterred "and that he would be by when

appearing at the realisation. "Yes Ma'am, you asked to secure the winnings of one of your companions in the hotel safe." He paused to look at his records. "One Mr Peckory-Goyle—"



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To the blissful relief of the others, Astoria had immediately headed to the ministry upon receiving Hermione's owl, filed the necessary paperwork, flooed to the embassy here in Las Vegas, paid the fine for the extra unauthorized person (Hermione), scheduled the earliest available time slot to return floo to the ministry in England, which, not so blissfully wasn't until the morning of Blaise and Astoria's wedding. That had earned Theo a rather aggressive smack around the

“Yeah... that one’s all you. Don’t be late.” Draco exhaled and stepped quickly into a floo network, before it could carry him away though, he swore he heard Hermione’s snarky voice saying “Oh you absolute coward.”

He couldn’t help but smirk but that was quickly replaced by dread as he found himself in the foyer of Malfoy Manor, face to face with his mother who looked absolutely livid with him.

“Mother.. you look as lovely as ever. I don’t have time to chat. I’m afraid, running behind schedule. I just came to change and get the things.” He tried to move quickly but the woman was fast and matched his pace.

“Eloped Draco? Are you serious right now? What does that girl have over you? Are you being blackmailed?”

Draco scoffed at her shrill accusations. “Merlin Mother. I’m not being blackmailed.”

“Right, well I will see you at the wedding then...” Draco trailed off.

“Wait what? You don’t expect me to go to that, do you?” Hermione stuttered. Draco raised an eyebrow at her.

“Astoria told you to be there and you agreed.”

"When did that happen?" The pitch in her voice rose an octave.

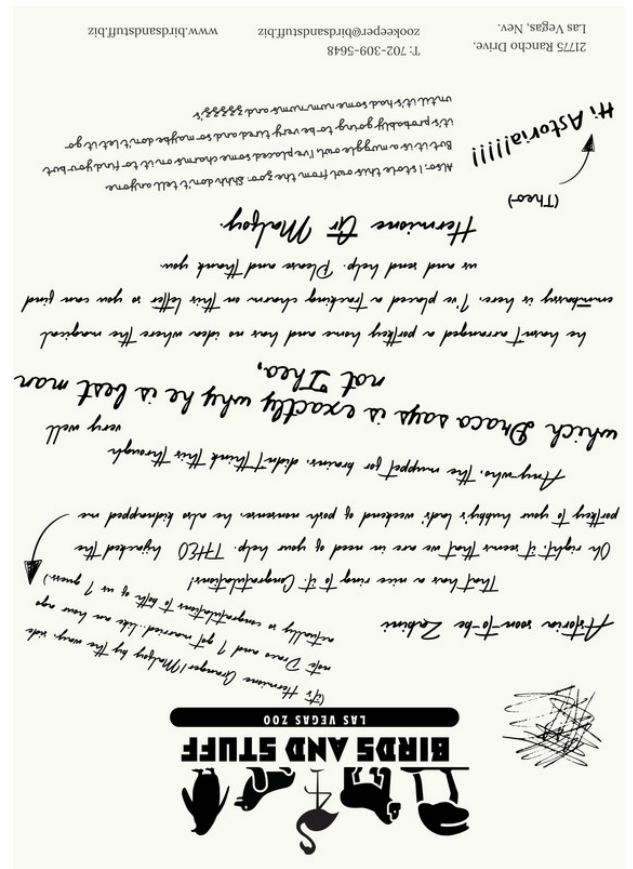
“When we got here?” He threw his arm away from his body.

“Oh... right. Where do I go? What time?”
She mumbled

“Zabini estate, be there by three. It’s a formal event so you know, try to dress appropriately.”

Hermione's eyes narrowed in annoyance. "Believe it or not Malfoy I do understand the proper etiquette for a wed—"

“Hermione!” Harry’s shrill voice carried across the foyer, they both looked up to see him marching furiously toward them.



Astoria soon-to-be Zabini

That has a nice ring to it. Congratulations!

Oh right, it seems that we are in need of your help. THEO hijacked the portkey to your hubby's lads' weekend of posh nonsense, he also kidnapped me (it's Hermione Granger/Malfoy by the way, side note Draco and I got married...like an hour ago actually so congratulations to both of us I guess.)

Any-who, the muppet for brains, didn't think this through very well which Draco says is exactly why he is best man not Theo, he hasn't arranged a portkey home and has no idea where the magical embassy is here, I've placed a tracking charm on this letter so you can find us and send help. Please and thank you.

Also, I stole this owl from the zoo. Shhhh don't tell anyone.

But it is a muggle owl, I've placed some charms on it to find you but it's probably going to be very tired and so maybe don't let it go until it's had some num-nums and zzzzz's

Hermione ~~Gr~~ Malfoy.

Draco whispered to her the second they cleared the office doorway. She stopped in her tracks and looked at him in annoyed disbelief. Suddenly she was hitting him with the stack of paperwork they had been given. “No, I’m not freaking pregnant!” She hissed. “Okay! I was just checking.” Draco grumbled. They found themselves awkwardly lingering in the ministry foyer.

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“Then explain yourself Draco. You never even told me you two were involved, and you haven’t mentioned her once since you were at school, you can hardly blame me for jumping to that conclusion! It makes sense, what does she want, is it money?!” Her legs were moving twice as fast as his to keep up and even despite her floor-length gown, she chased him up the stairs.

Draco threw her a look “She has a Merlin of the first order Mother, I doubt she wants for anything. She isn’t blackmailing me, I don’t have time for this, I’m running late enough as it is.” He grumbled, reaching his floor.

“Then I truly do not understand Draco! Are you blackmailing her? Lord Draco, I swear if you drag us into the bad press again I’ll—”

Draco spun to face her. “You’ll what Mother? Hmm? Believe me, there is not a single thing that I could do that will result in

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Hermione was staring wide-eyed at the letter, Blaise and Draco both slowly turned to look at her. Gregory started laughing, it boomed through the room as he shook his head and stood upright again. “Oh, man.” He disappeared into the bathroom and shut the door, his laughing echoing from the other side. Blaise stood and sheepishly looked at his bride-to-be. “Astoria, my love. You have no idea how thrilled I am to see you but please tell me you have a way to get us home again?” He asked nervously. She scowled in his direction. “Of course, I have a way home.” She snapped. Her scowl quickly turned toward Draco and Hermione. “Seriously you two? Married?!”

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seem to have commandeered from a muggle zoo. Poor thing had no idea what was going on. You charmed it to fly to my estate, do you not remember?”

Hermione shook her head. Astoria sighed and pulled out a rolled-up piece of paper, holding it out towards her. Hermione, Draco, Blaise and Gregory all scrambled towards her to read it. Theo, finally seeming to understand his position, remained fearfully glowering up at Astoria from his spot on the floor.

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Hermione, sitting at the table with a terrified look on her face and a cup of coffee halfway to her mouth. At the last second, he steered away in the opposite direction and away from the dining hall. With any luck his mother would follow and he could lose her further in the house. “Oh for goodness sake Draco where are you going? I feel like I deserve answers about the sit—” his mother’s voice stopped and so he stopped in his tracks too. “Oh. I see.” He turned to see his mother gliding into the dining hall. Dammit.

“Sorry.” He muttered in Hermione’s direction as he entered the hall. His mother was already taking her seat and observing Hermione studiously.

“Hello.” His mother offered. Hermione looked at him in panic before smiling back at his mother.

“Good morning Mrs. Malfoy.”

“Narcissa dear, after all I am, it seems, your mother-in-law, besides Mrs. Malfoy reminds

It’s two people with a shared living space without regulation over the other person’s life. You will be free to continue to date as you wish, come and go as you please, you won’t be required to tell me what time you will be home etcetera, vice versa and all that rubbish.”

“I see. Though for the record we are both rich and famous.” Draco smiled into his drink.

“Hence why I don’t have a flatmate.” She chuckled.

“I thought that was because you eat your meals in your bedroom.” He quipped. She rolled her eyes. Draco sighed. “We should think about issuing a statement, however, this is going to get out one way or another, I’m honestly surprised it hasn’t already and at least that way we will have control over the angle.”

Porter?” He smirked when an annoyed scowl

crossed her face.

“Oh yes, brilliant thanks for that. He

thought you had impervio’d me.”

“Naturally.” Draco shrugged with a smile.

“My mother was working under the

presumption that you were blackmailing me,

or that I was blackmailing you but there was

definite blackmail involved.”

She laughed. “I suppose our union is rather

abrupt.”

“We should discuss some ground rules,

given that our intended plan of living our

separate lives unaffected has obviously

become null and void.”

Hermione nodded. “Quite. I would prefer

that to remain the case as much as possible

though, we should approach this as a

flatmate-type situation.”

Draco blinked at her. “Flatmate?”

She rolled her eyes in response. “I suppose

it’s not necessary among the rich and famous.

Draco stood staring at her for a moment unsure of even what to say. The elongated silence only served to amuse Hermione

waving her hand to indicate to carry on. “I’m not stopping you.” Narcissa quipped,

He groaned. “Mother, can I at least have a coffee first.”

If Narcissa was displeased she didn’t show it, she didn’t even look away from Draco.

custard danish and coffee. “She told him before returning to her

staring back at him. “Yeah...that one’s all

was taken aback to see a smirk on her face

Draco’s eyes flew to Hermione’s face and

Hermione to Draco with a pointed look.

rather...curious.” Narcissa looked up from

next to no information and I am

inquisitive nature, but Draco has given me

be a long morning. “I hope you’ll forgive my

poured himself a coffee. This was going to

woman. Rude old bitch she was.” Draco

me of Lucius’ mother and boy did I hate that

more. Narcissa only huffed in annoyance. “Oh, honestly Draco. When did you two become involved?”

Hermione choked on her coffee which Draco found he enjoyed very much. Hermione looked up to see him smirking at her and muttered something about being a tosser under her breath.

“We’re not involved, mother.” He sighed sitting down.

Narcissa looked between them with narrowing eyes. “So this is a political marriage then?”

Hermione cleared her throat. Draco just stared at his mother from the other end of the table. “No mother, it is not a political move.”

Narcissa huffed in exasperated frustration. “Are you really going to force me to play twenty questions Draco?”

“Oh for Merlin’s sake Malfoy, just spit it out already. The poor woman has been far

night. In the maid’s quarters. Are you intending your wife to live a Cinderella life?” “A what? No, she wanted to be as close to the floo as possible. Understandably she doesn’t have the fondest memories of this house.” Draco offered, sounding more snarky than he intended. He threw back the covers and climbed out of bed, heading on a search for coffee. “You know, given the last time she was here she was brutally tortured and maimed.”

“So she intends to live in the help’s quarters for the rest of your lives or will you be joining her?” Her tone was full of disapproval. Draco threw a frown over his shoulder as he rushed down the stairs that suggested she was losing her mind. “You have given me no information Draco. What did you expect? You have left me no choice but to draw my own conclusions.” He thought of entering the dining hall but his mother was hot on his tail and there was

“That’s not a bad idea. We can sit down tomorrow to decide on what we want to say.” Hermione agreed. “The penguins were a beautiful gift.” Draco offered and Draco noted that she smiled more with her eyes.



His eyes fluttered open the next morning and he nearly jumped out of his skin. “Merlin mother. Could you not stand there watching me sleep? It’s creepy.” She raised an eyebrow at him as she stared down at him sternly. “You got home inappropriately late last night, I wasn’t going to wait up and then I woke up this morning to be informed that your bride has spent the

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“He thinks he’s found love.” Draco laughed when he was met with a disbelieving look. “Yeah, I know.” He agreed with her unspoken doubts.

He downed his drink quickly. “I suppose it’s a fair trade-off to alternate between houses. I know you don’t exactly have pleasant memories of the manor. If anything it will serve as an incentive to find a third location faster right? Though I should warn you, mother can be... nosey and overbearing at times so I can’t imagine the memories there will improve.”

It was Hermione’s turn to blink. “I see. Should I assume you have yet to have a discussion with her about our situation?” She smirked at him.

“I am not afraid of my mother so you can stop looking at me like that. Our conversation today was.. brief. Speaking of which, how was your conversation with

neglected on the floor. No one, not in his entire life, had thrown muffins at his head, and the audacity that this witch had to do so, in his own home no less, shocked him, so he did what he set out to do in the first place, drink his damn coffee.

The tension was thick in the air as Narcissa closed her eyes and focused on her breathing. Eventually, she rose with grace from her chair. “I see.” Was all she said before floating from the room.

Draco and Hermione blinked at the door she had disappeared through. Draco scoffed, drawing her attention back to him.

“Nice going Granger, you’ve probably caused my mother a heart attack. Did you have to be so cavalier about it?” He growled.

Rage flowed through her. “If you would have just told her in the first place instead of torturing the poor woman then I wouldn’t have had to get involved at all!” She snapped, standing quickly. “You know what Malfoy, bite me!” She picked up a muffin from the pastry tray and threw it at him which was quickly followed by several more before she stormed from the room. Draco sat, crumpled bits of blueberry muffins strewn across his person and pyjamas, the majority lying

“So your kitchen—”
 “Is about ten feet from my bed.” She finished. He blinked at her.
 “Is there not a sufficient cash prize attached to the merlin of the first order award?” She scoffed. “Yes, there is. My choice to live in a studio is not for lack of money. I didn’t feel the need to live in a mansion by myself.” She raised her chin proudly.

“Well, I’m not sure how comfortable you would be staying at my place. I live in a renovated industrial studio, which is to say... it’s all one room except the bathroom.” She trailed off.
 “No, that’s fine, I agree. Sharlene had said they applied from today onwards so it’s probably best we discuss it sooner rather than later since our history with alcohol and decisions doesn’t bode well for us.” He joked and was pleased to see a small smile gracing her lips.
 “Well, I’m not sure how comfortable you would be staying at my place. I live in a renovated industrial studio, which is to say... it’s all one room except the bathroom.” She trailed off.

“I don’t live there by myself.” He muttered defensively.

“Yes well, all the same, in the spirit of honesty, I don’t feel very comfortable staying at the manor either and at the end of this I should think we would like to return to our spaces without them feeling tainted in some way...what I’m trying to ask, rather poorly it seems, is if you would consider us finding a third neutral location in which we could reside for the next year?”

“That’s a reasonable request I suppose, though I think we should be hard-pressed to pull that off tonight.”

She laughed. “No, I suppose not. I was hoping you would be open to switching off every other night until we can find somewhere. I’ll stay at the manor tonight, we can stay at my place tomorrow, I’ll even let you take the bed.”

Draco opened his mouth to respond but a loud crash sounded toward the dance floor.

His head whipped up to see Theo's body writhing on the ground, his hands desperately scratching whatever part of his body he could get his hands on. Angry pink x's breaking out across the surface of his skin. Despite this Theo was grinning up at Daphne who scowled down at him before she stomped away.

Draco strolled over to help him up as the hex subsided. "She's my soulmate," Theo declared with a grin.

Draco shook his head. "I don't think she got the memo on that one mate."

Theo stared after the blonde who was now laughing, no doubt about the incident with Astoria. "Give it time." His face nearly split in two with how big his grin was.

Draco rolled his eyes, patted Theo on the back and retreated back to where Hermione sat watching with amusement.

"What was that about?"

too patient with you. I'd have hexed you to oblivion already...freaking coward." Hermione threw her arms up before taking a deep breath. "I do apologise, Mrs. Mal-Narcissa." Hermione corrected quickly when she caught sight of the woman's face. "Unfortunately, this has been all a rather large misunderstanding. Theodore kidnapped me and.. well frankly the bachelor party as a whole and we ended up in Las Vegas, when we woke up the next morning that prat and I were married. I don't even have any recollection of it. It seems that making this disappear isn't quite going to be a simple process...there are certain guidelines that we have to abide by in order to progress with a divorce. I truly am very sorry, I'm sure I am the last person you want your son attached to or for something as awful as a divorce to be part of his marital history..." Hermione trailed off as Narcissa raised her hand to stop talking.



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"This is beautiful," Hermione stated, looking around, from her seat at their bar table, a glass of champagne in front of her.

"Yes, the Greengrass family have always known how to pull off rustic elegance better than anyone else." Draco volleyed, looking down into his drink briefly.

"So, I apologise in advance for turning a beautiful occasion into a meeting about us but we should probably discuss the requirements?" Hermione said nervously.

his left. Straight ahead of him was a staircase. Hermione had said her studio was upstairs but it wasn't until he reached the top of the stairwell that he heard the shouting. That was definitely Hermione's voice.

Oliver wood. He would recognize that ponsy pricks voice anywhere. Draco hesitated, he considered carrying on up the stairs to the rooftop to give them some privacy but the tone in Hermione's voice had him stepping closer to the door, she sounded distressed. He couldn't make out what she was saying but when he heard something smash he made his decision. He slid the door open and tried not to appear surprised with the interior of her apartment, this was not what he had been expecting. It was nice, and much bigger than he had anticipated. Both Oliver and Hermione whirled toward him at his entrance.

Hermione looked on the verge of tears, she was wearing a satin black dressing gown

Oliver's direction, an uneasy feeling settling amongst the wreckage. Draco scowled in to be a vase given the discarded flowers laid the shattered remains of what appeared her. Oliver looked angry and between them and dripping water all over the floor below pulled closely around her, her hair soaking in his stomach.

"Darling," Draco said, eyeing Oliver as he stepped towards Hermione, hoping that she would play along and he could get her out of whatever this situation was, clearly it wasn't one she wanted to be in. "What's going on, are you okay?" He purposely wrapped his arms around her while stepping between her and Oliver, his back to the man so that he could give her a purposeful look. She seemed to catch on and the relief on her sheltered face annoyed him, what had Oliver done that made her consider Draco the safe option?

"Darling? What the fuck is this git doing here Mione?" Oliver didn't even wait for her

here among the upper class of their society in a rouge pink dress, but it wasn't the elegance that had Draco's breath catching in his throat. She looked like herself. She looked beautiful, soft and real. He frowned, catching his thoughts, he shook them from his mind, he turned his attention back towards Daphne. "Well, I suppose if that's the case, I might have better luck with Daphne," Draco smirked at the horrified look that Theo threw him.

"Don't you dare." Draco laughed and grabbed a glass of champagne from the bar, weaving through the crowd towards where Hermione was now talking with Blaise and Astoria and handing them a small gift box.

"It's not much but I hope if nothing else it brings you a smile," Hermione spoke quietly as the happy couple lifted the box.

For a moment there was silence before laughter erupted from Blaise's chest and a genuine smile washed over Astoria's face.

repercussions of his actions. Later he had heard her snapping at someone for putting the wrong vase of flowers on a table.

"I think I'm in love," Theo melted dramatically against the bar where Draco was getting himself a fire whiskey.

"Is that so?" He chuckled and followed Theo's gaze to the aforementioned sister. He laughed again and shook his head "Nope. That's never going to happen." He turned back to the bar.

"Just you wait. Our babies will be wild *and* beautiful." Theo sighed. Draco smirked and rolled his eyes. "Though on second thoughts if your divorce goes off without a hitch I might swoop in on Hermione instead." Draco's head shot up, once again looking toward what had caught Theo's attention. Certainly, she had fulfilled the brief. Hermione stood at the edge of the open venue that had propped up for the reception, she looked entirely elegant enough to be seen

This could not be the building. Draco stared up at it with disapproval. Hermione had said she lived in a converted industrial studio but surely he was in the wrong location? This was smack bang in the middle of multiple factories, other than what appeared to be a takeaway store, a dairy and a liquor store on the corner there was no indication of residential life. He swiped his wand over the door and was immediately faced with a door to his right and a door to

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to respond. “You know what, I don’t care, bugger off Malfoy, this is between me and my girlfriend.” He snarled in Draco’s direction. Draco rounded to face him, keeping Hermione behind him. He couldn’t contain his sneer toward the man when he felt Hermione push in closer to him, her hands clutching at the back of his shirt, she was cold and she was shaking.

“I don’t think so, Wood. This is my home too after all and there is no way I’m leaving you alone with my wife when you are very clearly not welcome here any longer. It’s time for you to go. Now.” He almost enjoyed watching Oliver’s emotions pass over his face as what Draco had just said sunk in.

“Wife?” Oliver laughed in disbelief “She’s not your fucking wife, and you sure as shit don’t live here mate. I would have noticed that in the six months, I was spending half the week here. Piss off with your bullshit games, this has nothing to do with you.”

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Draco peeked into the box and saw a pair of beautiful crystal penguins.
 “They are Magellanic penguins, just like the ones from the zoo. They are incredibly loyal to their partners and mate for life.”
 Hermione smiled radiantly at them and dammit all if he didn’t hate her a little bit for it.

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Theo’s suit. “Looks good.” He smiled at him. “We won’t even need to change you for the funeral.”

Theo frowned “Funeral?” Draco chuckled. Perhaps he wasn’t that over it.

“Yours mate. Astoria and I might be caught up in our wedding day bliss but Daphne is out for blood.” Blaise patted his shoulder. Theo swallowed hard. Draco couldn’t contain the laughter.

The grounds were beautifully decorated. Wildflowers have been artfully intertwined with arches of roses and twinkling lights everywhere and Astoria had looked simply radiant. Their wedding had gone off without a hitch. He suspected largely due to the aggressiveness of Astoria’s older sister Daphne. At one point he had seen her holding Theo by the scruff of his collar against the edge of the house swearing that if he put another toe out of line his great-grandchildren would still be dealing with the

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growled as he looked down at the man who hadn't appeared to have grown any since school. "I warned you not to speak badly about my wife. Then you proceeded to yell at her, call her a whore and then what? A death eater what Wood? Finish that sentence." His eyes narrowed into a glare.

It was clear Oliver was trying to appear unaffected by Draco's looming size, or his wand at his throat, or the near-black look in Draco's eyes. Oliver tried not to appear intimidated but the slow swallow in his throat gave him away. He was a Gryffindor though and he wasn't one to back down even when afraid. "Death eater slut." Oliver spat out.

Draco's head was thrown back and forward again to collide with Oliver's nose before he could react. Hermione's squeal drowned out the sound of the loud crack of Oliver's nose breaking. Blood poured from his face, several drops landing on the floor and on Draco but Draco didn't care as he shoved

Oliver towards the door. "If my wife wasn't so determined not to have negative memories tainting this place I swear I wouldn't hesitate, you have three seconds, and if I ever catch you back here again I will ensure your life becomes a living hell, three, two..". Oliver scrambled out the door and down the stairs. Draco turned to look at Hermione, staring at him with wide eyes, her arms still tugging the robe around her. "Are you okay? Did he hurt you?" Hermione shook her head, struggling to find her voice. Draco sighed and vanished the blood over himself and the floor before putting his wand down on the entrance table, holding his hands up to show he wasn't a threat. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare—" "You didn't." She rushed out "You didn't scare me, please don't apologise. Thank you." He eyed her with suspicion "What? No lecture on why violence isn't okay?"

Draco frowned at him. "It makes the opposite of sense Blaise. We're seeking a divorce, these are all things that—"

"Seek to make sure it's truly what both of you want. If you come out of it at the end of the year having lived together and done everything in your combined powers to make the marriage work and yet it simply doesn't, they will feel more justified in severing that bond."

When he put it like that it made sense in a roundabout way. "There." Draco let go of his bowtie. "Why couldn't you just wear a regular tie anyway?"

Blaise smiled back at Draco's reflection. "Bowties are cool." Draco shook his head with a smile. "So when do you move in together?" Blaise carried on, moving on to adjusting his cufflinks.

"Sharlene said it had to be from today onwards. I don't know man. It almost feels like it would be easier to just accept that we

no rings, the entire day could go to hell but nothing will stop me from marrying Astoria today." He smiled and Draco could tell he meant it. He swallowed nervously. Blaise was doing it right. He had found someone he was in love with and wanted to spend his life with. Draco however, was now tied to a witch that frankly he wanted very little to do with. Blaise must have read the expression on his face because he nodded his head up at him. "I take it that things didn't go well at the ministry." Draco searched Blaise's eyes. Blaise was calm, he was at peace, there were no doubts about him and Astoria's future, he needn't budge to protect his nerves. "The hearing will be twelve months from the date of submission of the paperwork. In the meantime, they have requirements for us to meet. Marriage counselling, letters of support in our divorce... living together." Blaise hummed. "Makes sense."

Draco held up his hand, his ring still glistening, right where it should be. "Newly married asshole now get out before I blast your fucking balls off for daring to treat my wife this way."

Oliver didn't move, his eyes had fallen to Hermione's hand gripping at Draco's waist, her own ring visible now that Draco had lifted his hand to display his ring. Oliver's face went five shades of red darker in less than thirty seconds. "You got married?!" He screeched at her, Draco sighed deeply at Oliver's choice to ignore his warning to leave. "You got fucking married Hermione! To this tosser? What the fuck! You want to bitch me out for one mistake with one girl but you went out and whore yourself out to him for what? To show me up? You fucking death eater slu—"

Draco had crossed the room, wand drawn and had shoved it under Oliver's chin. "Finish that word, I dare you." He

She stared at him again with wide blinking eyes for what felt like minutes. "You did..." she started "You did see me bounce Vanessa's face off a table just last week right? And remember that time I punched you in the face in third year? I don't think I have the authority to tell you not to, especially when it's in defence of me, seriously Malfoy. Thank you. He didn't hurt me but I can't say he wouldn't have."

Draco nodded and eyed her appearance, her hair was stuck to her neck and robe, and patches of water soaked her shoulders. "You were in the shower?" It wasn't even really a question, he knew the answer.

She nodded hesitantly "Yeah, I was, he walked into the bathroom like last week never happened, I started screaming at him to get out, the robe was the closest thing I had, he wouldn't leave, kept saying we needed to talk, kept telling me I was overreacting, wouldn't leave and then when I

will be married and carry on with our lives as they were before."

Blaise scoffed at him. "You're an idiot. That is never going to happen. Even if you both agree to that, it's only a matter of time before word gets out and then it will be a media field day, Rita will be trailing Granger everywhere she goes for the rest of her life trying to catch her doing something wrong, society girls will swoop on her like vultures to pick at her carcass."

"Well, that was... graphic.. and dark.."

Draco mumbled.

"Malfoy," Theo grinned stepping into the room.

Draco rolled his eyes. "Oh for Merlin's sake."

Blaise threw a grin Theo's way and pulled him in for a hug. It seemed the reality of his fast-approaching wedding was enough for Blaise to put aside his earlier anger towards their friend. Blaise stepped back and eyed

a bigger blow to our reputation than what Father has already done, and that includes eloping with Hermione fucking Granger on a stupid drunken whim!"

She looked at him as if he had slapped her. He didn't have time for this. He should be at the estate already.

"Malfoy." She growled. "It's Hermione fucking **Malfoy** now, remember?" She spun away from him and glided back down the corridor. He wished people would stop reminding him of that. It would have to be dealt with later, he really was running very late.

"There he is!" Blaise smiled in the mirror at Draco's reflection as he tried to straighten his bowtie.

"Yes, sorry. I'm here. I have the rings. It's all going to be fine." Draco stepped forward to help him.

"Oh I know mate, I'm not worried. You could have been a no-show, we could have

level of intimacy but since you two were not in a romantic relationship prior to your nuptials, I'm instead going to assign you the task of becoming friends by the end of this year. Hang out with each other, figure out what makes each other laugh, what your favourite foods are, maybe share a meal with other friends. Up to you, but do something between now and next week. Good job you two, despite how you're both feeling, you've made amazing progress today."

Draco and Hermione did not share the same enthusiasm.

"Are you serious right now? Why do you think it is doc?" Hermione snapped. "It couldn't possibly have anything to do with the fact that we were children, literal children, assigned sides and forced to fight in a war that started before any of us were even born. I know the family life Draco grew up with, he's been judged enough for the actions of his father and he doesn't need you picking at insecurities that we all have. That war was fucking traumatic. At the end of it regardless of what side we had been on, we came out of it with the same scars and the same horrible memories and the same stolen childhoods."

Silence fell again while Hr Thorne made more notes. Five minutes of silence in which Draco glared at the healer. Suddenly the pad popped out of existence. "That's a good start, I think. I can tell you're both reaching your breaking points so we will call it a day early for this week. Normally I would assign homework for date nights to rekindle some

indication of who you are as a person." He said defensively.

He hadn't noticed the way she had been looking above their heads before, he glanced at Hermione's head but saw nothing so he felt he could safely assume Hermione wouldn't see his thoughts either. "Correct Mr Malfoy, for my eyes only. Can you tell me a little about when exactly it became so difficult for you to place your trust in others?" She looked at him as if she was asking about the weather. Draco was relieved to see with a quick glance in Hermione's direction that she wasn't snickering at him but instead was looking as horrified as he felt. "Hmmm. Interesting. Why is it that you would automatically assume your wife to be amused by your vulnerabilities? Does she have a history of making fun of your self-perceived weaknesses?"

Hermione's eyes flew to him, wide and confused. Draco just glared at the healer¹³²

before them and worked meticulously to quiet his mind, shoving thoughts and memories into boxes and stacking them away out of her reach. She stared at him for a few moments before leaning forward on her knees and looking at him with sincerity. It was aggravating.

"Mr Malfoy, I'm not a legilimens, occluding isn't going to stop me from seeing your thoughts. I am here to help you both, if at the end of your fifty-two weeks you both feel that divorce is what you want then I will submit my approval to do so, which will help greatly in your case. I am not going to do that however unless you both participate during these sessions. One hour a week for fifty-two weeks in exchange for my sign-off to the council of vows and bonds. You both seem to feel strongly about divorce so then there should be no harm in participating, you are after all not in love with each other correct?"

the mind healer to maximize positive results. These thoughts will remain confidential to the mind healer.

“That’s insane!” Hermione yelled in frustration.

Hr Thorne pursed her lips and gave her a knowing look. “Yes, I suspect you’re probably feeling a bit embarrassed by some of your earlier thoughts but I assure you I have taken no offence. You’re not truly angry with me after all Mrs Malfoy. I do understand your frustrations.” Hermione’s face reddened. Hr Thorne turned back to Draco. “You didn’t answer my question, do you feel that the house I was placed in during my school years is somehow relevant to my ability to assist in your marriage?”

Draco felt his face growing hot. “No..” he mumbled. Hr Thorne eyed the top of his head and hummed before nodding at her quill. “I mean it’s not relevant to your ability to be a healer, but it would provide some

“Of course not.” Draco spluttered at the same time that Hermione snapped “Absolutely not.” Hr Thorne smiled. “Fantastic then this will be an easy case for all of us then, provided you do the work. Now I would like to touch back on you Mr Malfoy, what is it about me that indicates to you that I’m judging you? Is it my tone? Perhaps the way I sit? My very presence? You’ve decided that I’m here to judge you and I would like to understand—” “You are judging us, you’ve made several remarks on his self-perceived weaknesses, of course, he’s going to be on the defensive,” Hermione growled in her direction. Regardless of her attitude, Hr Thorne smiled at Hermione or rather Hermione’s thoughts. “Interesting. Mrs Malfoy, would you say that you have always been protective over the people in your life?” “Yes,” Hermione stated through gritted teeth.

“Would you say you have always been this assertive in the conflict of others?” Draco huffed in annoyance. “That’s hardly a fair question to ask her, we haven’t exactly had normal childhoods here. She’s earned the right to be protective of herself and her friends.” Another smile tugged at the healer’s lips, causing both Hermione and Draco to scowl at her. “Hmm. You said she has earned her right to be protective of herself and her friends? Do you think she considers you a friend?” Another look up, another scribble, another analyzing look at Draco and a quick glance at Hermione, another scribble. She smiled back at the scowling pair. “What’s most interesting to me is despite your insistence on not being a couple, you’re both instinctively protective of each other, despite the shared belief that the other person doesn’t consider you a friend. Why do you think that is?”

he had shown them, there had been no communication at any level, and there certainly had been no feedback on what it was that they were actually looking for in a home. Of course, he knew who they were, which only added to the intimidation he felt, it was also an easy assumption to make that they would be upset by this morning's article in the Prophet. He let them walk around the property for five minutes before heading in, it was a cosy family home on a lifestyle block. He shuddered to realise that the couple were glaring around the place, avoiding eye contact with one another. He cleared his throat awkwardly.

"So there are five bedrooms, a nice big backyard, one of the trees has a tyre swing for when the little one is older—" The air left his lungs at the way they both turned to him with deathly glares.

"I'm not pregnant!" The witch hissed at him through gritted teeth before storming out the front of the property again. Her husband sighed deeply before throwing him his own glare. "Great. Now I have to go deal with that. Again. Your listings, give me the portfolio and stay here." With shaking hands he handed him a stack of papers, all profiling the properties assigned to him. The realtor practically collapsed onto the stairs and took several deep breaths. "Hermione," Draco growled at her pacing form. She threw a look his way. "That's the fifth person since we left the stupid healers, on top of that absolute disaster. I still can not believe the way she was treating you Draco, it's uncalled for. I know there's pushing a client but that was... that was too far. Especially for a simple divorce case. Five freaking people have congratulated us or made some stupid comment on our non-existent baby, I swear

Draco smirked at her. "Don't tell me you're sick of me already sweet wife, I might begin to suspect the prophet is telling the truth and that I will soon be nursing a broken heart." He chuckled when she flipped him off. "For the record though, I work from home. Investment portfolios, buying up companies and estates. I haven't heard any mention of your own career, am I too assume you also don't have a job that you need to rush off to after our first appointment?"

"Appointment?" She looked up with confusion.

"The mind healer, remember? Merlin Granger, you were the one that selected the time slot."

The manner in which she threw her head back, rolled her eyes and groaned in annoyance reminded him of a toddler. Feisty and dramatic Draco decided.

Ten minutes of silence had lapsed since their introductions to Hr Thorne, ten

Blush spread across Hermione's cheeks. "Oh... I may have trapped Rita in a jar for a few months when we were at school after her series of particularly offensive articles about my supposed promiscuity. She's an animagus, illegally, but one all the same." Draco exhaled deeply and shook his head. "I don't even know what to say to that Granger. I won't pretend I'm not pleasantly surprised that you're not the stickler-swor rule enforcer I thought you were in school." He ducked as she threw a cushion at the back of his head, it collided instead with one of the ornaments on her bookshelf, knocking it over where it fell to the floor and shattered. Draco turned to look at her with raised eyebrows. "You're rather feisty, you know that?" "Would you sod off? Don't you have a job to go to?" Hermione snarled, waving her wand to repair the broken owl and summoning the cushion.

I will not be held accountable for my actions if anyone else says anything.” He stepped slowly closer to his pacing wife, she had a kind of radiance about her when she was angry, but it had been a rough morning and so he let her vent, better to get it out now rather than hex him later. “Do you think that’s why he keeps showing us freaking family homes? Even if I were pregnant, which I’m not” Draco raised an eyebrow when she yelled the last three words of the house behind him. “This is not the kind of house I would want to raise a baby in. Is that how people see me? Hermione Granger, war heroine, living in a white picket fence fairytale cottage in the countryside surrounded by baby ducks and chickens—”

“Don’t forget the penguins.” Draco offered. It seemed to be enough to break her out of her mood because those big caramel-coloured eyes stared back at him for a second before she burst out laughing.



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The realtor looked between the two people before him, both were visibly angry, with their arms folded across their chests. He took a deep breath and unlocked the front door, waving his permission to investigate. He hated jobs that involved bickering couples, but what was worse was when the couples said nothing to each other, and these two hadn’t said a single word since they had left his office two hours ago. Other than a shake of the head at the previous three properties

scattered everywhere as she flung the paper away from her.

Draco nodded silently, sipping on his coffee. He wasn’t listening as the witch ranted about the factual inaccuracies of her previous relationships and the events surrounding their newfound marriage, one week was still new, wasn’t it? Especially since their engagement would have been no more than thirty minutes long. They only had themselves to blame. They were supposed to sit down and write out a statement yesterday but between the muffins and Oliver’s inappropriate behaviour they hadn’t gotten around to it and now Oliver had beaten them to it. It was now a matter of damage control rather than story dictation and it seemed that Rita really had it out for Hermione.

“...I should have left her in that jar for the rest of her bloody life!”

Draco raised an eyebrow. “Come again?”

A small smile graced her lips. “Ah, I see. You two signed the agreement without reading it.” She held them out each a copy. Highlighted a third of the way down was a sentence that made his blood run cold. Parties agree that whilst present during their sessions, their thoughts will be recorded for

Hufflepuff? “Do you feel that is relevant?” She asked him directly, startling him. He frowned at her. Had he spoken that out loud? Had Hermione said something he had missed?

minutes of awkward silence while Hermione sat as far from Draco as she could on the sofa. Ten minutes of Mr Thorne looking between them over her half-moon spectacles and occasionally nodding at the quick gull scribbling a note on the pad floating in front of her. Draco rolled his eyes and began to look around the room, it was light and airy in here, with lots of green plants. Perhaps the woman before them had once been in

145
 month crammed in the studio or tip-toeing
 She folded her arms. "What and spend a
 fast-track things, you didn't mind did you?"
 and I've found that money can almost always
 He chuckled "No point in mucking around
 that?"
 impressive when you're working, you know
 smirking when he caught her. "You're
 Hermione raised an eyebrow at him,
 that happen."
 file whatever paperwork you need to make
 be in by tomorrow afternoon and then you
 now, tell them I'll double the asking price to
 "No. Too long. Get on the phone right
 silence.
 fell short as Draco held up his hand in
 before handover—" the poor man's babblings
 current owners, typically it would be a month
 "Well I would have to check with the
 windows.
 absently, stepping forward towards the
 "When can we move in?" Hermione asked

place they called home for the next twelve months. The large living space was two stories high with floor-to-ceiling glass windows that overlooked the city below along the entire side of the apartment. There was a beautiful modern fireplace set in stone and on the opposite side of the room was an expansive kitchen made from white marble, the island with a breakfast bench overlooking the living area. There was a hallway that led to two large bedrooms with a bathroom nestled in between them, there was a staircase behind the kitchen that led up to an open balcony that overlooked the living space, another hallway upstairs led to two more rooms, with another bathroom between them and an office at the far end. The place was huge, modern and perfect to live in comfortably for the next year.

"We will take it." They said at once. A stab of guilt hit Hermione at the look of relief on the realtor's face.



07 AUGUST 2003

Golden Girl resorting to old ways? The latest conquest suggests so.

It seems golden girl Hermione Granger is slipping into old habits, the war heroine made headlines during her time at Hogwarts for her many whirlwind relationships that left a string of wizards heartbroken. Some more recognizable among the list are none other than long-time ally Harry Potter as well as quidditch superstars Ronald Weasley and Victor Krum. Her latest conquest? The sole heir to the Malfoy empire, Draco Malfoy. Sources claim the witch recently ditched seemingly serious boyfriend

around the manor carefully trying not to set off panic attacks, no thank you. I'd rather pay the extra too. Though this place is significantly larger than the studio. Might need to do some shopping for extra furnishings. I love this couch though, it will be such a shame to see it go." She ran her hands across the back of a large light blue L-shaped suede couch. It looked big enough for at least ten people to sit comfortably and still have room. Behind her, she heard Draco tell the realtor who was now on the phone with the owners that he would throw in extra for the couch. She chuckled to herself. She knew she should feel bad about the ridiculous way in which they were spending money at the moment but she simply couldn't bring herself to care. They had already gotten themselves into this mess and they may as well enjoy the adventure, otherwise it was going to be a long twelve months. If the war had taught Hermione and

"Right of course. A whole assortment of birds, I'm a bird it seems."

Draco shrugged. "You're a bird, I'm a bird, we can own a whole aviary of birds, but we can't do it here because Merlin Granger I hate this place, so get your butt over here and help me sift through these."

She smiled at him in appreciation. "Thank you" she whispered. "For letting me rant and for calming me down. Thank you. I know today hasn't been ideal for you either."

They flipped through the papers, surprisingly holding the same views on nearly everything they saw. A series of no's and the variations of, spewing quickly from their mouths in unison. Hermione stopped him as Draco flipped to a penthouse in central London, right on the border of the muggle and wizarding worlds. "Yip," Draco stated, tearing it from the portfolio and taking it to the realtor. It was only further confirmed when they stepped inside. This would be the

"Are you colour blind? Malfoy, that is fucking blue. It's a greenish shade of blue sure but it is blue." Hermione snapped defensively. Maybe the apartment could be bigger after all.

"Granger I'm a fucking Slytherin, I know what green looks like. Maybe you're the one that's colour-blind!" Draco snapped back. This was going to be a long afternoon.

Oliver Wood for the Malfoy heir and has already been spotted with a wedding ring attached to her finger. It has left many questioning what possible reason the two have for rushing such a momentous milestone, sources close to the couple hint that there will be a new addition to the Malfoy family tree in the near future. The prophet approached Mr Wood for his opinion on his former lover's betrayal but his only comment revolved around respecting his privacy to recover from this heartbreak. Others have speculated that the new Mrs. Malfoy may have been more interested in seizing an opportunity to claim some of the Malfoy fortune. It all begs the question, how long before Mr Malfoy is left in the dust heart broken too?

Hermione's mouth was hanging open after having read the front page of that morning's daily prophet. Draco was standing at what he hoped was a safe distance, having already read it himself. He had a strong suspicion of who had rattled to the prophet. "That bitch!" Hermione screamed after she had read it through several times. Papers

"I don't care what you have to do to make it happen by then Clarice, I want the furniture delivered and all rooms set by three p.m. tomorrow afternoon and not a minute later." Hermione walked animatedly waving her arms around, talking into some muggle device pressed against her ear, pacing the sitting room. Draco however was taking what he felt was a well-deserved break by reading the remainder of the prophet that had been snatched away from him earlier that morning, his mother's copy had thankfully not been thrown around the room and so therefore remained intact.

He peered up as his mother entered, pausing to observe his wife with intrigue. "Who is she talking to?" Narcissa asked, coming to sit in the armchair next to him,



room she had claimed for herself at the start of the hall.

The realtor came to find them a few minutes later looking very pale. "The owners have accepted the offer and conditions and the property will be yours from seven a.m. tomorrow."

Draco smiled. "Relax Michael, you'll be getting double commission too for making sure the paperwork is filed properly by then." Then he turned back to Hermione. "So game night tomorrow moved here?"

She nodded as if it were obvious. "Do you need help to tell your Mummy again?" She poked a tongue at him.

"I'm sure she will figure it out when she realizes I haven't been home for a while." He deadpanned.

"Christ's sake Draco." She shook her head.

Draco was surprised to see that while she bookshelves extended off of the kitchen, unsupervised around the room. Large white wand, which left him with time to snoop vase was cleaned up easily with a wave of his amongst the wood tones and whites. The a shade of green. Blue accents littered around to see the walls of the bathroom were actually which pleased him, instead, he was shocked there was a distinct lack of Gryffindor red

so they could make this work surely? hotel suite which was smaller than the studio sufficient room, they had made do in the else in the studio she was but there was talk to her from the kitchen no matter where manor by any means and he could certainly as she had led him to believe, it wasn't the pleased that it wasn't as small and close-knit Draco looked around the place and was

the door with a light click. she retreated back to the bathroom, shutting as She snorted in response but said nothing as

owned a lot of books, the shelves were not busting at the seams with them, several shelves didn't even have books, some had plants or ornaments. A few had weird boxes with strange images on them, big chunky letters on the sides. Monopoly, twister, Cluedo, charades, operation? He was still staring at them when Hermione reappeared, this time with a towel atop her head and proper clothes on her person, even if it was just cosy loungewear.

She must have seen the confusion on his face "Didn't you ever play board games as a kid?" Draco shook his head. She nodded in response and then after a few minutes "We're hosting a board game night here on Saturday, you should invite the sleuths to come along too."

He raised an eyebrow at her "Sleuths?"

She smirked his way. "Sleuths, the Slytherin group. You know because you're all sly and sneaky and sleuth-like?"

Draco anything it was that life was short, may as well enjoy it. They found themselves wandering upstairs and peering into the large bedrooms. The floor-to-ceiling windows ran along this whole side of the building which meant that all four bedrooms and the office were shrouded in a light glow from the setting sun. Even the bathrooms had floor-to-ceiling windows, thankfully though it seemed they were frosted, not that they weren't high enough up that it wouldn't matter but it still eased Draco's nerves. "You should take this room, it's closer to the office which should be yours too, makes more sense for you, given your work," Hermione said, waving her hand at the biggest of the rooms further down the hall. Draco raised an eyebrow at her. "If you're sure?" She simply waved her hand dismissively at him and went back to the

pouring herself a tea and watching the witch argue into the thing she had called a 'phone.'

Draco had returned to his paper, trying to find if there was anything of interest in the business section. "She's ordering furniture."

"Is her room here not to standard? Perhaps she would prefer one of the rooms intended for family upstairs?" His mother hinted.

"I'm sure the room she's using is fine mother, you have impeccable taste. She's ordering furniture for the new house. We closed on a property this afternoon." He looked up to see his mother staring at him, whatever emotions she was feeling weren't visible. Hermione snapped the phone closed and stepped toward them.

"Oh. I see. May I make a request then if I'm to be left alone?" Her quiet voice stabbed at Draco's conscience. "Would you two still visit once a week for dinner?"

Hermione shook her head. "Narcissa, of course, we will come for dinner whenever

"No." Draco snapped out. Hermione's face fell slightly. "Oh well that's fine, I just thought you might feel more comfortable with your friends here too." She mumbled, pulling at her cardigan sleeve. "Yes I will, that's very considerate thank you and I will invite them, I meant no to the little sleuths." Draco raised an eyebrow again in her direction when she tried and failed to hide a small smile. If he didn't know any better he would say his friends had grown on her during their time in Vegas. He knew Astoria especially had grown on her. "This is not what I expected Granger, I was expecting tiny and very red and gold, not green and blue-" he gestured towards the painted walls. "That's blue." She stated in her matter-of-fact tone. Draco shook his head "That is green Granger. One hundred per cent. That is green."

wouldn't take his stupid flowers threw them on the ground, then you arrived." Draco nodded at her retelling of the events. Anger bubbled in him because he hated the idea of what could have happened if he had given them privacy like he had planned to. What could have happened if he had arrived an hour later? He wasn't thrilled to be married to her but he didn't want to see her hurt either. "Go finish your shower, I'm here now so you'll be safe, I'll clean up this mess." Draco indicated to the shattered vase.

Hermione stood still for a moment, Draco looked towards her just as she stepped towards him with trepidation. She wrapped her wet cold arms around his middle and gave him a quick squeeze of a hug before retreating from him again as quickly as she had done it. "Thank you."

Draco waved his hand dismissively "Go get in the shower, get warmed up before you freeze a tit off. You're freezing."

hysteries that Luna spoke up, "I think it was Harry, in the kitchen with the candlestick?" turned out she was right. Apparently, the whacklespurs had witnessed the whole thing.

"Thought you were supposed to be the good guy," Draco joked, feeling far more comfortable than he had expected to.

"Well, what can I say, maybe I just got sick of it," Harry smiled back.

"Oh let's play Twister next!" Astoria chirped up. They had all had several drinks which of course made for a hilarious time, that is until Theo put his tight foot under Daphne and after twisting the other way, knocked her over. She stormed off down the hall, slamming the door to the guest room. Theo had the nerve to grin at everyone before going to apologise.

"Luna honey, your left hand needs to go on blue not green," Ron gently prompted her.

Ron guessed Ginny in the billiard room with the candlestick, wrong again.

The game took an interesting turn when while exploring the study, Theo's character found himself surrounded by Blaise, Astoria and Hermione's miniatures, all of which held miniature weapons in their hands. "Oh hey, guys. Are we having a party in the study?" Theo laughed but then the house flashed dark and when it came to light again, Theo's miniature was lying in a pool of imaginary blood, the other three all covered in blood and eying up the real Theo who stared wide-eyed down at the board. Harry, Daphne and Ron burst into laughter. Hermione had a proud smirk on her face.

"I did say I would kill you." She shrugged.

"That is brilliant. Can you revive him and give me a go?" Ginny giggled, leaning forward to look.

It wasn't until everyone else in the room had a turn to kill the fake Theo while in

Ron and Harry and the scowl on Draco's face.

Another knock announced Greg, several moments later it was Blaise and Astoria, and much to Theo's utter delight, and her horror, Daphne.

Draco and Hermione both tried and failed to hide chuckles.

Ginny shot Hermione a questioning look, to which Hermione mouthed back 'You'll see.'

The following half an hour consisted of a tour of the penthouse, providing everyone with drinks and ice-breaking chit-chat. Draco was pleased that at that time no one had hexed anyone and if anything everyone seemed to be getting along rather well. Perhaps a little too well, Blaise was chatting away to Harry as if they had been friends forever about the latest broom model, the Thunderstorm 3000. Ron, Greg and Theo were all prattling about Quiditch and

Astoria, Daphne, Luna and Ginny were gossiping about something that Draco couldn't quite follow, he surmised it was to do with make-up at least. Hermione prodded him on the shoulder 'You okay?' She mouthed. He just nodded.

It was a surreal feeling to find himself in this position, even more surreal to find he didn't hate it. It just seemed to be any typical other night. "Should we start a game?" Hermione announced, holding up a box called Cluedo.

The rules, It turned out, were fairly simple. Hermione had charmed the game tokens so that instead of the various colour-titled characters, there were miniature versions of themselves standing along the edge of the board.

"Throwing the murder elephant out there early Granger, it's a hell of a way to clear the air," Greg smirked.

“Theo you’re cheating, you need to count the squares out properly” Daphne snapped at him.

Ginny bolted upright “I think I know!”

“Okay Gin, well take a guess then but if it’s wrong you can’t tell anyone and you’re out of the game.” Hermione handed over a miniature envelope with the answers in it.

Ginny looked hesitant. Shaking the doubt she declared “I think it was Blaise, in the kitchen with the rope.” Ginny’s miniature self pointed a flashlight at Blaise’s character, blinding the small man.

“Sure blame the Slytherins.” Theo joked. Astoria threw a cushion at him.

Ginny winked in good humour though, stood and secretly peeked inside the envelope. “Dammit.” She exclaimed and her character dejectedly went to sit on a couch placed in the games sitting room.

Greg guessed next, Theo in the kitchen with the wrench, which was incorrect.

Draco chuckled “It’s okay, Hermione’s the judge and she can’t tell the difference between the two anyway.” He teased.

“Oh for Merlin’s sake Malfoy, it’s freaking blue,” Hermione called out in frustration.

“What’s this?” Ron threw Draco’s way.

“You’ve been to Hermione’s studio. She is convinced that the walls around the bathroom are blue.” He gave a pointed look in her direction.

“Would you lot back me up please!?” Hermione cried out.

Ginny coughed awkwardly and looked away, Ron just stared. “Mione, I would love to do that except that they are green, I never thought I would say this but Malfoy’s right,” Harry said regrettably.

Greg burst out laughing which caused the group to shift, lose footing and collapse in a pile.

“You’re not serious?” Hermione screeched, looking at Ron and Ginny who both gave her

“Malfoy,” Theo said, almost instinctively at this point.

“Theo,” Hermione, Draco, Astoria and Blaise all growled at the same time causing Ginny to chuckle into her drink.

“What I don’t understand is how this happened in the first place.” Harry pointed between Draco and Hermione.

“Mate your guess is as good as the rest of ours,” Greg mumbled.

“No one has any memory of that night? Seriously?” Daphne asked. A chorus of No’s ensued.

It was a bizarre experience to watch a half-inch-sized version of himself slinking around a manor trying to find evidence. Luna didn’t even seem to be interested in the clues, she simply floated from room to room, commenting on how nice the decor was in each room, or how the plants were infested with certain creatures only she and her representation could see.

Another knock at the door felt like a relief and Draco excused himself to answer it. Theo stood with his arms out, a bottle of fire whiskey in one hand and a grin on his face. “There he is, Mr domesticated. Sweet place man.”

Draco rolled his eyes. “Theo you remember ‘The boy who lived’ Harry Potter, Ginny, Ron and of course Luna.”

“I’m the only one who gets a title in that huh?” Harry smirked

“What was it that you said to me in fourth year Harry? You are the chosen one?” Hermione teased as she finally reappeared. “Theo, hope you don’t have any portkeys this time with plans to kidnap us?” She joked as she stepped forward to offer him a hug.

“Well to be fair, I didn’t exactly plan to take you last time, it was a spur-of-the-moment decision, something I’m sure you and Draco understand.” He poked back. Hermione laughed despite the grumblings coming from

He took a deep breath and opened the door to reveal not one redhead but two. Harry, Ginny, Ron and Luna all stood in the doorway, somewhat surprised to see Draco on the other side of it. Ginny seemed amused and brushed past him without invitation, and Draco promptly stepped back into the apartment holding the door open for the others to enter. "Grranger, it's your lot!" He called out, Hermione bustled out to the balcony and grinned down at them with a smile as she tried to shove an earring through one of her earlobes. "Oh hey, guys. I'll be down in a minute." And with that, she disappeared again leaving the three men to stand awkwardly looking at one another. Ginny stepped into the living area, a low whistle rushing past her lips as she looked up at how high the ceiling was in that part of the penthouse. Luna, who had not seemed to change much at all since school, trailed over

slowly toward the female redhead, looking around with a dreamy expression.

"Can I get anyone a drink?" Draco offered, relieved when they both nodded. He walked back to the fridge and pulled out three beers, holding them up to the men standing awkwardly at the kitchen counter for approval. Both nodded and so he absently handed them one each. "Weaselette?" He held up the beer to her.

She turned with a grin on her face. "I'll make you a deal, don't ever call me that again and I won't call you Ferret. Besides, it's Potter now."

Draco nodded as she stepped closer. "Okay, Potterette would you like a beer?" He held up the beer again. Harry sighed beside him but looked up surprised when Ginny started laughing. She nodded and accepted the bottle.

"So," Mr Thorne sat with her palms on her knees, her back upright. "Why don't you two fill me in on how your weeks have been?" She said with a smile. Draco was in a good mood though and he was determined not to let her ruin it. "We brought a place to live in together, we've both seemed to settle in there really well." Hermione paused to check with Draco that he felt the same, a small nod and a smile confirmed that.

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similar looks. Her eyes narrowed on Draco, she was clearly about to say something but stopped. Down the hall was a light but consistent knocking sound. Hermione tilted her head, everyone's eyes looking toward the sound. "Is that..." Blaise started. The knocking started getting louder and faster, a muffled moan sent them all over the edge into fits of laughter. "Oh ew! Theoi!" Hermione groaned, sharing the same look as what Draco had.

"Yes, it's been great to be there actually, my mother even came over for dinner last night and spent the night in her guest room. She was rather impressed too." Hermione nodded at him in response. Hr Thorne made a few notes, reminding them that she was there.

"Oh, we had friends over for game night. My friends and Hermione's friends. That went rather well too I think." Draco carried on.

Hermione snorted, a quick look up from Hr Thorne and she too had a small smile and made a silent 'oh.' Before continuing with her notes.

"I have taken up positions on several committees and joined a few boards of directors chairs as well, with the help of Narcissa. I have a gala at the end of the month for the Hogwarts BOD, which should be good. Narcissa has been amazing with all of that and so supportive too." Hermione

"Luna? Do you want a drink?" Draco called to the blonde staring at a blank space on the wall. "Luna?" Harry raised an eyebrow. Draco looked at him and shrugged, "Luna and I were friends at school, as far as I'm aware, y'all still hate me." Ron choked on his beer. "Wait, what? You were friends with my wife?" Draco smiled politely. "Wasn't everyone?" He knew full well that both Ron and Hermione had thought she was barney to start with but the fellow blonde had never been anything but kind to him during their time at Hogwarts, he had tried to repay the kindness by sneaking her food and blankets when she had been held prisoner at his manor, he had even been trying to figure out a way to get her out of there but then dobby had managed to rescue her anyway. "No thank you, Draco." Her singsong voice called back.

be the first time that Draco would be encountering her friends since their ill-advised elopement. It would also be the first time that a group of Slytherins willingly spent several hours in the same space as a group of Gryffindors, possibly ever.

"Draco, would you relax, it will be fine. We're all adults, we've all moved on. Were not in school anymore fighting on opposite sides of the war. Take a breath and hand me that bag would you." Hermione seemed to pick up on his mood without him even saying anything. He grabbed the paper bag from the bar stool and moved toward the fridge. "Want these in the icebox thing?" He asked. Hermione hummed in agreement. He was unloading the last bottle of something called Vodka into the fridge when there was a knock at the door. He looked around, but he couldn't see Hermione. "Get that would you?" Her voice called from the balcony above him.

up and feel like she failed in some kind of way because it wouldn't be true.”

“So you would say that you care about her happiness?”

Draco frowned. “Of course.”

“Would you say you care for her as you would any of your other friends?”

Draco shrugged. “I’d say that yes.”

“Does that surprise you?”

“No.”

“But some of her actions have, can you elaborate on that?”

Draco stared at her for a long time. He knew she could see an example above his head but she instead stared straight back and waited for him to voice it instead. Draco cleared his throat and shifted uncomfortably, it was hard for him to be open about his gratitude towards people, it hadn't been how his father had raised him. “I was surprised by her choice to keep one of the spare rooms

“Yes, I’m not doubting your support of her Mr Malfoy, but I can see your concern for her emotional well-being when it comes time for her to give those seats up.” The healer peered over her glasses at him.

“Hermione is a grown woman. She understands the implications, and I’m sure she would rather do as much as she can in the next year than do nothing at all.”

“That’s right. I do know there’s an expiry date here but I would like to focus on what can be done in the meantime and cross that bridge when the time comes.” Hermione agreed.

Hr Thorne remained expressionless and made several more notes. “And yet, you remain concerned. Why?”

Hermione peered over at him, Draco swallowed. “I want her to succeed, whatever that means for her. I don’t want her to get eighty per cent of the way and have to give it

Hermione blanched. “Narcissa...I... we are getting a divorce.”

“Yes I know dear, but that won’t be for a whole year, assuming they approve the application, think of all the changes you could implement in that time. After all, there is no harm in taking advantage of the opportunity while it’s there. Come see me in my study after dinner, we will notify everybody that you will be stepping in to fill my spot.” She rose with a smile that spoke of victory and glided from the room, Draco glaring after her.



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“I’ve got to hand it to you, Granger, it’s impressive that you’ve managed to fully furnish this place overnight.” Draco looked around him at the penthouse, now with every room fully furnished and decorated. It didn’t even feel as though they had only brought it yesterday, there wasn’t a single box in sight. Art lined the walls, occasionally with the odd photo frame of him and his mother or his friends or Hermione and her parents or her

said, this made Hr Thorne pause and look up and between the two of them, the slightest hint of a frown but she said nothing for now. "Overall we have had a rather pleasant week," Draco finished with a slightly pinched smile. Hr Thorne hummed and sat observing them for a moment. "Well, you two certainly seem more comfortable around each other this week." She indicated to Draco's arm hung over half of the back of the couch. "You seem much more open and I'm pleased to hear you two are getting along. Perhaps we could briefly touch on Hermione's decision to take up position on—" "I'd rather we didn't," Draco cut her off. "She is entitled to claim the seats and I support her choice to do so, as my mother said, we're going to be in this thing for at least the next year so she might as well do some good and make some long overdue changes while she can."

exclusively for my mother's use. It was extraordinarily considerate of her."

Hr Thorne hummed again. "You feel that being open and expressing this gratitude makes you vulnerable, have you considered that the opposite might be true? To form deeper connections with those around you can be beneficial to you." She turned to Hermione. "Mrs Malfoy has something happened in the last week that has resulted in you feeling gratitude towards your husband?"

"Of course, but can you stop doing that? Can you call me Hermione instead of Mrs Malfoy and stop referring to Draco as my husband?"

"He is your husband and no, Mr and Mrs Malfoy keeps our environment professional. What is it that he did this week that left you glad to have him around?"

Hermione's eyes narrowed at the healer for a moment, she sighed and looked at Draco

friends displayed amongst it. Books lined the bookshelves in the office. Even comforting throw rugs and cushions placed along the couch or on the armchair of the living area provided a cosiness that he had not anticipated. His wardrobe was already fully stocked with his clothes from the manor. Hermione had shown him what would be his mother's room when she came to stay, she had said it wouldn't be as elegant as the one in the manor but Draco knew his mother would love it, she had perfectly captured his mother's tastes. "Thank you. I was told once by someone very wise that anything can be fast-tracked if you throw enough money at it." She smirked from her spot in the kitchen where she stood assembling a platter of food. On the bench sat the stack of board games from Hermione's studio, any minute now their friends should start arriving. He would be lying if he said he wasn't nervous. It would

they are placed before them in a professional capacity but you would be surprised what you can achieve over a glass of wine and a few well-timed jokes at a gala."

The glint in her eyes had disappeared and Draco could see the wheels turning in Hermione's mind. "I don't think I will have much luck being nominated for a seat Narcissa, as much as I can see how that could be a lucrative plan."

Narcissa smiled at Draco. He knew that smile, it meant his mother was up to her old tricks. She had set a trap for Hermione and the poor thing hadn't even realised that she had been caught. She turned back to Hermione with a sickening level of glee. "Darling you don't need to be nominated. You married into the Malfoy family and since Draco hasn't claimed our seats since I stepped back, you would be free to do so as his wife."

"No, you're here to make sure there is no way your marriage is going to work and therefore are justified in severing the magical tie binding you and Mrs Malfoy together, but it has become apparent to me that the biggest obstacle when it comes to you, is your belief that you not worthy of Mrs Malfoy's affections or forgiveness. Clearly, that stems from your father's lack of acceptance of you and the conditions placed on you to receive his love. It isn't your fault—"

"Stop it, I'm not here to hash out childhood traumas."

"Would you say you had a happy childhood?"

"My father has no relevance to my current situation."

"Do you believe that your father was proud of you?" She pushed.

"No." Draco glowered.

"Why do you feel so uncomfortable hearing positive things about you? Is it because you still harbour some guilt for the side you were on during the war?" Draco glared.

"Enough." Hermione snapped. "I already know why he feels uncomfortable about it. I don't need you to bring that to the surface in an attempt to fix our relationship."

More scratching from the quill. Hr Thorne's eyes never leaving Draco's.

"With all due respect Mrs Malfoy, I'm not doing it for your benefit. Mr Malfoy's inability to accept praise is something that he should work on for himself, I am simply helping him to confront that."

"It's not your place to decide that for him," Hermione growled. The middle-aged witch ignored her, appearing completely undeterred by Hermione's criticisms.

"Mr Malfoy, I would like you to describe your father to me."

of silence seemed to startle her.

sound of someone's voice after forty minutes asked suddenly over dessert. The abrupt dear, what do you do for work?" His mother and he wasn't sure he liked that. "Hermione formulating opinions and plans in her head glancing at him. Draco just knew that she was dinner as she threw glances her way before than he had memory of her ever being over own conclusions because she was quieter His mother seemed to be trying to draw her fell into that category.

was just somewhat surprising that his mother capacity, were taken care of, he supposed it sure those around her, no matter the selfless witch who always sought to make had shown time and time again to be a nothing less from Hermione Granger. She Of course, he should have expected he liked that.

constantly surprising him and he wasn't sure

"I don't. I was working at the ministry after the war, right up until about six months ago. Then I was rather burnt out, I had gone into the job with false expectations that I would be changing the magical world, helping shape it into something better during the rebuilding process but everything was pushed back or denied and in the end, I gave up. It's not my finest moment I'll admit, I'm looking to go back and try again in a few months but I just needed some time to myself, I hadn't allowed myself that after everything that happened before jumping straight into work." She explained carefully.

"Oh no dear, you don't want to do that."

"Mother." He warned over the top of his whiskey.

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked hesitantly.

"Well, you won't ever achieve what you want to achieve working at the ministry. You were brilliant in the war, in my opinion I'm

who shifted uncomfortably again. "He has a great knack for calming me down when he needs to. He's also generous and protective and he makes me laugh a lot. He's really funny, which I don't think was something I expected, but he is. He's a good listener too." Another hum, another scribble. "It seems there's a lot of personality traits that you're fond of with your husband. Would you also say you care for him and his well-being?" Hermione nodded in response.

"How does it make you feel, Mr Malfoy, to know that your wife thinks so positively about you, not just your actions but you as a human being?"

"I know what you're doing," Draco stated. "What am I doing Mr Malfoy?" She raised an eyebrow at him.

"You're trying to transition us, from strangers to friends and then you will transition us from friends to partners."

Draco couldn't listen to this anymore, he stood abruptly and stormed from the office they were in.

Hermione glared at the healer. The healer, unfazed, stared back. "Mrs Malfoy, you have a deep-seated desire to protect those around you, your parents inclu—"

"No. Stop it right now. That was unfair and cruel. You have no idea what kind of things you could be dredging up. I'm not saying that Draco's methods of dealing with things are perfect but he is coping—"

"No, he's not. His biggest reason behind why a marriage between you two couldn't work is because he has convinced himself he doesn't deserve you. Taking you aside, assuming I sign off on the divorce, his lack of relationships comes from his self-designed penance. Mr Malfoy has not allowed himself a single relationship since he took the mark. So what is to happen if I allow him out of this marriage without dealing with his issues?"

not sure the war would have been won without you but you are wasting your time at the ministry darling girl."

"Mother," Draco warned again more harshly. Hermione stared at Narcissa, seemingly not sure what to make of her statement.

"What would you advise me to do then?" Hermione did well to hide any annoyance in her voice. If it wasn't for that spark in her eyes Draco wouldn't know she was annoyed at all. It annoyed him that he knew that about her.

"Every change you want to pass, will go before a board of directors, or pass in front of a committee. The people on those committees and boards are not ministry officials but members of esteemed families with a few nominated outsiders. You need to find yourself on as many boards and committees as possible, men don't like to listen to women and their ideologies when

you like, or Draco will if you prefer I didn't attend, but you should know that I've just ordered the furniture for your room at the new property, your welcome to stay as often or as little as you like. My not wanting to live here at the manor isn't personal against you and as I don't have the option of having my parents nearby, I would never dream of trying to separate you and Draco."

Narcissa stared at the young witch in shock. "I have a room?" She spluttered.

Hermione laughed as if it was preposterous to think otherwise. "Of course. Though it won't be as elegant as your room here I'm sure, but it will be yours and yours only to use whenever you wish."

Draco observed his wife in quiet shock. Hermione had not mentioned this to him but here she was making sure his mother wouldn't feel rejected herself. It was a gesture that he appreciated more than he could express. It seemed that this witch was

ridiculous how easy that was, after years, literal years, of what I can only describe as bashing my head against a brick wall. I..." she shook her head again in disbelief, knocking a strand of her hair free from the pin. Draco reached out and tucked it behind her ear, Hermione stared up at him for only the briefest moment before reaching up to lightly press her lips against the corner of his mouth.

"Thank you. For being here, and not putting up a fight about me taking the position, for just being you Draco, you truly are an amazing person."

And just for a moment, he forgot how to breathe.

Christmas holidays would allow them enough time.

After nearly two hours they finally found themselves alone in the corner for a breather. "Granger, you're shaking, are you cold?" Draco frowned with concern. He went to cast a warming charm but stopped as she shook her head. She looked at him with wide eyes, the faintest hints of watering glazing her caramel eyes.

"I can not believe it. Draco do you know how many times I tried to suggest that exact idea at the ministry? The minister for education regulation wouldn't even meet with me. One Gala and people are rushing to push it through, snowballing ideas on how to expand on it and make it better. Do you know what a difference that will make to muggleborns in particular, to not come into this world two weeks before you're expected to leave your parents, knowing nothing and no one? I...I just can't believe it, it seems

that Rita Skeeter hasn't written an honest word in her career, no there is no truth. Draco and I are both rather private by nature is all." She waved her hand dismissively. Draco couldn't help but be impressed by her charm. "Speaking of which, I believe congratulations are in order, your eldest daughter is pregnant with your first grandchild is she not?"

It was a smooth deflection. They stood politely and listened to him ramble in pride about how she was expecting a boy and they thought they might call him Eddicus, after his father.

Every so often a flash in the background would pull at Draco's peripheral vision indicating someone somewhere was being photographed, he hoped that at least one of those photos would include Hermione and her discussion with Ptolemy, and he hoped even more that it would find its way onto the cover of the prophet tomorrow morning. He

didn't know why but he had become somewhat invested in ensuring Hermione made as many of her desired changes as she could before they went their separate ways and it would be great for her public image to be seen as friendly with the President of the Hogwarts board of directors.

"Tell me dear, you're young and full of fresh ideas, what's one change that you think would benefit our future generations?" Ptolemy asked as he puffed on a cigar, Hermione, quite the actress, pretended to contemplate his question for a moment. Ptolemy winked at Draco who smiled back, he knew that he was asking her this only because she had passed some hidden test he had been conducting on her.

After a moment Hermione sipped her champagne. "I suppose, it would be beneficial for all students that they all spend a week or two here at Hogwarts the year before they are expected to start their

looked mildly impressed that Hermione knew his wife and had noticed her absence. “No, she is staying close to Lavinia in case she goes into labour. I think she’s more excited than Lav for this baby to be born.” He smiled. Finally, another gentleman came and distracted Ptolemy, allowing them to slip away and continue making their rounds of those gathered.

Draco barely needed to speak, Hermione carrying much of the conversations and winning over witches and wizards all around. Occasionally Draco would casually drop in that Hermione had just been speaking to Ptolemy about this great idea, turning the attention towards the hopeful change. Of course, as soon as they had been charmed by Hermione, and heard that Ptolemy also thought it a great idea, don’t be modest darling, they ate it up themselves, scrambling amongst each other to try and implement it as soon as possible,¹⁹⁹ perhaps over the

schooling. Muggleborns would be able to have a less jarring introduction to this world and those of magical-born families would be able to begin friendships with these other children sooner, perhaps even become pen pals for the year, it’s common for children of wizarding families to grow up being friends with the children of other wizarding families which in my opinion, is fantastic but can be daunting to those who are starting from scratch the first day of school.”

Her answer seemed to surprise Ptolemy, he had no doubt expected a spiel on curriculum reform of muggle studies or the like. Instead what she was proposing was rather achievable. “Hmmm, certainly a great idea in which we should think about implementing Mrs Malfoy!” She returned his praise with a warm smile, Draco could tell inside she was bouncing but she kept her composure.

“Say where is Elanore? Did she not join you tonight?” Hermione sidelined, Ptolemy

clinics throughout England, it had always been intended for Hermione to go to boarding school, though one in magical nature had been a surprise. Her summers had been as crammed with dance classes, french lessons, piano lessons and table etiquette classes as his had, the difference however being that both of her parents had loved her very much. His mother loved him of course but it was harder to show him when his father had been around.

“I couldn’t agree with you more Mrs Malfoy! Now you must tell me if there is any truth to that article in the Prophet the other week, are we to be expecting a new Malfoy sometime soon?” Draco wanted to scowl at the nosey old bastard but he held a tight smile.

Hermione chuckled and rolled her eyes as if the thought of eloping and being pregnant with his love child was preposterous. “Oh come now Ptolemy, you know as well as I

dinner there was no need for her to be taking so long.

“Draco, I swear I will muffliato you.”

“I’d like to see you try.” He grumbled under his breath. Finally, he heard the tap of her shoes on the floor above him. “About bloody time.” He muttered. He looked up to see her wearing those things she had told him were called jeans again. Personally, he hated it when she wore them, they looked uncomfortably tight against her skin and highlighted certain areas of her body he would rather not be drawn toward, no matter how fine her behind was. They were getting a divorce and he couldn’t afford to have thoughts about her ass. “You look nice.” The words tumbled out of him and he mentally slapped himself.

She smiled her appreciation. “Shall we go?”

“Only if you’re sure you’re done mucking around? We could clean the kitchen first if you prefer?” Draco drawled sarcastically.

Hermione rolled her eyes and stomped away from him toward the front door. “Careful Draco, you’re letting your dramatic show again.” She called over her shoulder. “Maybe I’m just annoyed because you told me off like I was a freaking child for eating chips at two o’clock this afternoon, spouting off about how we would be going to dinner soon and I’d ruin my appetite and now it’s six and guess what, we still haven’t eaten,” Draco said, his snarky attitude on full display. “I did not tell you off like a child!” Hermione shrieked at the accusation. Draco jabbed the button on the elevator angrily. “Hermione you smacked my fucking hand!” She stomped her foot. “I did not smack your hand, I smacked the chip out of your hand!” She argued. “Like I was a fucking child!” Draco gave her a pointed look.

“Oh hush now Mr Malfoy, I am so pleased to see you both again. I’m sure you won’t have any trouble locating the great hall?” “I think we will manage. Will you be joining us later Professor? I would love to catch up properly.” Hermione’s soft voice floated out. “Yes, I will come down once all the guests have come through.” She smiled. “Excellent then we shall see you later.” Draco followed Hermione from the office, his hand resting with a feather touch against her lower back. They had agreed following Hermione’s acceptance of the committee seats, to at least in public keep up pretences of an intentional marriage. Other committee members would be less judgmental towards her if they thought they were in a legitimate union. The Malfoys were still the wealthiest family in this part of the world and the only reason to schmooze up to Hermione was if they believed she would continue to have access to those funds.

The great hall was beautifully decorated, staff in suits that reminded him of the penguins from the zoo floated around the room with trays of hors d’oeuvres or glasses of champagne or whiskey.

Keeping his hand on her back he retrieved a glass of champagne and handed it to Hermione. She smiled her appreciation but he could tell she was remembering his mother’s warning, no more than two glasses throughout the night, you want to always be holding a glass to provide the appearance of engagement but not to drink enough that your judgement may become impaired. He took a glass of whiskey for himself. “Ready?” He said beneath his breath. A smile and a small nod were her response. He guided them towards Ptolemy Smith, the current president of the board.

“Mr Malfoy! What a pleasant surprise! Ah and of course Mrs Malfoy, congratulations you two. I was so pleased to hear that you

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 were claiming your seat once more! I'm afraid the board has rather missed Narcissa's input these last couple of years." He was a large old man with an impossibly round face, his cheeks had a permanent purple tinge to them, Draco suspected from poor circulation.
 "The pleasure is ours, Mr Smith," Hermione replied gracefully. "It has been too long since our family was active in the community and it is so important, unfortunately, Draco has just been so busy with work that it hasn't been feasible until now." Hermione smiled sweetly. She needn't have worried because she had stepped into this role as though she had been born for it, and in a way she had.
 He had discovered earlier in the week that in the muggle world, her family had been the equivalent to the Greengrass family, her parents had been wealthy and wildly successful dentists who had owned a chain of

able to step out the other side without so much as a wobble in her step.

Headmistress Minerva McGonagall stood before them, a surprised but pleased smile on her face at their arrival. "Miss Granger! Mr Malfoy! What a pleasure to see you both, my how you've both grown!" She smiled, stepping forward to clasp Hermione's hands, followed by a pat on his shoulder. "Oh of course. Forgive me, it's Mrs Malfoy now, isn't it? Old habits you see." The elderly witch bustled looking between the two. Draco searched her face for any traces of judgment or disapproval but found none. She genuinely seemed happy just to see them, Draco didn't doubt that more so applied to Hermione than himself.

"Professor, you look incredible." He offered with a slight bow. A small blush rose in the Headmistress's face, waving her hand to dismiss his compliments.

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 "Hermione! We're going to be late!" Draco called up the staircase.
 "Yeah, yeah give me a minute would you."
 She snapped back.
 "Witch, I have given you twenty. Everyone will be waiting for us, you're the only one who knows where this damn place is." Draco growled. It had been her idea to invite both their groups of friends out to dinner and what would for most of them, be their first experience at a movie theatre, it was a casual

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"Fine! Next time I'll let you fill up on chips, and the rest of us will enjoy our meals."

The elevator doors slid open but Draco was too busy glaring at the witch beside him. "Even if I had eaten the whole bag, it was four hours ago because you insist on getting ready as slowly as possible, I could have eaten the chips and still been hungry enough to eat my meal." He hissed.

"It's not my fault that you can't control your feelings just because you're hangry." She glared up at him.

"Hangry?!"

"Angry because you're hungry" She explained.

Draco's mouth opened and closed several times in shock. "It literally is your fault! You're the one who smacked the chip out of my freaking hands and took the bag off me. Like a freaking child!" He called out exasperated.

now and been fine, and I didn't let you take the sandwich off me 'cause your right, I let you take it off me because your fucking scary Gin, and I've gone up against Voldemort." He said seriously. Several laughs erupted from their group as they followed Hermione's form still stomping down the street toward the muggle side of London.

"Well I ate earlier and I could definitely eat again," Theo smirked. Blaise and Astoria groaned.

"We all know what you ate earlier Theo and we don't need to hear about it. That's my sister." Astoria grumbled. Several more groans filtered through the group but Daphne grinned at Theo and started whispering in his ear.

Ron and Luna seemed to have fallen into their own world, hand in hand with her head resting on his shoulder, talking in hushed tones to each other. Briefly Draco wondered if under different circumstances, in another

life, that could have been him and Hermione, if they hadn't been on opposite sides of the war, if they hadn't gotten married in a drunken haze, if they had actually fallen in love and pursued a relationship. Would he be happy? Would she?

Hermione stopped outside the restaurant and waited for everyone else to catch up. It wasn't until they were seated that Ron cleared his throat. "It's okay with everyone I have something to say, when I first heard that Malfoy and Mione had gotten married I thought she had gone completely barmy. And I know you two are trying to get a divorce but you fight like an old married couple and you've brought together two groups that I never thought would get along or become close but here we all are. So what I'm trying to say is that even if your divorce goes through I would like to hope that we can all stay friends because, and I never thought I'd say this but I think you snakes are

naturally around her shoulders in delicate waves.

"You look fairly dashing yourself." She smiled back at him. His outfit wasn't anything special, he had a rotation of suits he wore to events like this, crossed somewhere between modern dress robes and muggle business suits but he accepted the compliment for what it was. Tonight after all was about Hermione.

"Ready when you are." Tonight they would travel through the floo to Hogwarts, it wouldn't be the first time he had been back since the battle but it still wasn't a place he felt comfortable being. A sharp nod from Hermione and she strolled to his side.

"Thank you for coming with me tonight. You are much more experienced at this type of thing than I am and I would feel a bit like a fish out of water without you there." Hermione looked up at him as her hand affectionately came to grip his elbow.

His mother had come to stay last night and brought with her a gown for Hermione. It was made from a silky cream-coloured fabric with shimmering gold sequins swirling around it that hugged her hips before flaring out mid-thigh, the front had a deep plunging neckline, exposing the fine curves of Hermione's cleavage. The back was left completely open and he would be lying if he said that seeing her like this didn't make his chest tighten a little.

They had been working on giving and accepting compliments this past week at the mind healers, Draco had been tasked with finding at least one opportunity a day to open himself up to vulnerability and compliment Hermione, not just something she has done. "You look incredible, Granger." He spoke quietly. Her eyes darted up to meet his in the reflection of the mirror. The top half of her hair was pulled back and pinned in place with an orbital hairpin, the rest of her curls falling

alright, pretty decent actually, the lot of ya, even Theodore. Luna and I are going to need the extra support soon too because well... We're having a baby!" He finished with a grin.

It was a surreal moment as he sat there with a smile on his face, to look around the table and see his friends genuinely happy for Ronald freaking Weasley. It was a bizarre feeling that Draco himself felt happiness for the redhead. The groups had seemingly blended together and he hoped that Hermione and himself had formed a good enough friendship by the end of their marriage that they would remain in each other's lives. He looked across the table to where she sat and found she was already looking at him. A truce, in the way of a smile, was exchanged.

Draco ordered the biggest steak on the menu and sat back with a smug smile upon its completion. His earlier snappiness had

Someone beside them cleared their throat. Both Draco and Hermione looked up to see their entire group standing there with mixed expressions. "As amusing as that was, Ginny wouldn't let me eat either and I'm starving so can we go now?" Harry asked. "Unless you two would prefer to catch up with us later if you guys have some frustrations to work out," Theo wiggled his eyebrows.

Hermione scowled in Theo's direction and stomped away through the foyer.

"She's like a foot shorter than you and half your weight, you're telling me she managed to take a bag of chips off you?" Greg raised an eyebrow at him.

"No, he let her take them off him because he knows his wife is right," Ginny chimed in with a pointed look at Harry.

Harry stared at her for a second. "You can say that all you like but I'm with Malfoy on this one. I could have eaten both earlier and

"I'm sure you will do fine with or without me Hermione, you are the brightest witch of our age after all, but of course, I'm happy to accompany you," Draco mumbled back. He was happy to accompany her, it was everyone else that he would have to schmooze with that he wasn't so thrilled about. His mother had spent several hours over the last week tutoring Hermione on the names of everyone else on the board, their wives, children and if they had them, grandchildren. Who was friendly with who, and whose wives she should get on her side. It's less about the ideas you're pushing and more about how likable you are to the rest of the board Narcissa had explained. They stepped through the floo in the office, Hermione's grip tightening, no doubt relieving their previous experience when returning from Las Vegas. Thankfully this time though was much shorter and she was



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Draco stood in her doorway watching her fiddle with her dress in the mirror, picking at parts of it and flattening it down. They would be attending her first gala tonight since she had stepped into the position open to the Malfoy family among the Hogwarts board of directors. She was nervous, he could tell. She had spent four and a half years at the ministry and had never gotten close to coming face to face with them.

“Yeah, I’m still missing details on that, what the hell happened?”

“You and me both mate,” Draco recalled what information they did have, which consisted entirely of what they had figured out the following day.

“Wait, there’s a videotape?” Harry responded a little too enthusiastically for Draco’s liking. Draco groaned and nodded knowing full well he would be forced to endure another viewing of his wedding to Hermione sometime soon.

“Wait, Greg was really a gorilla? You didn’t get footage of that too, did ya?” Harry asked with a laugh.

Greg who was walking directly in front of them groaned. “Please don’t remind me, I wasn’t right for like a week after that.” Draco laughed.

“So that’s a no to the bachelor party?” Harry asked to clarify.

“It’s a strong no, but I’ll be sure to tell Potterette that you tried really hard to convince me otherwise.” He offered. “I heard that,” Ginny called over her shoulder. “Oh, well I tried.” Draco shrugged half-heartedly to the dark-haired wizard. The movie they had chosen to see was a new Christmas movie. That made very little sense to Draco because it was only the middle of September. The storyline itself confused him for a while as it kept jumping to new characters that hadn’t been introduced and seemed to consist more of multiple little stories rather than one big one the way the movies had been that he and Hermione had been watching at home. This experience was different, this time he did have to sit upright and with his feet on the floor, he found he missed laying on the couch at home, but he got to try another flavour of soda, this one was called

anywhere other than bed but he did as he was told. Her laugh floated through the air. “Are you always so rigid, put your legs up, lean back, relax.” She carried a bowl of funny-shaped white things that Draco vaguely recalled as being popcorn, he had never eaten it himself though.

She pointed a slim black stick to the small box hanging from the ceiling and light filled the rectangle on the wall. She seemed to know what she was doing because she worked her way across a screen, clicking different things to make new words appear, finally settling on Lilo & Stitch. She placed the bowl on his lap, physically rearranging his body to her liking, he had never sat so haphazardly in all his life. If his parents could see him now with his feet on the couch of all places they would have a fit.

He expected her to sit away from him, the sofa was certainly large enough for it, but instead, she tucked her feet beneath herself

explaining. He didn’t know why, it’s not like he owed her anything nor did she owe him. The penthouse was dark, the only lights on were the lights in the kitchen and the glow from the fireplace. “Hey, it’s alright, I’m glad you’re okay.” Her arms still hugged tightly to her chest blending into the darkness in her long-sleeved black shirt. Draco sighed internally, wishing that he could be more objective, her curls framed her face and the glow from the fireplace made her eyes sparkle. She was stepping towards him, extending out a glass of wine for him to take. “I was thinking that we could watch a movie.” She indicated to the large white rectangle that had appeared above the fireplace. “A what?” Draco asked with confusion. She shook her head with a small smile. “Take your shoes off and sit down. Right here.” It felt weird for him to be shoeless

disappeared leaving him to think that Hermione had correctly identified his 'hangry' status. The movie theatre was only another block down; the fresh air did them all good after their meal and they found that they fell into little groups. Harry walked beside him with his hands in the pockets of his jacket, watching Ginny, Hermione and Astoria gossiping enthusiastically. "Ginny keeps trying to convince me that we need to throw a belated bachelor and bachelorette party for you and Hermione." Draco frowned over at him. "You know we're not together right?" Harry nodded. "Oh yeah I know, but Ginny is convinced that you too are, and that elevator tiff is all I'm going to hear about for the next two days." Draco chuckled. "Tell her our trip to Vegas counted then."

'lemonade'. It was nice but it wasn't as good as the Coca-Cola one that they had tried in Vegas, Draco decided. Also, this room was significantly louder and darker but the screen filled an entire wall.

It seemed Hermione was the only one of their group to have been to a movie theatre before, Harry mumbling something about being locked in a cupboard instead. It sounded like a touchy subject and since he would rather avoid discussions of his own childhood, he let the comment slide. It wasn't until towards the end of the movie and in a rather clever way Draco thought, that the multitude of different storylines merged into one. Love actually wasn't perhaps his favourite movie but it had been the first movie he had seen that wasn't what Hermione called 'animated' and he liked it all the same.

acceptance. Draco noted carried the theme of family and brilliance of the muggle creation which could do was watch on in fascination at the filling the penthouse around them, all he move on the rectangle before them, sound taste filled his mouth as pictures began to grabbing her own handful. A salty buttery shoved them through his lips before barely managed to open his mouth as she grabbed a few pieces from the bowl. He leaning on the couch next to his shoulder and

He will return to a life of solitude, sure he has friends and his mother but he will never open himself up to love, he has a rather irrational fear of becoming his father. Which I know, and you know is ridiculous because you were able to list five positive things about him off the top of your head in a heartbeat. I am not pushing him to be cruel, Hermione. I am pushing him so that in the end if you still decide to leave he doesn't view it as his fault."

The seriousness of what the witch was saying hit her upon hearing her first name. The floating pad popped out of the air, she had been dismissed.

It was dark and Hermione was staring out at all the city lights below her, a glass of red wine in her hand, arms folded across her chest when Draco finally stepped into the penthouse that night. Relief flooded her face when she heard him open the door and that caused a stab of guilt in his gut. "I'm sorry, I just needed some time." He found himself

It was Astoria's turn next. "Never have I ever pined over someone I had a crush on for more than a year." Daphne, Hermione, Harry and Ginny all drank.

Draco smirked at Harry's only remaining drink. Ginny shook her head in amusement.

"Never have I ever, killed the same evil wizard four fucking times."

Harry sighed deeply before drinking it down, thrusting the glass back onto the table and raising two fists in the air above his head. The laughter that passed around the group was short-lived.

"No, you wouldn't have because you were one of his little lackeys weren't you?" Draco turned to see the black-haired witch from earlier.

"I'm not that person," Draco stated firmly, it wasn't the first time he had to deal with this kind of reaction, though it had been over two years since the last incident.

"I think it's best if you find your way back to your friends," Hermione bit out. "You would say that, you're just as bad, spreading your legs for him. How do you sleep at night?" Every person at the table stood a little straighter and the girls all looked ready to pounce.

Hermione just smiled at her. "Like a baby."

"Fucking slu—" Draco snapped harshly. "You've said your peace now get lost and leave her out of it."

The witch turned back to him, reaching her hand up and shoving Draco's face backwards. He blamed the shock of that and the alcohol on his slow thinking because it took him a second to realise that Hermione had grabbed the witch by her hair and was now rag-dolling her around, her free hand scratching at the witch's face.

The black-haired witch, who was trying desperately to get a grip on Hermione, was

Blaise laughed looking down at the table. "Never have I ever eloped." Draco and Hermione both blinked at him before downing their shots with slightly embarrassed faces.

Gregory smirked. "Never have I ever used polyjuice potion to spy on someone else." Hermione and Harry both lit up and downed a shot. Draco frowned in confusion.

"Yeah sorry about that mate." Harry chuckled as he looked over at Draco, Draco shook his head in shock.

"Wait what, you turned into Gregory?"

Harry roared with laughter pointing at Gregory, obviously having just remembered something. "He asked why you were wearing glasses and then when I said you were reading, he was so surprised you could read." Everyone else erupted into laughter as a slow realisation dawned on Draco.

"You cheeky bastard!" Draco chuckled. He turned to Hermione in confusion "Wait, who

The entire group had five shots and a glass of Ogdens lined up in front of them as they circled the table. Daphne turned her scary voice on as she explained the rules of 'Never have I ever.' They would start with Hermione, who was standing next to him and go clockwise around the table making a statement, Draco going last and repeating until someone had finished all the drinks in front of them. Harry chuckled a nervous laugh as Daphne glared down at each of them while explaining that no one was to wimp out.

Hermione smirked at Theo. "Never have I ever hijacked a portkey." Theo narrowed his eyes at her but his grin gave him away. Surprisingly Harry also took a shot. When they all looked at him in amazement he reddened, explaining that he knew the accommodation Ron had chosen for the last quidditch world cup was rubbish so he changed it.

leaving gouges all over Hermione's arms and face. It seemed the entire group was as shocked as he was for a moment because it wasn't until Hermione punched the witch while still gripping her hair, screaming at her that Draco wouldn't hit a woman but that didn't mean she wouldn't do it for him, that everyone strung into action.

Harry went to stumble towards her but Ginny pulled him back. Draco managed to get his arms around her waist as the other witch finally grabbed a handful of Hermione's hair, instead of deterring her, Hermione started fighting harder against Draco's grasp, Theo's arms grabbed at Hermione's arms, trying to convince her to let go unsuccessfully.

Another set of arms snaked around the other witch, finally managing to pull them apart with a few strangled cries. Hermione was panting but still trying to break free and go back for round two. In between her

"Hermione!" was the shocked chorus of the table.

"It was Snape." She said as if that was explanation enough.

"Speaking of Snape, never have I ever had detention with Snape." Ginny chimed. Harry, Gregory, Theo and Daphne all took a shot. Harry looked bewildered at Draco.

"Seriously? You never had detention with him?" Draco smirked with a shake of the head.

"Mate he could have burnt the place to the ground and Snape would have looked the other way." Blaise laughed.

"He used to tell me that I strut like my dad.

He was in love with my mum." Harry stated, his focus disappearing in his drunken state. Everyone stared at him for a moment before they all burst into laughter, startling him back to reality, his cheeks reddening again.

"That's so messed up mate." Gregory laughed.

did you turn into?" Harry and Hermione

roared with laughter again.

Tears running down her cheeks she finally caught her breath "Milliecent's cat." Another eruption of laughter around the table.

"Never have I ever had sex in the library at Hogwarts," Daphne said when the laughter died down. Blaise, Astoria, Theo, Harry, Ginny, Gregory, Draco and Daphne all took a shot.

Hermione looked outraged. "You're kidding, all of you? Daphne, it was your statement why did you take a shot?"

Daphne shrugged with a smile "Because I was lying."

"The library?" Hermione exclaimed again, everyone chuckling. Draco patted her head playfully as a form of mocking comfort.

"Never have I ever set a teacher on fire." Harry stared straight at Hermione who down her shot with a guilty grimace.

hand was lightly holding onto her waist to anchor her.

Gregory yelled to head back to the table and then disappeared in the way of the bar, presumably to get more drinks. The rational part of Draco, still emotionally recovering from the last drunken night out, knew he shouldn't have anymore. The irrational part of him took one look at Hermione giggling and pulling on Astoria's arm, Ginny doubling over in laughter on the other side of her, saw Harry playfully shoving Theo as the two of them joked about something and decided he didn't want to be an outsider tonight. He wanted to let his guard down and enjoy Hermione's birthday, after all, there were no portkeys planned for tonight. He was fairly certain he wasn't going to wake up tomorrow in an unknown location married to yet another witch, what could it hurt to have one or two more?

behind him to point at him. "Stay the fuck down." He growled.

Hermione was yelling at someone behind him, the girls all huddling around her trying to keep her out. There was a slap and he heard Astoria's voice cry out "Oh for Merlin's sake, Ginny!"

The loud music suddenly disappeared from overhead. "Enough!" a security guard's voice boomed. Draco turned to see another guard pulling Ginny off one of the black-haired girls' friends, another witch with brunette hair.

"You lot. Get out. You want to fight, go do it somewhere else." The guard glared at both groups. He motioned to Harry, Greg, Theo, Blaise and Draco. "You, take your girls, get out, that way." He pointed towards the door on the Diagon Alley side. "You lot, out that way. Take your girls with you too." He pointed at the two guys, the black-haired girl

him struggled, landing a few punches to Draco himself, one to Draco's ribs, one to Draco's cheekbone, the rest were insignificant. Distantly he was aware of someone else fighting, likely Gregory and the other tough guy, but he was too focused on hurting the man below him. Arms gripped him by the shoulders and yanked him backwards. It was chaos. Greg was indeed fighting with the other guy, Harry, trying to yank him backwards, something was said because, in the midst of trying to separate them, Harry turned around and punched the guy in the face. People all around them in the club were either egging them on or trying to break up the fight. Blaise and Theo were still gripping his shoulders trying to push him backwards.

Blaise glared over at the guy Draco had been punching who was getting ready to get up and try to tackle them. One arm shot out

to help him. He gave a nervous nod in response Harry had returned with a tray of what must have been twenty-odd Tequila shots, apparently a muggle form of alcohol, Gregory with multiple glasses of Ogden's finest. Shots were passed around before Hermione for some reason started sprinkling salt on everyone's hands and handed them a wedge of some green fruit.

Hermione offered a shot up in cheers. "I love you guys, thanks for being here, now let's get drunk!" Theo cheered loudly as the rest of the group laughed. Clinking their shots together before mimicking her actions, Lick the salt, down the shot, suck on the fruit.

Theo let out a loud wooing noise, Harry looked as though he had bitten a bludger and Blaise started coughing. Draco found he rather liked it though, it seemed so did Greg. Harry, Blaise and Daphne all switched to Ogden's but the rest of them loaded up

another round. The warmth lighting his insides.

Ginny started swaying to the music and decided to pull Harry out to the dance floor. The girls all loaded up another shot, looking at Theo and Draco expectantly.

Draco shrugged. "Why not." Embracing the spirit of Hermione's birthday. Theo, ever the party animal nodded in glee.

"Man, I am just praying that one of them wakes up in a zoo tomorrow," Gregory smirked. Blaise burst with laughter, Hermione having heard him gave Gregory a wink.

Everyone had a significant glow on by the time they followed Harry and Ginny out to the dancefloor, Draco was glad for the drinks because they allowed him to do what Ginny said and loosen up a little, well as much as one could when there were so many strangers in such close proximity to him.

and her friend and then pointed to the Knockturn alley exit.

It took a few minutes for the group to reconvene outside and when they did Draco noticed most of them looked a little too pleased with themselves. Hermione especially looked thoroughly proud. The guys were all a little shocked but most of them had glints in their eyes. Blaise rolled his eyes but couldn't hide the small tug at the corner of his lips. "Merlin Granger, remind me not to get on your bad side..." Theo exclaimed, and then after a moment. "...again." Almost everyone laughed. Except Draco, he was a little too stunned to speak, he just kept staring at Hermione, this witch just continued to blast away any notions he had of her and he was beginning to wonder if he was in a little too deep here with her. He shouldn't be proud that she essentially attacked some witch on his behalf. He shouldn't be turned on by her violent

fingers was a large fistful of hair that she had ripped from the other witch's head. She writhed against Draco, but eventually, he managed to turn her away, Harry and Ginny helping to keep her in place. Blaise was saying something to her but Draco was too focused on the voice behind him. "You better learn to keep your bitch on a tighter leash!"

Blaise looked up at him in panic. He heard Theo say "Oh shit." But he was already turning around, the black-haired witch was red-faced, bleeding, in tears and in the arms of someone trying to comfort her, another guy stood in front of him, glaring at Draco. "What did you just say?" Draco frowned. "I said, keep a tighter leash on your fucking bitch." He snapped again. Draco stared for a second, nodded and then launched forward, punching the guy in the jaw so hard he went straight down. Draco went down with him, punching him continuously, the man below

Theo and Daphne seemed to be particularly close, grinding and pressed as closely to each other as possible, Draco noted that Harry and Ginny were dancing in much the same manner, as were Blaise and Astoria, even Gregory was now dancing with some witch he didn't recognise, Draco wasn't sure he felt particularly comfortable dancing like that with a stranger.

There was a Black haired witch next to him that was eying him up but before he could turn and retreat to the table Hermione slid in between them, throwing him a questioning nod. He knew what it meant, it was her way of asking if he was okay. He returned the nod and noted the annoyed look on the witch's face as he started dancing with Hermione, trying to relax the way everyone else seemed to be. Song seemed to bleed into song, never really finishing but constantly changing, it seemed with each change of song Hermione and himself got closer to each other until his

line to get through into Diagon Alley. The club, The Naked Philosopher, was significantly more crowded than the pub, the music was loud and it was dark. Crowds of people pressed against each other in some kind of bizarre dance that Draco was sure he had never seen before in his life. He didn't know the steps to this dance, he didn't even know what it was called. They crowded around a table off to the side of the club while Harry and Gregory went to go get everyone drinks. The panic or confusion must have shown on his face as he tried to observe the pattern, failing miserably because Ginny tugged on his arm until he bent down for her to speak into his ear.

"It's not a practised dance, it's just about letting loose and having fun. Breathe a little Draco." He stared at her wide-eyed at hearing his first name from her lips. The pointed raise of her eyebrows and nod of her head indicated that she genuinely was trying

faltered when they came face to face with Narcissa. "Mother?" Draco asked, not having expected her to be standing by his kitchen. She sighed deeply, putting her head in one hand and shaking her head. "Please tell me you two at least did not do that to each other." Hermione gawked. "What? No!" She exclaimed. "Good." Narcissa looked between them with narrow eyes, another deep sigh passing over her lips before she straightened her back and forced a smile on her face. "Hermione darling, Happy birthday. I thought I would stay tonight if that's not an inconvenience?" "Of course, it's not Narcissa, you know you are welcome anytime," Hermione said in a quiet voice as if afraid she was about to be scolded.

Draco and gave him what he could only describe as an approving nod. Draco frowned in confusion. He wasn't sure what part of any of this it was that she approved of.

Theo whispered something in Daphne's ear causing her to giggle. They both rushed their goodbyes and disappeared into the floo. Astoria pulled Hermione in for another hug.

"Happy birthday again Hermione, you, me and the girls, lunch next week yes?" Hermione nodded in response. Blaise exchanged his farewells too before dragging his wife off as well.

Gregory looked between the two of them and shook his head. "I'd hate to go up against you two once you're on the same page." He mumbled, ruffling Hermione's hair and giving Draco's shoulder a quick squeeze.

Hermione giggled all the way through the floo and smiled all the way up the elevator and into the penthouse. Her smile only

it was the first time that his mother had Blaise had also mentioned on the quiet that That thought alone made him angry. recovery and pain management potions. seemed to conveniently know so many Draco think if that was perhaps why Theo and that it had been particularly bad. It made his eyes that Theo hadn't had the same luxury on Blaise but Draco could tell by the look in the ground. He apparently never laid a hand married, he had been glad to see that one in whispered that of all the men his mother had went back for year six though, Blaise had mysteriously over the summer before they start of fifth year, the man had died Blaise's mum had married Theo's dad at the their group. Gregory and him but never fully engaged in studious. He trailed around after Blaise, up until their sixth year he had been quiet, loose canon, throughout childhood and right

wanted next to nothing to do with the estates and assets of her late husband. She had gladly turned it all over to Theo on the condition that a governess was hired to watch over the estate until he came of age. When Theo returned it was like he was a different person, he was loud, he laughed a lot and he had a mischievous streak a mile wide that Draco had never seen in him before, so while he knew that tonight would likely lead to trouble of some kind, he couldn't bring himself to actually mind if it meant Theo was happy and Hermione had a good birthday.

Draco also couldn't stifle the pride he felt as he watched Daphne help Hermione fasten the necklace he had gotten her for her birthday around her neck. It was a white gold oval-shaped locket with the constellation of Virgo made out of tiny blue diamonds on the front of it. He had recruited the help of Potterette to get hold of a photo of her mum and dad to go inside. When she had burst

altercation. He shouldn't feel delighted at her being so defensive of him but here he was, feeling all those things.

Several groups of people stopped to stare at their dishevelled appearance as they entered the leaky cauldron. Harry's shirt had been ripped at the shoulder. Hermione's hair, a wild mess and half hanging from her ponytail, deep scratch marks across her face and arms. Somehow Ginny had ended up with a split in the corner of her lip. Gregory's knuckles looked only slightly less busted than his own, and while he couldn't recall seeing him fighting anyone, Blaise had some bruising forming around the side of his left eye.

Harry turned, still drunk towards Hermione, pulling her in for a one-armed hug. "I love ya Mione, but I'm going to take my wife home now and shag her senseless." Ginny perked up at the Idea while everyone else grimaced. Ginny paused on her way past

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"Wonderful. Perhaps we should talk in the morning, once you two have had time to sleep this off, yes?"

Hermione was wide-eyed as she embraced Narcissa with a quick peck on the cheek and scurried off up the stairs. His mother raised an eyebrow at him. He couldn't help the chuckle that escaped him.

"Honestly Draco. Fighting?" she gave him a disapproving look. Draco stepped forward and placed a kiss on her forehead before going to the icebox for a bottle of water.

"Do you want the short story?" he asked after polishing off half the bottle. Her face clearly said 'obviously.' He sighed. "Someone had an issue with my past, a woman, she put her hands on me, Hermione threw hands back. The woman's friend, a guy, spoke very ill of Hermione. I threw hands at him, then it was a massive chaotic mess in which everyone was in on, even Harry Potter got involved at one point. I'm sorry, mother."

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into tears and excused herself earlier for a moment he thought he had made a huge mistake in doing so but Ginny had assured him he hadn't, still he wasn't sure. Now though, her long delicate fingers reached up to brush over the front of the locker, he watched as a distant smile crossed her face. Her eyes flew up and caught him watching. She mouthed a quick thank you and Draco finally allowed himself to believe he hadn't upset her after all.

The visitor's floo to the building was in the main foyer downstairs, the idea being to increase the security of each resident in the building, only those who had been given written permission by its occupants could access the floors they intended to visit. Draco had been rather pleased by that and it was quicker than having to walk to the foyer at Malfoy Manor anyway.

The Leaky Cauldron was just as busy as ever and the group had to form a single file

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frankly after today's therapy session, Draco could use the distraction.

Despite having been assigned to both of them to determine if their marriage could be salvaged, healer Thorne had seemed to zero in on Draco more so than Hermione. Today's session was about highlighting the differences between him and his father. Hermione had been especially quick to point out that she believed him to be kind, which had taken him by surprise.

He was annoyed to admit that these therapy sessions were making it rather hard to keep an objective mind about her, to keep his feelings distant.

"Oi are you lot ready yet or what?" Ginny shouted as if they had just been waiting on the guys. Theo whooped and downed his drink. Draco couldn't help but groan internally at his friend's enthusiasm, it was bound to lead them to more trouble at some stage tonight. Theo hadn't always been a

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Sunlight filled the room with a warm glow. Hermione stretched her arms upward, her eyes fluttering open to look out the windows beside her. Draco's arm lay across her, his hand tucking into her hip, his face buried behind her shoulder, the soft breaths indicating that he was still asleep tickling her skin and pressed against her thigh was his hardened length. She tried and failed to stop the smirk that passed over her face in amusement.

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There in his bed asleep was his wife, what he did find was that he didn't mind in the least, he crawled into bed, fully clothed, too tired and sore to care with a small smile on his face.



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Draco watched across the room as Astoria expertly straightened Hermione's hair. He could see the way her face lit up in the mirror, he was drawn to the smile that broke out across her face in laughter at something Daphne said as she sat across from her, Ginny applying light makeup to Hermione's face. Harry walked over to him and stared, following his gaze towards the girls.

"You know you're staring right?" He muttered into his beer.

She had come into his room last night with the intention of saying thank you for standing up for her but had clearly fallen asleep. She found that she didn't mind waking up next to him this morning it felt rather cosy to have his arm across her like this. The necklace he had gotten her for her birthday had touched her more than he could understand, it had been kind and considerate and thoughtful, and then last night he had been protective and dammit all if watching him punching someone for calling her a bitch didn't cause tingly feelings in the pit of her stomach.

She slowly turned to face him, tucking her hands up under her cheek, his arm, instinctively reaching around her back and readjusting his grip. He looked peaceful when he was sleeping, even despite the blue bruise on his cheekbone and his tasselled hair. There were no subtle frown lines, no tightness pulling at his mouth and she was

Narcissa sighed. "Former death eater leads the chosen one astray?" She mumbled.

Draco frowned. "What?"

"Tomorrow's headline. At least tell me that he looks worse than you do?" Draco

chuckled.

"Much."

Narcissa rolled her eyes, stepping forward and brushing her hand over his cheek before turning down the hallway.

"Where are you going?" he called after her. Her sigh was audible. "To bribe the papers,

obviously."

Draco chuckled to himself. "Obviously. Sleep well, mother."

Draco clicked his neck as he walked up the stairs and rolled out his shoulders, he would deal with the healing spells tomorrow, it wouldn't be wise to do so tonight given that he was certain he was still rather intoxicated. Surely not so intoxicated however that he was seeing things?

When the lights turned back on in the theatre everyone sat there in a kind of amazed silence for a while.

"Was it just me, or did anyone else think that Harry bloke looked a bit like Snape?" Theo asked.

"I just don't understand, they never seem to shut up. They just keep talking and gossiping." Draco drawled. In truth, he hadn't been paying attention to the words they said to each other at all and entirely focused on the expressions that danced over her face in response. Still, he didn't want to draw any more attention so he shook his head and turned to survey the rest of the guys lounging about chatting away. "So where are we going again?" Draco asked.

Harry had an amused look on his face as if he wasn't quite buying Draco's dismissal. "There's some new club that opened last week on the border of Diagon and Knockturn. It's supposed to mimic the nightclubs that muggles go to. Ginny's been going on about it since before it even opened." He explained. It had only been a few days since they had last seen each other but today was Hermione's birthday, and

and let either of us end up on the cover for something as common as brawling?" Draco raised an eyebrow at his mother with a cheeky grin on his face. "How much did it cost this time?" Hermione spluttered beside him. "What do you mean?" Narcissa glared at him. "Five thousand." Hermione's mouth opened and closed like a fish next to him. "Hermione darling, close your mouth you shouldn't appear so shocked. Mother has connections with the prophet, with enough notice and a money bag large enough she's rather successful at keeping the headlines clean. Though I'll save her the troublesome lecture, it's not encouraged and when in public you should always strive to be better than everyone else, to rise above so in future we should strive to avoid a repeat incident, isn't that the gist of it mother?" Draco joked in a mocking tone.

judgement placed on Hermione, not when she played such a major role in saving them all from the malicious bald snake-man.

The apricot danish was sweet with the perfect amount of tart to it and it did an excellent job of highlighting the lingering tastes of Hermione's juices. He could have died in that moment in his room upstairs and he would have been happy. It had taken every ounce of control to walk out of that room instead of making her scream his name for hours, Merlin, had he wanted to.

"Honestly I'm a little surprised it's not all over the front page, it's not like there weren't dozens of witnesses, I would have thought Rita would jump at the chance to drag mine or Draco's name through the mud, a slug of a woman that she is." Hermione's voice filtered through to grab his attention.

Draco snorted, tearing a small corner of his danish off. "Of course, it's not. Do you honestly think that mother would sit back

silencing charms on all the bedrooms, and also because I don't know if you know this." He said with a smirk from where he stood at the end of the bed "But you're not exactly quiet with your self-love either." Mortification hit her as she realised that he would have heard her taking care of herself the first night they had slept here in the penthouse. He chuckled at the sight of her reddening cheeks. "Hermione, don't get me wrong, I found it sexy as hell but I didn't think you would want me listening to it. We should head down though before she comes looking to wake us up." He handed her the pyjama shorts that had been discarded earlier. She nodded and after getting dressed again followed him downstairs. Narcissa was busy in the kitchen assembling an array of pastries onto a platter, awkwardly avoiding looking up at them. On the counter next to her, Hermione could see a paper bag with the logo of the bakery down

the street on the front. Horror flooded her system at the realisation. "I thought you said you silenced the rooms." She hissed quietly at Draco under her breath, Draco raised an eyebrow at her.

"He did dear, but there was no mistaking that level of magical power and that is not something anyone's mother wants to be present for or discuss so shall we move on and discuss the events of last night instead?" Narcissa turned and looked at the two of them with a raised eyebrow, tutting when she saw the scratches still evident on Hermione's face and the bruise still on Draco's cheek.

Hermione swallowed.

Draco sat in silence, thoroughly enjoying the apricot daniş in his hand. He had tuned out ten minutes ago, Hermione was ranting and raving about how unfair it is that people judged him for the things he did in his past. He could appreciate her sentiment that they were in the past but a lot of his actions had very real and permanent consequences for some people. He could handle the judgement of himself, what he couldn't tolerate was the

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Narcissa's eyes narrowed at him in annoyance but there was the slightest of smiles tugging at the corner of her mouth that she was desperately trying to conceal, Draco knew his mother wasn't really angry, he knew beneath the surface she was thrilled by the current events, Draco and Hermione protecting each other and to the best of her knowledge, sleeping together, meant that there would be a fighting chance she would get to keep the daughter in law she had grown so attached to over the past month and a half. "Quite." Her response didn't clip in the way she had intended it to either.

Narcissa turned to Hermione. "While I don't condone the violence, I do appreciate your protective stance of my son, but Draco is right, please do try to refrain from making this a common occurrence. If it does happen I need to know immediately so I can get on top of it before it's too late." Hermione swallowed and gave a weak nod, clearly

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endorphin rush, but nothing else can happen between us Hermione until you mean it, do you understand?"

She wanted to argue and tell him she did mean it but she knew there was no point right now, and deep down she thought that perhaps he was right, maybe the fact that she just had the best orgasm of her life was clouding her judgement a little, doubtful, but was a possibility, so instead she nodded silently.

"Good." He placed another kiss on her forehead before pulling away from her and Hermione found that she immediately missed his presence.

Sudden embarrassment hit her like a truck. "Oh my god, Draco! Your mum!" she buried her face in her hands in shame, removing them to glare at him when she heard him chuckling.

"Don't worry, after the Theo, Daphne incident a few weeks ago I put permanent

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watchful eyes to make sure she didn't try to steal anything else. Almost always, she was made to wait in the foyer while one of the other creatures went to fetch her requested funds.

"I would like to access the Malfoy family vault please Kripplkei." She heard Narcissa demand in a soft tone next to her. Hermione was still locked in a staring contest with the goblins closer to the door.

"You, Mrs Malfoy, yes, but your companion shall have to wait here." His tone was low and she knew when she turned he would be looking at her.

"What?" Narcissa gasped, taken aback. Hermione hung her head and whispered in a low voice "I broke into Bellatrix's vault remember?"

Narcissa stared at her for a moment before turning back to the goblin at the counter before them. "Well as the beneficiary of my

did. He nodded and stepped up to place a kiss on his mother's head, placing his hand on Hermione's back as he did so.

"Very well. You two stay out of mischief and have fun." Draco did intend to go annoy someone else, he intended to annoy several someone's if it meant he would keep busy for the day so he retreated upstairs to get ready and then go in search of Harry freaking Potter to challenge him to a friendly game of quidditch.

As soon as they had stepped through into the leaky cauldron Narcissa had linked her arm with Hermione's. She still had no idea what it was that they were to do here, but thought it would be impolite to push her mother-in-law. She nearly broke in that resolve as they stepped through the doors of Gringotts. Several of the older goblins stared at her, following her every movement as they walked. Hermione had been back here since but had always felt the pressure of the

flutter of the pleasure that was mounting at a rapid pace within her. Hermione no longer felt like she could breathe as he continued to suck at her clit, lashing at it with his tongue, she arched her back in an attempt to gasp at more air. Draco dipped another finger into her, curling to hit that same sweet spot. The crescendo was right within her grasp when he ripped away from her, involuntarily she groaned in frustration, but he was looking at her with eyes like a dark storm, she could barely recognise him beneath his lust.

"Tell me your mine, Hermione." He growled possessively. Her head still spinning from the heaven she had been in seconds ago, her voice was lost and all she could do was nod. "No, be a good girl and use your words. Tell me your mine."

"I'm yours, Draco, I'm all yours." She managed to whisper through the fog settling in her brain. Draco hummed, pleased with her answer, glided his tongue over her once

more, lapping her up like a man dying of thirst. His fingers slid through her to reclaim their place as his mouth closed over her clit again, with ravenous vigour Draco sucked at her, pressure building hard and fast yanking at the coil within her, she was distantly aware of how loud her cries of pleasure, whimpers of his name had become but the rest of the world had ceased to exist. His fingers, worked her core, moving faster as he stroked against that pleasure centre. His growls of enjoyment vibrated against her.

"Come for me Hermione, show me what a good girl you can be for me and come." He rushed out against her before his tongue lapped at her bundle of nerves again, sucking and pulling. It would be impossible for her to resist doing what he was asking of her even if she had wanted to, that band had already snapped, her eyes rolled far back into her skull and all sound faded to nothing as her core clenched painfully around his fingers. It

sister's vault, I find her to be forgiven. Now if you please, the Malfoy vault."

Krippkei narrowed his eyes on Hermione. "While you might find her forgiven Mrs Malfoy, Gringotts does not."

"I beg your pardon?" Narcissa growled.

Hermione cleared her throat. "I may have also stolen their dragon. Frankly, the thing was better off. It's totally barbaric to keep a creature like that chained and tortured in a pit of darkness, but nonetheless, I stole it... and broke through their ceiling..." Hermione trailed off.

Narcissa stared at her with wide unblinking eyes. Krippkei's narrowed even further as he huffed and sat further back in his chair. Laughter suddenly echoed around the atrium and it took Hermione a second to realise that it was coming from Narcissa. She had never not once heard Narcissa laugh. The woman stopped to examine her for a moment with

magical energy in the air around them, sparking and threatening to set fire to everything and burn it to the ground. Draco's mouth immediately closed around her clit again and he sucked on it, rolling his tongue over it while he did.

She could hear herself panting as waves of pleasure rolled over her, she could hear herself moaning with delight but she was too lost in the feeling he was causing her to care. One hand left her thigh and a second later one of his fingers was sliding with ease into her, curling to hit that sweet spot inside of her that had her grasping at the sheets below her, his other hand no longer held down her thigh, instead, he had snaked it around and had it splayed across her hips, pinning her further into the mattress.

She could feel her arousal coating his hand as he continued to slide his finger in and out of her. His enjoyment was clear when he growled at her every moan, every gasp, every

felt as if her soul had left her body. Hermione gasped for air and suddenly she was whooshing back. She could hear Draco mumbling pleased phrases against her as he slowly drank her up, guiding her softly through the other side of her orgasm. Her heartbeat felt impossibly fast. Draco leaned over her again, pressing soft kisses to her forehead and brushing stray strands of hair away from her face.

"Hermione? Darling, are you with me?" Her body felt like it had been set on fire but she nodded against his lips. "Good. You did so well." His body stiffened above her briefly, she swore she could feel him breathing her in. When he spoke again, his voice wasn't drenched in lust, there was now a subtle hint of fear. "I told you to tell me that you were mine, I want you to know that I meant that but I'm not holding you to your answer. I don't want you to say anything right now, not when you're still on the high of that

"Diagon Alley?" Hermione questioned. "Yes, you and I have some business to attend to." Narcissa held Hermione's face still and passed her wand over the scratches on her face. Draco finished the last of his coffee and stood. "I'll go get ready then." He said but Narcissa gave him a stern look. "You are not coming. This is between Hermione and myself." She said with finality. "Is that so?" Draco questioned. "It is, so find someone else to bother." She grumbled but there was a pleased sparkle in her eyes and though he was tempted to annoy her just to get a rise he felt he couldn't take this away from her. Especially when Hermione might not feel the same way he

Hermione knew by the woman's silence that she would be getting no more information about the matter until they arrived inside.

Hermione had known that the Malfoy family was rich, rumours even said that they were the richest wizarding family on this side of the world but nothing would have prepared her for the sight before her. They entered the vault into what appeared to be a foyer, straight ahead was an archway that led to a room that she could have sworn was at least equal to, if not bigger than the great hall at Hogwarts. Shiny gold galleons sat stacked to the ceiling. She had no interest in their money, Hermione had never really been materialistic and at the end of the day she had received a large sum after the war for her merlin of the first class award that would keep her comfortable for the rest of her life, but it was still a shock to see so much money here.

the goblin sent shivers down Hermione's spine. Several minutes passed with Narcissa and the goblin seemingly locked in a battle of strength as they glared each other down.

"Very well." Krippkei hissed, barely containing his anger.

Narcissa ignored him and a large smile broke out across her face. "Excellent!" she clasped her hands together. "Come along, darling." She motioned for Hermione to take her arm.

"Narcissa I really wouldn't have minded waiting for you in the foyer, you shouldn't have gone to the trouble, I'm not even allowed near my own vault most of the time," Hermione whispered, taking the woman's elbow and falling into step beside her.

Narcissa raised an eyebrow at that information but shook her head. "Nonsense, besides I was being truthful with Krippkei, it is imperative that you accompany me today."

Hermione could feel the power rolling off of Draco and in the moment she opened herself up to the feeling of safety that came with it. Her eyes glued to him as slowly he lowered himself to his knees at the foot of her bed, his eyes never looking away from her face. The pleasure of seeing this man kneel for her made her head spin. The sight of him settled between her legs causing her heart to race. His hands pushing her thighs further apart with a firmness that somehow

of her.

down the bed. A delighted squeal rushed out behind her knees and yanked her further opened her eyes when his hands gripped her pulled away from her, she hadn't even veering off to trace down her thigh. He kisses all the way down her stomach and neck again, carrying further south, light began a trail of kisses down the side of her holding him up. Her eyes fluttered as he above her, his arms on either side of her ribs

was just as gentle sent electric shocks through her. Hermione fought the need to tremble beneath his touch, he hadn't even touched her yet and she was a light with the feeling of pleasure running through her veins. "Hermione, you are exquisite, do you know that? Look at you, already glistening for me." Draco breathed out in admiration. His hands roamed up and over her stomach, her heart threatening to break through her chest at his praises. His hands tenderly traced back down and came to rest at the inner part of the backs of her thighs, lightly pulling her open further for him to see.

That growl in his chest was back and it hit some primal part of Hermione's soul. There is a look of desire and appreciation in Draco's dark eyes that had her wanting to push closer to him. She was thankful that he took the hint because he looked at her again, pure delight in his eyes before lowering himself to her, placing a tender kiss above

Narcissa seemed amused by her shock. “That’s nothing dear, Draco and I donated three-quarters of our money after the war to fund the rebuilding efforts, I suspect it’s why the wizengamot never placed either of us on probation. Not that either of us would have fought it if they had, we were guilty of some crimes. Namely blind stupidity and loyalty to that man.”

“Voldemort wasn’t a man.” Hermione disagreed quietly.

Narcissa looked up from her purse, stepping closer to brush Hermione’s cheek. “Oh no dear, I was referring to Lucius, though I suppose he wasn’t really a man either.” She stepped to her right toward another archway, darkness filling the frame stopping Hermione from seeing what lay beyond. “More like a perpetual child,” Narcissa grumbled to herself as she stepped through, Hermione followed her, passing through a thin veil of darkness. “It’s

her fingers pressed against her lips before bursting with laughter once more. People nearby stopped to stare but neither of them seemed to care and try as she might, Hermione couldn’t stop the small chuckle that escaped her lips, Narcissa’s laugh was just too contagious and pure, it made her happy to see Narcissa so free even if just for a moment.

Eventually, her mother-in-law seemed to be able to contain herself, smoothing down the front of her robes almost subconsciously. “I do apologise Krippkei, how horribly insensitive of me. I’m afraid it is imperative that Mrs Malfoy accompany me to the vault so why don’t you set up a security bond? That way you are covered should my daughter-in-law feel the need to suddenly escape on the back of one of your beasts whilst under the threat of trying to save the wizarding world again.” Narcissa waved dismissively but the look on her face toward

ducking down and capturing her taut nipple between his teeth, the feel of his hot tongue rolling over it sent shooting shocks straight to her core. His hand, which she had only now realised was huge, framed the underside of her breast as his mouth sealed over her and pressure rose as he sucked her nipple further into his mouth. His hand began to retreat further south again, pushing her pyjama shorts down with him. A deep groan rippled through him at the realisation that beneath her shorts, she wasn’t wearing any underwear.

He lifted his head to peer down at her again with those dark eyes of his. “You slept in my bed last night without underwear?”

Truth be told she really hadn’t meant to fall asleep in here, but right now she felt nothing but glad that she did. She gave a shy nod.

“You’re going to be the death of me, I swear.” He dipped his head again giving her a lingering kiss, he rolled himself to hover

her clit that caused a small whimper to release from her. Hermione felt him smile against her, placing another kiss only fractionally closer, she tried to wiggle her hips up but his hands were holding her too firmly in place. Draco made a tutting sound. “Patience pet.” He smirked, resuming his agonizingly slow kisses. A gasp sounded as his lips finally connected with the bundle of nerves. His tongue slid against her clit and Draco growled again in delight.

“Fuck, Hermione you taste incredible.” His breath against her centre and sent goosebumps over her skin. His tongue licked up over her entrance and resided once more at her clit. Hermione looked down to see Draco’s eyes fluttering closed and she was hit once more with a sharp shot of electricity, how could a man as powerful as Draco be making her feel so powerful right now? Between them she could feel the surge of

Hermione smiled at the realisation that the older witch had an extension charm on her purse.

Narcissa placed the black jewellery box on the counter in the centre of the room, with a wave of her wand, thin drawers and cupboards opened up, climbing on top of each other until it resembled a small display shelf. "Right darling girl, you may find something you wish to keep, my birthday present to you. I will not listen to any complaints or arguments whatsoever and I will be greatly offended should you choose to do so, do I make myself clear?" She tilted her head sternly in Hermione's direction.

The argument was right there on the tip of her tongue and she had to swallow several times to fight back letting the words tumble out of her mouth. This was too much, she knew the majority of these pieces were family heirlooms, it felt wrong for someone of her kind, whom their family had hated for

hundreds of years, to accept such a gift, but the look Narcissa gave her scared her more than the thought of upsetting a bunch of dead witches and wizards. Everything was so beautiful, it felt impossible for her to choose. The rings were breathtaking, but she still had the surprise wedding ring attached to her wedding finger, something she often forgot she was even wearing, a simple white gold band with a ridiculously sized clear oval-shaped diamond, and truth be told she had caught herself staring at it in admiration more than once. It had grown on her and she was rather attached to the simple elegance it brought. Draco had brought her a stunning locket for her birthday the day before and so she felt that a necklace had been ruled out too. She supposed that left earrings or a bracelet, both of those options seemed more appropriate for a birthday gift as it was. Hermione was walking along, slowly examining everything

rolled her hips again, a playful sparkle appearing in her eyes.

"Don't start something that you're not prepared to finish." His eyes were dark as he stared down at her, fingers gripping her ribs tighter as he rolled her further onto her back, his face hovering above hers, pushing himself harder against her hip involuntarily.

"Who said I wasn't prepared to finish it?" her voice came out in a breathy, quiet confidence.

His hand slid down her ribs, lower passed her waist, fingers dancing over her hip and coming to grip firmly at her thigh. "I mean it, Hermione. If you start this, I won't want to stop."

There was a tone in his voice that made her think he meant more than right now in this moment. Her heart fluttered against her chest and she reached up behind him to run her finger through the back of his platinum hair. "So then don't stop." She whispered,

chest filled her ears and that tingling in the pit of her stomach twisted sharply. Draco dropped his forehead against her shoulder. "Please don't wiggle like that." He whispered. His erection jumped to the forefront of her mind, her lips parting in a silent 'Oh, but Draco's arm was still tight against her waist, he had made no move to roll away from her so she decided to test a theory, perhaps she hadn't been the only one to feel the difference in their dynamic lately. She grinned "Do you mean like this?" rolling her hips in a slow manner that purposely rubbed against his length. His breath hitched, ever so slowly lifting his head to look at her. "Hermione." He warned, an undertone of pleading in his voice. She batted her eyelashes and feigned innocence, he might have believed her if not for the cheeky grin on her face. "Draco?" she

in the display cases, when something caught her eye in the bottom right corner. It appeared to be some kind of diadem, not so far as to be considered a tiara but more than a headband.

Her eyes were glued to it, it was the same white gold as the ring and the locket, delicate flowers and leaves making up its body. The centre of each flower was a small shimmering white diamond. Narcissa stepped up beside her. "Oh yes, that is lovely."

Hermione smiled, opening her mouth to argue that it would be too much but Narcissa held up her hand with a stern look. Hermione sighed in resignation and nodded. "Alright, thank you Narcissa, it is truly beautiful."

"It is my pleasure, my sweet girl. Happy birthday. Now, the next order of business." She levitated the headpiece to the jewellery box where it cushioned itself into the top tray and then stepped back through the archway,

warded." She explained without Hermione asking. "Only those in the Malfoy family can step through it. Even those noseys blamin' goblins don't know what's in here." She was still ruffling through her purse trying to find something with a look of great frustration on her face. Hermione was too busy looking around the room in shock though to take any real notice.

They had stepped into a room around the same size as her bedroom, in the centre of the room was a large display case, lined with at least a thousand different rings in every size, shape and coloured gem. The walls were lined with similar display cases, all containing busts with various necklaces and earrings. It felt as though she had stepped into a high-end jeweller who specialized in pieces across every time period.

"Ah, there it is." Narcissa cried with joy, pulling from her purse a black jewellery box that was significantly larger than her bag.

forced to admit that her husband truly was blessed with good looks.

She reached one hand out and traced a light feather line between his eyebrows down to the tip of his nose. His brow furrowed slightly and his nose crinkled in such a mild way that she couldn't help but smile and do it again, she was on the third line of his nose when his arm that was still thrown over her tightened, yanking her closer to him and closing what little space there had been between him. His eyes flew open as hers grew wide. She expected to see surprise on his face but instead, he looked at her with purpose, lifting himself onto an elbow and hovering over her.

"If you don't stop tickling my nose I will roll you over, sit on your thighs and tickle your feet." He growled, his voice deep and low.

A small shocked laugh escaped her at the absurdity of it. Another growl from in his

fear that he would roll away from her squeezing in her chest while a hot need burned at her core.

He let out a shaky breath, eyes calculating her face, checking every tiny expression for doubt, when he found none he let out a small groan and dipped his head to hers, capturing her lips against his in a bruising passion. His hand by her head pushing into her hair, pulling her up closer to him. He ground himself against her hip again, moving from her mouth to her jaw then to her neck, his tongue flicking over her sensitive flesh before sinking his teeth into her neck in a way that straddled the line of pain and delectability.

A small moan brushed past her lips, her back arching upward slightly. "Please Draco" she keened beneath him. A pleading sound that made his cock twitch. His hand moved back upward, pushing the baggy shirt she had changed into last night higher, his head

They had been sitting on the couch in healer Thorne's office in silence for nearly ten minutes. It reminded Draco of the first time that they had been here. He never had found out what house she had been in and it didn't matter, no but he was still curious. The healer had gone through a wide range of expressions rapidly upon seeing the thoughts about the events of the last week. She had been scribbling handwritten notes since and had not spared them a single

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wasn't serious. She smiled at him. "I can give dating a go."

Draco smiled up at her. "Good, now come here, I've been dying to kiss you all bloody week." He grabbed the backs of her knees and yanked her forward onto his lap, his arms wrapping themselves around her waist and pulling her tight against his chest. Her hair fell around his face as he reached forward pressing his lips to hers.

as his. "I do know, perhaps this is something we can discuss further with healer Thorne tomorrow, provided we can get a word in edgewise. Between your birthday, the morning after and this conversation she's going to have her work cut out for her I'm sure." His grey eyes tore themselves from where his fingers were playing with her dress and clashed with her brown ones. "As for what I want? I want you, Hermione. I've found myself rather inexplicably infatuated with you and frankly, this distance is driving me crazy. I think you're right, it is a sudden leap, perhaps one I'm more willing to take than you at this point and I'm okay with that. I will wait and bide my time but I'm no longer under the impression that this can't work between us.. if you would let me, I would like to try dating you."

She stared at him, her mouth slightly agape. Draco watched as his words sunk in. "You would?"

"I don't see the point in beating around the bush here." She started and Draco felt his stomach drop. "It's quite a situation we have found ourselves in. Married on a drunken night out, planning for divorce, I can't speak for you but I certainly wasn't expecting to develop feelings towards you and now that I have I find myself rather at a loss as to what to do about it." Had he heard her correctly? His She had said she had feelings for him? His heart lurched and Draco was certain she would be able to hear it any second. "I guess what I was wondering is what it is that you want from me? It feels extreme and sudden to jump from trying for a divorce to love and forever, you know?"

Draco hummed, his fingers reaching out to touch her dress, his fingertips stroking against her thigh. The dress was as soft as he imagined it would be. The sight of her in green had images of him taking her on his desk flashing through his mind, claiming her

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glance. Draco kept himself entertained by watching Hermione, every so often she would look up and they would share a smile, or a chuckle at their healer's response. Draco had thought about saying something but it seemed as if the witch had forgotten they were even there and he was rather enjoying not being berated.

"So, you two have decided to start dating?" She said, finally looking up at them with warm eyes.

"Yes, we have." Hermione smiled over at Draco.

"I see. Well, I shouldn't say anything but honestly, I'm a little relieved to hear that, you two have very complementary personalities and I've thought from the start that you two would make a good match. So shall we discuss what that means for your marriage then?"

"We are still taking things relatively slow. I would like to take Hermione on some dates

jump all in, it's going to take work, but I have never seen you run away from something you wanted just because it's too hard. I know I can be a lot, grumpy, arrogant, selfish, bossy, and I definitely have a superiority complex, but I think I've earned the right to that one on account of my devilish good looks and impeccable charm." He smirked, his hands running up her calves. She grinned back at him. "But I think I could make you happy, really happy not just a content kind of happy, and I can tell you now I won't ever try to make you less than. So, what I want is to give this a proper shot. If you still want to walk away and divorce me, I will try to accept that and I will try to give that to you if it's what you truly want, but I would like to try first. What do you think, my darling wife, would you try dating me?"

She scrunched her nose up, sticking one finger in her throat and pretended to gag. He chuckled at her theatrics knowing that she

Draco raised an eyebrow at her. "Come again?"

She shook her head "It doesn't matter, are you busy? I thought we could talk?"

"Give me two minutes to finish signing these off and then I'm all yours." His heart began to beat faster in his chest from anticipation, was she going to tell him that the other morning had been a mistake and they should keep their distance again? She turned next to him and leaned back against the desk, her dress falling in a soft and subtle v between her thighs. Draco could still remember the taste of her on his tongue, the sounds she had made for him. He couldn't think about those damned sounds without becoming painfully hard, he had found his cock in his fist so often he had started to feel like a teenage boy again. He signed the final contract and leaned back in his chair to look up at her.

"If you will let me, yes, see if I can't win you over. I'm not saying it is going to be perfect, we're going to fight, because you are a giant pain in the ass a lot of the time, your bossy, and always think you're right even when you aren't, and you're stubborn—" She laughed, "I'm sorry, is this supposed to be winning me over?" He raised an eyebrow at her as if she had just proved his point. "You're forever interrupting me and tend to insert yourself into every situation, but I find that I like those things about you. You are fiercely loyal, you are quick to analyze every situation for its merits and risks, you are protective and kind and generous to a fault, you are brave and wild and so incredibly smart. You remind me of Friend Fyre, impossible to tame or control but beautiful in the best ways." He pushed his chair closer to her, lifting her feet to sit on either side of his thighs. "It's going to be hard, and I'm not saying let's

whole world. I guess the selfish part of me doesn't want to lose that."

"Well, I'm pleased with the development and look forward to seeing the outcome. I would like both of you to plan a date within the following week for the other person, preferably out of the house. Bonus points for creativity." Hr Thorne snapped her pad closed, It seemed they had been dismissed early. Hermione and Draco wasted no time getting out of there and found themselves wandering slowly up the side street towards Diagon Alley.

"Do you want to go look at flourish and blotts?" Draco suggested casually.

Hermione's face lit up. "Really? You wouldn't mind?"

Draco laughed. "No Hermione, of course not. Just let me grab a coffee quickly first." He ducked into the café on the corner, ordering Hermione a spicy chai latte, her favourite and himself a cappuccino.

Her eyes sparkled when she took it from him, realising he had remembered her drink order. "I'll try to be quick." Hermione worried her lip.

Draco frowned at her. "Are you in a rush?" She shook her head "No I just know, most people aren't as enthusiastic about spending long periods of time in bookshops as I am."

Draco stepped in front of her, lifting her chin to look him in the eyes. "Hermione, I knew when I suggested it that the rest of my day would likely be spent watching you bouncing between shelves and getting excited every five minutes about a different book. I have no interest in you rushing what otherwise would be an enjoyable experience because of what exactly? Me? No, thank you." He said firmly. "I have my coffee and I will be enjoying the view today. Take your time." He turned and held the door open for her. Though she was looking at the ground

"Oh, I think there would be enough people in the quidditch community that I could convince to join us, After all, if Hermione Granger says it's a good cause, it must be right?"

Hermione shook her head in amusement, a grin still in place. She couldn't help but think to herself that the girl should have been in Slytherin.

"Wonderful! Astoria and I could help with the venue and decorations, Gregory could help with the marketing?" Daphne smiled.

"That sounds fantastic Daphne, thank you so much." Hermione offered with a smile.

Despite her sneaky underhandedness, Hermione knew that this no doubt was for a good cause and she would be happy to play along and help her friend achieve her goal. Hermione couldn't help but think that she was right about the other thing too. There would be no way to figure anything out without another conversation with Draco.

fundraise support for the conservation of the golden snidget, she was wondering if Harry would consider commending the event," Ginny said without any hesitation.

Ginny looked at Hermione with satisfaction.

Hermione pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes in a combination of pride and mirth, she had to hand it to the witch, she had seen the opening and she took it. She knew Hermione had no interest in quidditch, this plan was entirely Ginny and she was counting on Hermione being in the inner circle of several important names to be able to pull this off now that she had informed Astoria and Daphne about it.

"Oh, that sounds like a wonderful idea Hermione!" Astoria cried out with enthusiasm. "We could all help organize it! Ginny can recruit a few players surely? Would anyone on your team be interested Ginny?"

he caught her small smile, the kind she didn't even know she did when something made her happy.

Just as expected, while he sat with one leg crossed on the old black leather sofa in the middle of the store, Hermione slowly trailed along each shelf. Her eyes lit up with joy every so often as she stumbled across another book she wanted. He had finished his coffee some time ago but found that he was rather content to just be along for the ride. When her stack grew from one book to five, he stepped up beside her and silently took them for her, offering a reassuring smile every time another book was added to the pile. He remained silent as she spouted off facts about the cross-overs in muggle and magical history when it came to ancient Rome. Draco observed the way her cheeks moved the freckles across her nose when she smiled, or that she had one particular curl that she was constantly tucking behind her

and spend time as a couple first. I think Hermione needs more time to figure out if she can accept me in her life forever" Draco explained.

"You seem like you have already accepted her being in your life forever." Mr Thorne observed.

Draco shrugged. "I think it's different for me. I spent the first sixteen years of my life thinking I was going to have an arranged marriage so it's not that big a leap for me, especially when I already care for Hermione so strongly."

The witch peered over her glasses. "Yes, but then you have spent the last seven years resigned to the fact that you would never marry, so what has changed?"

"Hermione is extraordinary. I think that if I'm going to be willing to spend my life with anyone it would be her. She is exceptionally talented and kind and feisty and caring and she has a light about her that brightens up my

whole thing off the table? Then what if in another two months, we hate each other again and we're back to square one? It seems like such a leap to go from, hey I have some feelings for you to let's spend the rest of our lives together."

Ginny nodded sympathetically. "Listen, Hermione, you are a smart witch. It doesn't have to go from one extreme to the other, you could just date for a while, and I know this is a radical concept but I'll throw it out there anyway, maybe try have a conversation with him to see where his heads at, because you will never actually know unless you discuss it with him."

"Discuss what with who?" Astoria sat down, a tray floated its way onto the table with tea for everyone and a small tower with finger food. Daphne placed a plate in front of each of them.

"Hermione has some thoughts about organizing a charity game of quidditch to

reader.
completely wrong because she wasn't a mind head around it and still end up getting it could drive herself insane trying to wrap her she wasn't interested in more herself. She from her and she would be lying if she said He had given the indication he wanted more



"Hey, how was lunch?" Draco eyed her dress and the way it perfectly shaped her body. "I got roped into organizing a charity event for Ginny under the guise of it being my idea." Her caramel-colored eyes rolled back in her head.

got when she was annoyed with him. He wanted it all.

He might not have said it out loud yet, he didn't want to rush things with her and ruin the opportunity he had to win her over but he more than cared for her. Draco had never been in love before but he was fairly certain that this is what it felt like. The heaviness of that weighed on his heart. Somewhere along the way he had stumbled into a hole and hit the jackpot and the fact that he was now indebted to Theo for it irked him.

Several times he had seen her debate over a book and decided against it when she eyed the already tall stack Draco was carrying. Several times he had tapped his wand against it after she had moved on and sent it off to the counter.

"Perhaps we can pick up some takeaway on the way home? Maybe even owl your mother and see if she wants to join us? Oh, we could

to get into fights more often, Harry was on such a high from the fight that we had sex all over Grimmauld Place. It was mind-blowing!"

Hermione tried not to grimace at the image of her oldest friend and Ginny going at it like rabbits.

"Maybe that's what you need? You have an incredibly fit husband might I add, loosen up a little, take advantage of some casual sex while he's right there at your disposal?" Her friend rushed out.

Hermione looked away, her eyes falling on a shrub of Lavender behind her. It smelt divine and the pops of purple against the green were very pretty.

"Oh. My. Stars! You already did!?" Ginny all but yelled. Hermione desperately looked around, shushing her.

"No! Well I mean, we haven't had sex, but things may or may not have gotten away from us the other morning and..."

referring to the green colouring of her dress. Hermione rolled her eyes. "Gods Ginny, I didn't realise I was only allowed to wear red for the rest of my life." She laughed. Ginny grinned at her. "No, you can wear other colours, just not green." "It's not even Slytherin green." Astoria giggled with a frown, approaching from behind Ginny, Daphne at her side. "It's pretty blimmin' close." Ginny threw her a look, daring Astoria to challenge her. "I think you look lovely." Daphne grinned. They had decided to meet at a café halfway down Diagon Alley, there was a beautiful little courtyard out the front, hedged by lavender bushes with little white tables under yellow and white striped sun umbrellas littered the courtyard. Astoria rolled her eyes and tugged Daphne inside to order some tea and finger food. Ginny sat next to Hermione, leaning in close. "Oh my lord Hermione, you and Draco need

show her a movie, what do you think?" Hermione rambled over her shoulder. "Sounds wonderful dear." Draco smiled, an elderly gentleman in the aisle with them smiled at him and gave him a playful eye roll in comradery. Draco offered a small chuckle in return but he was rather enjoying himself. He tried to picture Lucius trailing after Narcissa like this and knew it would never have been the case. That thought brought him some comfort in the knowledge that he could perhaps have a chance to be a better man and husband than his father had been. Narcissa sat at the breakfast counter, nose in her newspaper pretending not to be enjoying the fact that Hermione was baring him for having brought so many books, the books she wanted yes, but it had been the principal of the matter. He had been sneaky about it. Draco rolled his eyes, humming in agreement every few minutes as he dished up several plates of Chinese take-out.

ear, and though he loved it she seemed to grow frustrated each time. What he learnt about Hermione while she shopped, were things that only this one particular version of Hermione could show him. She didn't constantly have her head stuck in books the way she used to, she was more free with her identity than she had been at school, more open with her feistiness and attitude but this Hermione, the Hermione that only came out when being allowed to simply exist around books without restraint was the one Draco felt like he had missed out on the most. This side of her had been more prominent during school when he couldn't have been more appalled by the idea of a relationship with her, and now that they were in one, he felt like he had been ripped off. He wanted to go back and snatch whatever moments he could. He wanted to pick fights with her because he loved seeing the way she

"You're not even listening to me!" Hermione cried out exasperated.

"Of course, I'm not Hermione. I was a Slytherin. I am a Malfoy. You wanted the books. I brought you the books. The fact that you are upset that I didn't give you the chance to argue your way out of my opportunity to spoil you and be a pain in the ass, and don't pretend like you wouldn't have, is not my problem, now would you like a Coca-Cola or a Sprite?" He held up two cans of soda for her to take her pick.

She glared up at him for a moment, and huffed a big sigh, her face softening as she did. "Sprite please."

He chuckled, stepped forward to place a kiss on her head and pressed the can into her hands, catching as he did the delighted look of victory on his mother's face. His eyes narrowed at her.

"Mother, Hermione brought you a gift today."

Hermione frowned. "I got the impression that he wants more from me than a casual lay. Which if I'm honest is how I feel about it too, but we're supposed to be going through this application process, so what does that mean for us? Do we take that

happened at your birthday anyway?" She still get dizzy thinking about it now." She body, I have never come so hard in my life. Merlin that man ate the soul clean out of my her voice to a whisper. "Ginny, I swear to the redhead, leaning in close and lowering standing by the counter. She turned back to was relieved to see Astoria and Daphne still

Hermione looked back toward the door and rushed, her cheeks turning as red as Ginny's hair. Ginny grinned back at her. "Hardly seems fair, rich, attractive and knows his way around. So, what's with the secrecy? I mean you two are married, everyone assumed you two had started sleeping together after what happened at your birthday anyway?"



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Diagon Alley was bustling with people, a last-ditch heat wave left over from summer meant that even in her A-line cold shoulder-styled chiffon dress she was still warm. Ginny raised an eyebrow at her as she approached the café.

"Has living with Malfoy turned you into a traitor?" She asked with a hint of mirth in her tone.

"What?" Hermione asked in confusion, she looked down and realised Ginny was

with Draco about the three of us having matching PJs.” Hermione waved her hand about.

Narcissa looked up between them for a moment. “Excuse me.” She stated before retreating towards her guest room.

Draco looked at Hermione with a furrowed brow. Hermione glared up at him. “Now look at what you’ve done. We’ve probably upset her!” Hermione hissed.

Draco sighed. “I’m sure she’s fine Hermione.” Suddenly the movement of bright purple caught his eyes and he couldn’t stop the shocked laughter that burst from him at a great volume.

Narcissa stood there, wearing the onesie, patting down the front of it to smooth it. He had never in his twenty-three years of life seen his mother look so commonplace, it was coming as quite a shock. Hermione’s eyes went as wide as dinner plates at the sight too.

“Am I wearing it correctly?” Narcissa asked

nervously.

“Yes! Yes, you are! How do you feel?”

Hermione spluttered out.

“Ridiculous darling.” His mother said with

a laugh, a genuine laugh, not one of those

fake polite ones that she offered when

expected of her. “Absolutely ridiculous, but

dare I say it, I can’t recall ever having been so

comfortable, and you did say it was common

to wear during sleepovers to watch movies,

that is what we are doing tonight isn’t it?”

Hermione giggled. “Yes, they are rather

cozy.” She observed his mother with delight.

“Shall we make a night of it then?” She

turned to face him, Draco gulping knowing

exactly where this was headed. “Draco go get

yours on, right now.”

He had re-emerged wearing the matching

yellow suit that Hermione had brought for

him, trying desperately to shift through his

discomfort of wearing such a bright colour,

December to introduce next year’s intake I

hear, you must be pleased?”

Hermione was more than pleased, she was

thrilled, she couldn’t stop herself from

gushing as she raved about how right

Narcissa had been, in a month and a half of

being a chairwoman, she had accomplished

more than she had in four and a half years at

the ministry. She told Narcissa all about how

Julian Jones had incorporated Hogsmeade

trips into the orientation schedule, Kartona

Tilba had included an additional day in

which, muggleborn children and their

families would be guided around Diagon

Alley and have everything explained to them,

rather than being left to figure it out alone,

that they would be entitled to be able to

return to Diagon alley in the year leading up

to school starting to properly familiarize

themselves with the textbooks and supplies,

but it hadn’t just been Hogsmeade.

At the start of the month, she had a brunch with the board of governors at St Mungo’s about expanding into the community, opening pop-up clinics in the areas still recovering from the war, potentially offering training incentives to those seeking to become a healer, and further down the track, having a team of on-call healers that could be called in an emergency when someone had been injured too badly to risk travelling.

She was so busy rambling about the successes that she had had that she didn’t think too much about the items of jewellery that she was selecting, not allowing herself to feel the guilt of accepting them. It wasn’t until she placed the final bracelet that she realised she had filled the black jewellery case, she turned to Narcissa and was surprised to see the woman’s eyes shining back at her with what Hermione could swear was love and pride.

Hermione caught sight of the way he was looking at his mother and raised an eyebrow at him. "Don't be bitter Draco just because she loves me more than you." She teased. Narcissa smirked into her paper and gave a small shake of her head. Draco stared at Hermione until she sighed and disappeared down the hall to return a few moments later with a bag. "I brought it to be funny, please don't feel like you have to wear it, I brought all of us matching ones as a joke." She mumbled in dismissal. Narcissa pulled out a large fluffy purple one-piece suit with little pictures of what appeared to be a muggle animal dotted all over it. "It's called a onesie, it's a type of pyjama. They are very comfortable but even most muggles think they are a little ridiculous, though they are popular for movie marathons at sleepovers. But like I said, please don't feel obligated to thank me or wear it. I was being³⁰⁷ funny, I was joking

but if it would make his mother and Hermione happy then he would suffer through it. Hermione had changed into her pink one and she and his mother were discussing the differences between each of the different flavours of soda in their fridge, something Draco had become rather addicted to.

"Draco sweetheart, which is your favorite?" His mother asked him suddenly.

"Coca-Cola?" Draco answered questioningly.

Narcissa nodded, "Then I shall try that one." She told Hermione with a nod.

Draco shook his head in bewilderment, what in the world was happening right now, had he stepped into an alternative universe at some stage?

Hermione smiled and showed Narcissa how to open the can. Tentatively with her fingertips from both hands placed delicately on either side of the can Narcissa took a

the box floating in front of her, the witch carried on straight to another concealed archway to the left of the entry foyer, Hermione followed slowly behind her.

This room was much the same as the last, filled to the brim with jewellery of all kinds. "This jewellery is for galas and benefits and so on. You may borrow anything in here for any upcoming events, and since you are representing the Malfoy family you should note that this is also not up for debate. You can come here whenever you please but I have always found it less troublesome to take a selection with me and switch them out when I've cycled through them, so choose what you wish and put it all in this box here." There was a black ottoman near the doorway that Narcissa settled onto, continuing to talk before Hermione could object. "So, Ptolemy has signed off on the introductory program for new students. Everything is all set for

“I’m having a debate with Hermione about Jane’s status,” Draco explained.

apparating to the foyer of their penthouse to quickly change and drop off the basket of goods Hermione had collected before rushing back out the door and flooing to the Malfoy Manor.

“Mother?” he called as he stepped into the foyer, heading towards where he knew she would be in the tea room.

“Ah, Draco. There you are.” Narcissa said with a smile.

“Hello, mother.” He bent and pressed a kiss to her cheek before plopping onto the seat opposite her. “I was wondering if I could ask to borrow your estate in Porquerolles for a few days, I want to surprise Hermione with a trip.”

Narcissa looked simply delighted. “Yes of course dear, I’ll have the elves’ stock and clean it for you.”

“Thank you, mother, also... Can you send the copies of Jane’s books here too?” Narcissa raised an eyebrow at his request.

get to afterwards anyway so Hermione will be all yours for retail advice.”
The markets were stuffed full of muggles and the scents of dozens of different flowers, sweet-smelling fruits and cured meats. Draco watched as Hermione tucked her hair behind her ear, smiling at the stallkeeper in front of her, enquiring about a jar of homemade jam. The lingering summer heat had faded but the chill of autumn hadn’t quite kicked in yet. In Draco’s opinion, Hermione looked simply angelic in her cream and floral sundress, a white cardigan keeping her safe from the harshest of the winds. Something the stall owner said made a bright laugh filter out of her mouth. Theo, who was looking from Draco to Hermione, let out a low whistle which pulled Draco out of his head to look down and see Theo looking at him with amused eyes.

“Congratulations on your wedding, man. I’m really happy for you.” Theo offered up genuinely.

“That was months ago you idiot. You were there?” Draco drawled.

“Yeah...” Theo nodded, checking that they were still out of earshot. “But now you mean it.” Draco stared at him for a long moment. It hadn’t been phrased like a question and Draco knew it wasn’t, but he found himself giving a small unsure nod anyway. He didn’t know if it was a good idea to tell his friend that when there was still a chance Hermione might decide to leave anyway. Theo gave a pat on Draco’s arm and wandered off to rejoin Hermione who was now negotiating over some oranges. Draco lurched forward to carry them, placing them in a basket that Hermione had brought with them along with the jam. She smiled her appreciation. He watched silently as Hermione joked with Theo, discussed the upcoming charity game

“Malfoy’s, more than I wanted to see of either of you at eight in the morning,” Theo mumbled, Hermione who was still standing at the counter where Draco had just fucked her snorted. “Maybe you should try knocking first then, what’s up?”

“Fair play and noted for future reference. I need you.” Theo looked at her pointedly.

Draco laughed and went to retrieve his coffee mug.

Hermione smirked at their curly-haired friend “Oh Theo I’m flattered, but I’m a married woman.”

Theo gave her a withering look. “You’ve been around that one too long.” He jabbed his finger in Draco’s direction. “No, I need you to give me advice on some purchases I intend to make.”

Draco and Hermione exchanged a look. “We’re heading to the markets in a minute, you can come with us. I have a meeting to

of Quiditch that Ginny had pulled her into and argued over the brilliance of Jane Austen’s writing.

“She was years ahead of her time. You have to understand that muggle women in that time didn’t have the same level of freedom and choices that they do now.” Hermione Draco snorted, causing them to both look at him. “No, but wizarding women did.” Hermione looked at him with offence. “Well I’m glad to hear that but what I’m saying is that Jane Austen who was-”

“A witch,” Draco mumbled. Hermione stopped and looked at him with wide eyes. “She was not.” She stated with such conviction that if Draco didn’t know better he might have believed her, but he did know better.

“Yes, she was.” He challenged. Theo hid a smile and pretended to be interested in his shoelaces.

“Shut up, she was not” Hermione’s tone

had turned to doubt.

“Yes, she was. I can prove it to you later.”

Draco smirked in victory.

“Are you serious? No. She can’t have been.” Hermione gasped.

Draco chuckled and motioned to carry on walking, which she did arguing about how she would know if one of her favourite authors had been a witch. Theo thankfully remained quiet and didn’t give away his surprise. Draco rolled his eyes but let her rant

uninterrupted. It was a little before eleven when Draco put a hand on her shoulder.

“Darling I have to go, I have a meeting I need to get to, will you be alright to carry on with Theo?” He said with a brush of his lips

against her forehead.

She smiled up at him “Of course! I’m done now anyway.”

“I’ll see you at home later then.” He smiled.

He turned and headed to a secluded alleyway,

"I'm here." he took her hand once more and led her outside. "Now you may take it off."

Hermione fumbled with it next to him, Draco watched her face as she took in the view before her with a gasp. Hermione stepped forward to the railing and looked down to the quaint street below them. It was quiet here, the island of Porquerolles only allowed the use of service cars. This had been the first house his mother had brought with her own money, a place that Lucius had been forbidden from visiting. It had been her quiet haven away for when she needed a break. Lucius had an estate himself for the same purpose, a dark damp castle in Ireland.

"Draco! This is beautiful! Where are we?!" Hermione said in shock.

"Porquerolles. Off the coast of France. I have something else to show you though, something I'm sure you will appreciate more." Draco said with mirth.

The townhouse was a beautiful old rustic type, the outside of it was painted a beautiful light pastel pink, most of the houses in the area were painted with bright colours, it all added to the charm. Inside however was filled with woods and creams and golds. It was barely a five-minute walk down to the beach, the smell of fresh bougainvillea and wisteria, a hint of citrus undertones filled the air. He stepped back inside and toward the small round dining table where a collection of six thick old notebooks sat neatly stacked on top of each other.

Hermione stepped toward them with trepidation when Draco pointed at them. Lifting the top one she opened the cover and gasped loudly. Draco shoved his hands into his trouser pockets and stepped forward to peer over her shoulder with what could have been quite possibly the smuggest smirk to have ever passed across his face.

mews, whispering his name over and over, lost in her own world.

The front door opened, Theo took one step in before turning and walking straight back out calling a "Fucking nope." Over his shoulder.

Draco smirked and increased his speed, she broke, locking down tightly around him, her walls spasming. Her torso slumped forward against the counter, a long, loud, luxurious moan filling the penthouse. Draco moved his hands to her hips with near-bruising pressure, his own loud groan mixing with the sound of hers as he thrust one last time deeper before he spilt inside her.

Silently Draco cursed himself because that hadn't been how he had meant their first time together to go. He had meant for it to be more than a quickie in the kitchen, regardless of how much he had enjoyed it.

withdrew to the tip pushing in again slower this time.

"Harder." She moaned, leaning her head back on his shoulder, her back arching with the movement, pushing him deeper into her. Draco groaned at the sound of her plea and started rolling his hips in fluid motions. His hand holding her leg to the counter moved away to the base of her throat, his other hand at her waist dipping lower to circle her clit.

Her walls clenched tightly around him, she felt like heaven. "Fuck Hermione." He growled in her ear. "You feel so fucking good." Their skin slapped together with each thrust. She was close again, he could feel the subtle wiggle of her hips as she fought the urge to push back on him. "Come for me Princess, come all over me. I want to feel it." He had to hold on, he needed to feel her come undone again first. She was so close she had started whimpering needy little

“Draco, can I take the blindfold off yet?” Hermione questioned, loudly, her arms gripping onto Draco’s elbow as he led her toward the balcony. Draco chuckled and took off her earmuffs. “Not yet. Nearly, patience dear.” Draco chuckled, letting her go to open the large French double doors.

“Draco?” she asked nervously.

01 OCTOBER 2003



I hope this manuscript of my latest novel finds you well. The weather here has been dreary and I have wished infinitely that this rain would dissipate, my poor owl has had a terrible time with the post of late. I hope the weather has been kinder to you. It is my hope that I will be able to visit again when my health is better. It has been too long my sweet Tryphena.

As always, with much love

Jane.

“What?!” Hermione screeched. “You’re related to Jane Austen!?” She rounded on him in a fury at only just finding out.

Draco laughed. “She was my... Great, great, great grandmother’s cousin on my mothers, father’s side. Her mother, Cassandra married a muggle man named George but she and Ophelia, who was Tryphena’s mother, stayed in touch, even though the rest of the family scorned Cassandra. Thus Jane and Tryphena grew up in contact.” Draco traced the family tree in his mind.

“Was that Theo before?” Hermione frowned at the front door. “What was he doing here?” Draco chuckled. “Yes, and I have no idea, though I don’t think he’s going to barge in without knocking first again. Good morning by the way.” He turned her into a snuggle against him, placing gentle kisses on her lips, one hand holding the back of her head.

“Good morning all right.” She said with a smirk. He waited until she had waved a quick cleaning charm and donned her clothes before walking to the door and yanking it open. Theo was at the other end of the hall with his fingers in his ears singing ‘lalalalala’ over and over to himself. Draco watched with an amused smirk and raised an eyebrow at him. Theo spotted Draco and immediately reddened before he barged into the apartment.

“Please Draco, I need more, I need you.” She gasped. His heart leapt, gently replacing her leg on the floor he climbed back to his feet. Turning her head to meet him he kissed her deeply. One hand reached down to grab her thigh after extracting himself. Lifting it up sideways to rest on the edge of the counter. His other hand gripped the base of his cock, sliding it back and forth through her arousal.

“Please Draco.” She moaned. The tone in her voice was enough to have him snapping his hips forward in one firm motion until he was fully seated inside her. He heard her gasp as she tried to adjust to him, he should have taken it slower, given her time to stretch to his size.

“Fuck.” He hissed against her shoulder. As she pushed back against him, encouraging him to move he wrapped his arm around her waist, holding her tight against him. Draco

Draco's great-great-great-great grandmother. Draco offered her a small sad smile as he handed her a cup of tea, clearly understanding the change in her mood. "My mother told me to let you know that she did get her final visit with Tryphena. She passed away the week after returning home. I do not doubt that you will pour over the diaries at some stage for yourself."

"Diaries?!" Hermione gasped.

"Yes, all the women from the Black household have kept diaries over the years, they are currently all at the manor, I can't touch them, they have a curse on them to ward off men but now that you're a Malfoy, and I am Narcissa's son, you should be able to view them." Draco waved dismissively as if he hadn't just told her that all her birthdays had just come at once. "Drink your tea and we will go." He gave her a knowing smile.

It was a bizarre feeling to watch Draco carrying her sandals in one hand for her so

that she could walk barefoot along the sand. It was equally as bizarre to see him with the bottoms of his sandy-coloured linen pants rolled halfway up his calves and the top half of his shirt unbuttoned, exposing his chest beneath it. It was barely four o'clock and dinner wasn't for a while yet but the two of them were enjoying the slow pace that they were travelling at. Every so often Draco would stop and pick up a shell that he thought was pretty and he would give it to her. She would slip it into the charm extended pocket of her dress when he wasn't looking. They would dip their toes into the water's edge. Once she had playfully kicked water at him and he had chased her laughing for a few minutes before capturing her with a bruising kiss. She was sitting on a log along the beach watching as Draco bent to examine some of the shells at the water's edge and she could

Draco stared down at her, pulling her closer "Having breakfast." He breathed, lowering his lips to brush against her shoulder before sitting down against the kitchen counter. His fingers trace up the inside of her right leg, before lifting it and placing it over his shoulder.

Hermione let out a breathy moan as he exhaled against her centre.

"You're not reading Hermione, it's very important you don't stop reading, and don't skip any."

The tip of Draco's tongue barely made contact with her as he teased a line up her slit to the peak of her clit. Gently running two fingers through the rapidly growing arousal at her core before pushing them into her. Above him, he heard her smack her hands down on the counter.

"Read Hermione." He growled before he leant in and latched his mouth around her clit, sucking at the bundle of nerves, curling

"I was thinking around nine?" He turned to face her while sipping his coffee. "I should have time for that, can you read the business section out loud for me while I eat breakfast?" She raised an eyebrow but nodded at him all the same. "Excellent," Draco smirked. Draco stepped up close to her, their bodies brushing lightly against each other. He reached down and flipped the prophet to the business pages. "Draco! I wasn't done with the article on the centaurs and you haven't even made your breakfast." Hermione gumbled. Draco pointed to the article he wanted her to read. She rolled her eyes and looked down to read it. His fingers reached out and gripped her hips, slowly lowering her pyjama shorts. "Draco!" She squealed "What are you doing?!"

Hermione stared at him in shock. "Tea?" He asked casually, moving away to allow her to process. She opened and closed her mouth in shock several times, failing each time to put a voice to her words.

"I was thinking that we could take a stroll along the beach this evening. I've made dinner reservations at a restaurant that overlooks the beach, I was thinking it might be nice to walk down there?"

Hermione nodded too stunned to speak. She let out a scream as she turned the page and realised that the entire book had been handwritten. Draco laughed and she looked at him with wide questioning eyes. "They all are," answering her unspoken thoughts. She supposed it made sense considering Persuasion hadn't even been published until six months after her death. Her hands were shaking as she placed it back on top, she couldn't help but wonder with a sense of sadness if she had ever made it to visit

suddenly picture a future where they might have a little boy, with her curls but Draco's blonde colouring. A future where Draco would be pointing the shells out to him and they would be talking about all the creatures that lived in them beforehand. A future where that blonde toddler would run up to her waving his little arms to show her something, and Draco would be trailing behind him looking exactly how he did right now, carefree and alive, watching her with those storm-coloured eyes of his.

The images of that future hit Hermione like a truck and the sudden ache of it not being reality hurt. It was the epiphany that she had been falling in love with him for the last few months, the way he was gentle yet dominating with her, that he allowed her to be herself in a safe space, the way he laughed with her friends and the softness in which he treated his mother. The way he was fiercely loyal and protective. The effort he would

his fingers and rubbing against the soft walls inside her, stroking that magical sweet spot. He could hear her trying and failing to keep her breath steady enough and focus clear enough to put sound to the words. Against his thigh, his hardening cock twitched. He needed more, more of her moans, more of her juices flowing over his fingers and tongue. Inside he could already feel tiny flutters of her building orgasm. He continued to build his speed, her moans infiltrated every sentence. He wasn't even paying attention to the article, he was too busy chasing her pleasure. One of her hands reached down and grabbed at his hair, the harder she gripped at the blonde wisps the faster his fingers and tongue moved.

She threw her head back and a loud gasping moan filled the penthouse. It was enough to drive him wild. His strokes slowed as he guided her through her orgasm.



28 SEPTEMBER 2003

Hermione was leaning against the island counter, a cup of freshly brewed coffee in her hands, the prophet spread out before her. Draco noticed that she had already placed his favourite mug next to the coffee pot for him. "Hey, are you busy this morning? I was thinking of heading to the markets, would you like to accompany me?" She asked without looking up

Draco hummed for a moment. "What time do you want to go?"

“Wait, wait, wait.” Hermione giggled. “Give me a minute but then do that again cause holy Merlin.”

Draco watched her and she went to the kitchen and began pulling open cupboards until she found what she was looking for, a very large glass jar. Draco watched her as she hummed a song while filling the sink with water. He continued to watch as she began pulling things from her pocket, realising with shock that it was every shell he had given her and was placing them in the sink. When she was satisfied that was all of them, she pulled her dress up and over her head with a smirk, leaving her breasts exposed as she was now in nothing but a pair of blue underwear.

Hermione walked back towards him “Now where were we?” She smirked. He reached forward, lifting her up around his waist, kissing her deeply. He stumbled with her through to the bedroom, growling each time

deeply that they toppled backwards into the sand behind her, their kiss never breaking.

Draco kissed her like that for a few moments before breaking and resting his forehead against hers. “I’m in love with you too, Hermione. Merlin, am I in love with you too.” He recaptured her lips with what could only be described as raw hunger.

Draco reared back, scrambling to his feet and offering Hermione his hand and pulling her back the way they had walked towards the townhouse.

“Draco! What about dinner!” She laughed.

He threw her a look that clearly said ‘fuck dinner’ She giggled and followed along behind him. They barely made it in the house when Draco grabbed her waist spun her around and slammed her up against the wall, his lips already at her throat licking at the salt from the beach air.

It wasn’t until Narcissa had been set up, with the small table in front of her, her dinner and coke on it that she seemed to have recovered from the shock. Draco felt in part that was due to the fact that she was watching in fascination at the images and words flashing across the screen as Hermione tried to find a movie she thought Narcissa would like.

“Ah!” Hermione cried out with a smile, selecting something called ‘The Princess Diaries.’

His mother seemed to forget the rest of the world existed, her eyes glued to the screen in front of her. Draco barely watched the movie, he was instead watching his mother clasp Hermione’s hand every so often, take the odd sip of Coca-Cola, gracefully try to eat into laughter at something happening in the movie. He looked at Hermione, the woman

responsible for it all and he knew that this was indeed what being in love felt like.

around hers. He kissed her so hard and face and the feel of his lips crashing down off by the feel of his hands grasping at her anything just ign-" she whispered but was cut with you...I'm sorry I shouldn't have said just ruined everything. "I said, I'm in love She swallowed, fear seizing her that she had dispersed.

He fell. "What did you just say? Say it again." He Shock passed over his face and his smile face and say it so bluntly but she did.

meant to stare up at him with a frown on her offering her yet another shell. She hadn't approached her wearing a goofy smile and She hadn't meant to blurt it out as he doors at the base of her back.

in passing comfort or guide her through feeling his hand stroke the back of her head she went too long without seeing him or anyway. That way in which she missed him if when she wouldn't, he would just know make for her if only she would ask, and even

her mouth evaded his. Finally, she found herself placed down on the bed.

Draco stood back taking her underwear with him. It was the first time she had been fully exposed to him since Vegas. He stood looking down at her, his eyes roaming over every inch of her, pinning her to the bed with lust in his eyes. "You really are fucking glorious Hermione." His voice barely a whisper but the deep desire in it sent goosebumps erupting all over her and heat rushing to her center.

"This hardly seems fair." She grinned back at him, still fully clothed. Draco didn't look away as he undid the few buttons he had bothered to do up in the first place. Beneath it, his defined muscles flexed with every movement. Scars rippled across his chest that she knew had been caused by Harry. She swallowed that guilt and let her eyes roam instead as the shirt dropped to the floor. Her eyes were drawn to the black mark etched

small sip, a wide delighted look appeared in her eyes as the bubbles no doubt hit her tongue.

He looked from Hermione to his mother and found himself relieved that he had married this witch on a drunken whim. Even if she decided to continue with the divorce, she could never take away this moment of seeing his mother breathing and living, not just surviving and existing.

"Oh my!" Narcissa cried out with a small giggle.

"Wait till you hear that we're eating on the couch." He laughed.

His mother looked as if someone had just told her Voldemort had risen from the dead again. "You can't be serious?!"

Hermione giggled. "He is, but it's because we wanted to show you a movie and we have what muggles call TV tray tables. It's like a miniature table that stores away."

about to get killed.
 nodded with far too much glee for someone
 She turned and shook her head at Theo who
 sounding laugh came out. "We're in Vegas?"
 and flung it open before a hysterical-
 Hermione had stomped over to the door
 "Theo!"
 sodding minute?" Draco snapped at her.
 "Oh, would you shove off Granger, for one
 at him.
 "I have a name you know?" Hermione spat
 and why is she here?"
 "Theo," Draco growled out. "Where are we
 motel room and Granger was with them.
 were standing in a rather shady-looking
 eyes open and groaned when he saw they
 This was bad. Draco slowly cracked his
 kill you!" Blaise roared.
 "Hitting you? Your lucky I don't fucking
 yelled out.
 "Ow! Ow! Stop hitting me!" Theo

"Use your teeth to take off Greg's socks."
 "Date."
 "Blaise, Truth or dare?"
 laughed.
 before hissing out a "Yes" while his friends
 Draco glared at her, he finished his drink
 thumb, was it true?"
 second year that you used to suck your
 She grinned. "Alright, I heard a rumour in
 "Truth"
 either. Malfoy, truth or dare?"
 nose twice. "Not the one you would think
 wider. She gave a quick tap on the tip of her
 Her face reddened but her grin spread
 proud shock.
 "Granger! You slept with two of the
 Weasley brothers?" Blaise exclaimed in
 Hermione smirked "Yes, yes I did."
 "You said Weasley twice." Theo said
 Finnigan, Weasley, Thomas."
 "Alright. Smallest Krum, Weasley, Wood,
 Hermione gave an embarrassed laugh.

His eyes grew wide in outrage "How dare you—"

"Yeah, yeah, spit on my name, dirty blood, blah blah blah. Drink up." She threw her drink back again. Blaise who was trying to hide a smirk threw his back too, Theo and Gregory following shortly after. All four of them stared at Draco expectedly. Draco let out a deep sigh and then downed his drink. Hermione was going to get them all very drunk, he was already feeling the room start to spin from the glasses of clear liquid she was pouring down their throats, something called Vodka.

"Alright Granger, truth or dare?" Blaise asked her as he watched her refilling his drink.

"Truth."

"In order from smallest to largest, rank the size of your sexual partners' appendages." He said with a smirk.

She shook her head in disbelief "Fuck me." She muttered and before anyone could react to that or the knowledge that they were in Las Vegas she stormed off slamming the door behind her.

Gregory raised an eyebrow at them as if they were going to do something.

Blaise lurched forward having apparently finally snapped. "What the fuck Theo!" He yelled, tackling him to the ground and aiming to punch Theo in the head. Gregory dove to pull him off him before his fist collided.

"Right everyone calm down!" Draco found himself yelling. "Everyone just take a minute." He said, calmer this time.

Draco ran his hand through his hair. "Okay... Okay... We're in Vegas? As in America?"

Theo nodded and looked at each other in silence. The motel door swung open again a few minutes later and Hermione walked back

“Oh, that’s nasty.” Theo chuckled.

After some difficulty, he managed to successfully complete the dare, making sure to throw them in Draco’s face when he was done, drinking two large glasses of alcohol in quick succession to ‘get the taste’ out of his mouth.

“Gregory, truth or dare?”

Greg raised an eyebrow “After that one? Truth.”

“Have you ever given bad love advice to a friend so you could move in on their crush?”

Gregory threw a quick glance Draco’s way, before nodding. “Yeah, Pansy in third year. Failed epically anyway.”

Draco had started to feel rather hot from the alcohol coursing through his system, he offered a smile to show that he had no hard feelings.

“Theo, truth or dare man?”

“Dare, definitely dare.”

“So boring posh bullshit?” She cut him off. Theo laughed “Yeah pretty much.”

“You say that because you’ve never experienced aristocratic culture Granger.” Draco defended, annoyed.

Hermione threw her head back and laughed. “Oh Lord, that truly is what you believe isn’t it? That I’m a muggle therefore I must be poor. My family are incredibly well off Malfoy. Pour que tu puisses te faire toute avec tes conneries biaisées. Maintenant tais-toi et bois ton énorme crétin.”

in with several bottles of what appeared to be muggle alcohol.

“Alright. We may as well enjoy ourselves since we’re here.” She explained and retrieved five glasses from the cupboard, pouring generous amounts of booze into each one. “Down the hatch it goes.” She said, throwing back the first glass before handing the other four to each of them.

“Merlin Granger, steady on,” Gregory exclaimed.

Her look silenced him. They all downed their drinks only to be refilled seconds later. “Right, we’re going to play a game of truth or dare,” Hermione said taking control of the situation. “Everyone knows how to play? It’s pretty self-explanatory if you can’t work it out then... Well, I can’t help you.”

“Who put you in charge?” Draco growled out.

Hermione pinned him with a look. “Oh, I’m sorry. Do you know how to function in



CHAPTER 24: WHERE IT STARTED:

...THE NIGHT IN QUESTION...

He knew that something had gone wrong the second he was pulled out the other side of the portkey. His eyes were pressed closed and he felt a little queasy, that had taken far too long to have nipped them off to France.

“Theodore Nott!” A high-pitched screech assaulted his ears. Oh no. Draco thought to himself. Oh no... that sounded like...

for some American muggle money, apparently, there was a difference, she had then exchanged the American money for some plastic circular discs. Each of them had taken to 'the tables' Blaise had won a few rounds in a game called roulette, but then he had promptly lost as much.

Theo had terrible luck on craps.

Draco had given the brightly lit machines a go, he was doing quite well he thought, Hermione and Gregory had wandered off to something called blackjack, turns out Hermione wasn't bad because she won a few thousand dollars. Gregory, however, seemed to be the natural amongst them as he raked in jackpot after jackpot, he had also somehow acquired some older gentleman's hat.

Hermione was either wildly stroking his ego or he had just become comfortably wealthy in the muggle world. Blaise was barely capable of standing up having had several

more drinks at the bar while waiting for them. After he nearly got into a fight with a guy nearby over something trivial they decided to head back to the motel briefly to come up with a plan about how to spend the night and hopefully sober up Blaise a fraction.

That was of course when shit hit the fan.

"What the fuck do you mean you didn't organize a portkey home?" Blaise screamed at Theo. Theo didn't even have time to answer before Blaise started throwing punches.

"Okay everyone calm down!" Hermione slurred. "Where is the magical embassy?"

She seemed content to feed him to the wolves when Theo shrugged. Her hands waved out dramatically in an "I can't even."

Way.

Draco knew he should be angry, he knew he should be pulling Blaise off Theo, but he was much too distracted by Hermione's ass.

Everyone erupted into surprised cheering, cries of congratulations drawing the attention of several nearby tables.

Draco looked down at his wife and saw that she looked quite pleased with herself. "That's what Theo wanted your help with, wasn't it? He whispered into her hair. Her nod made him smile.

"Please for the love of Merlin, tell me that we get to plan the bachelor party. Think you owe us that one mate." Blaise asked motioning between Draco and himself.

Draco chuckled into his drink. As if Theo could stop them.

"Oh! Can I help with the Bachelorette party?" Hermione piped up with a smirk.

"Granger, wipe that look off your face right now, i had nothing to do with that, don't punish me for Theo's mistakes." Daphne pointed at her, attempting and failing to stop herself from smiling.

"Well, Hermione and I have something we would like to tell you guys." He paused to look at her. "We have decided not to pursue a divorce." He smiled at everyone's pleased faces becoming back at him.

"Oh, you know what. You guys should get married again! Do it properly this time with more than a drunk Greg and Theo!" Astoria exclaimed.

Draco and Hermione looked at each other wrinkling their noses in disagreement, smiles pulling at the edge of their mouths.

"Maybe for our anniversary?" Hermione joked but immediately Astoria and Ginny started whispering away to each other.

"O! You two." Daphne snapped at them, causing them to look at her with a frown. Daphne broke out with a large grin. "If you want to plan a wedding maybe you would consider helping me plan mine? Theo and I are engaged!"

“I dare you to kiss five random strangers tonight with no explanation.”
 Theo grinned “Brilliant.”
 Hermione stood on wobbly legs. “How are we all feeling?”
 “Rather inebriated Granger, how do you think?”
 “Fantastic let’s go then shall we?”
 The casino was bright and loud and swarming with people. There were weirdly shaped metal boxes with pictures that spun when a muggle pulled a lever. As far as he could tell, certain pictures produced more of the muggle coins than others. Theo had barely made it through the door before he had kissed every member of a passing group. Four women and three men who all stared at him as if he was mental. Hermione giggled, pulling him away claiming that he was French and muttering some rushed apology.
 Hermione had exchanged some of the British muggle money she had in her purse

Her dress highlighted every curve of it and all he wanted to do was take a bite out of it...

“Ouch!” She screamed when he did exactly that “What the FUCK Malfoy?!”

He gave her what he hoped was a seductive look. “Just appreciating your fine ass.”

She stared at him for a bit before bursting into laughter. “Dude you’re so drunk.”

“Hey guys” Gregory called from the doorway to the bathroom that he was now holding closed. “A little help?”

Hermione flicked her wand and the door clicked audibly. They all stared at the door when they heard a thump on the other side of it. “Okay. So give him an hour to sleep it off, we need to find a way home so he doesn’t kill Theo. At least not before I do. So no portkey, no embassy... We need an owl... Oh, I know!! The zoo will have owls!” She cried out.

“Malfoy.” Draco, Blaise, Gregory, Theo and Ginny corrected her unanimously. The whole table laughed and offered up a round of cheers at their announcements.



Draco looked around the table at his friends old and new. He was even happy that Ron and Luna were here tonight, it was strange to think to himself that he had missed their presence over the previous few weeks. Ginny eyed the arm Draco had draped across the back of Hermione’s chair and his thumb running back and forth on her shoulder before looking at him with a knowing look.

Theo and Daphne whispered excitedly together. It was nice to look around the table and see everyone. Gregory was engaged with Harry about something at the ministry. Astoria whispered excitedly to Luna about the baby, who they had today found out was a girl. Molly had burst into tears apparently and Ginny rolled her eyes when Ron told her she was no longer their mum’s favourite.

of them.
 around her waist and pulled her down on top
 tried to pull him up but Draco's arms snaked
 lightweight." Hermione walked over and
 "Nope, no you don't, get up you fucking
 drink he fell backwards.
 end of the double bed and as he drained his
 further argument. Draco was sitting on the
 Greg sighed and accepted the drink without
 smirked back at her.
 She jabbed her finger at Theo, who just
 practically pinched motion "To killing him."
 she held her index and thumb up in a
 situation then yes, because I'm this close."
 you want to be dealing with a murder
 Hermione gave him a stern face. "Unless
 "Is that a good idea?" Greg slurred.
 Large ones at that.
 poured another series of drinks for them.
 pamphlet around. To everyone's horror, she
 "I got a map!" Hermione claimed waving a

Greg stared at him when they had left the room. "What the fuck was he thinking?" Was all he said, Draco shrugged and tried to focus on a spot in the room that wasn't tilting. After another minute Greg snapped at him again. "What the fuck are you thinking by the way? Stop hitting on her." He finished with a laugh.

Draco smirked and gave another shrug "She's fine."

Theo bustled into the room with his arms loaded with weird plastic packages with pictures of food on them. Hermione waved her wand from the motel door. Theo opened the door currently containing Blaise in the bathroom and dumped them onto the man who was asleep with his head next to the toilet. "For you to calm down." He said as Blaise's eyes flew open. Quickly he pulled the door closed again and Hermione locked it once more.



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"You're serious? You're not pulling my foot or whatever the saying is? You promise?" Narcissa beamed from ear to ear.

"Yes mother, Hermione and I have decided to remain married."

"Oh, but that's wonderful news!" Narcissa cried, pulling them both in for hugs.

"You're the first to know. We're going to dinner tonight with everyone else, we will tell them then but we wanted you to be the first." Hermione smiled at her mother-in-law.

“Granget it’s like two in the morning, the zoo isn’t open.” Theo chuckled as if she was the idiot here.

She glared his way. “You should hope not since I’ll be stealing the fucking thing.”

“Where are we going to find a zoo Granget? Do you know your way around here?” Draco droned, his eyes still on her ass. Had Granget’s ass always looked so good?

Hermione caught him looking because a moment later she smacked him around the back of the head. He offered a weak ‘sorry.’ But given that he was smiling and trying not to chuckle it didn’t seem to be very effective. Draco reached out and tried to grab onto her hip but she swatted him away with a laugh. “I’ll go to the reception, often places like this have heaps of pamphlets on things to do in the area. For the love of god. Stay here and do not wander off. Theo, you’re with me.”

Behind them, Theo started whistling. Hermione giggled and punched Draco in the chest playfully until he let her go. “Come on Casanova, we need to save your best friend’s wedding.”

The motel Blaise was currently sleeping off his drunken rage in was on a boulevard of brightly lit shops. They were stumbling along trying their best to keep Theo from entering every single one.

“I just can’t believe you won so much money, have you really never played blackjack before?” Hermione frowned up at Greg, who for some reason had brought a beer with him from the miniature ice box at the motel. Draco wasn’t clear on why, Greg could barely see straight as it was. Then again, perhaps he wasn’t one to talk, having done the same.

“Nope! Luck..lucky..lucky what’s it called... Beginner’s luck!” He cried out, raising his glass to the air.

“Oh thank you!” Tears welled in Narcissa’s eyes. She looked at them with a sly look for a moment. “Any chance of convincing you two to give me a grandchild anytime soon?”

Draco and Hermione snorted. “I’m afraid not mother, at least not in the next two or three years. Hermione and I have a lot we wish to do before we have children.”

Narcissa narrowed her eyes at him as if to say ‘We’ll see about that.’

“We told our healer yesterday that we wanted to continue with our marriage, she would like us to continue to see her once a month as a couple and twice a month as individuals. We also want to travel a bit first as well, Narcissa, we were hoping you would be open to accompanying us sometime?”

Hermione explained, clearly catching the look too.

Narcissa beamed and pulled them in for another hug.

His words sent her undone, her back arching off the bed, shattering around him with a scream of his name.

“Oh fuck Hermione!” His eyes closed as he followed her over that edge. He released her legs with a shaky breath, lowering them to either side of him. Draco leant down and placed a kiss on her forehead, the tip of her nose and then her soft lips.

“Draco?” She whispered, tracing her nails up and down his back.

“Mmm?” He murmured as he began to stroke her hair.

“I don’t want to get divorced.” His laughter filled the room at her statement.

“Hermione, you ripped that option off the table the second you told me you loved me, you silly witch, I am never letting you go.”

"Sounds like you're afraid of mummy." Hermione teased.

Draco nodded with a grin "Unashamedly so."

"The woman can be scary." Theo tapped Draco's shoulder in solidarity.

"Sounds like you're the pussy then Draco," Greg smirked.

"I got a tattoo, you don't, and you wouldn't cause you're too snooty for it." Draco shrugged.

"Stop saying that." Greg groaned.

"I dare you to get one then, prove us wrong." Hermione chirped up from his other side.

"Don't bother Mione, he won't do it." Draco waved his hand dismissively.

"You just called me Mione." Hermione stared at him for a long time.

Draco stared back, finally offering a noncommittal shrug. "It's your name, isn't it?"

"Why would I get a unicorn on my dick? Tell Greg to get a unicorn on his dick." Theo grumbled.

Draco snorted. "Greg wouldn't get a tattoo, he's too much of a tight ass." Greg threw a glare his way. Draco shrugged, finishing his beer. "What you are. Far too much of a pussy."

"I am not, I'm just not an idiot."

"Pussy." Theo chuckled. Draco and Theo started laughing and leaning against each other. Hermione smirked at them with a shake of her head.

"Shut up, you get one then Draco if you're so tough." Greg retorted

Draco snorted again. "I already did remember? Still trying to get rid of that one thank you very much. Besides, I'm pretty sure if I come home with anything else permanently attached to me then my mother will kill me."

slightly, coming back forward he pushed himself into her. She cried out in pleasure, at the sudden fullness.

"Fuck Hermione." He hissed with his own pleasure. Hermione's back arched up toward him, his arm circled under her in response, pulling her closer. His other still held his weight above her. He rolled his hips again, pushing deeper into her than before, pulling husky moans from her in the process. His answering growl was feral and he was doing all he could to keep control. He rolled his hips again, one of her knees came up to rest at his hip.

He wondered if she could hear his heart pounding in his chest, threatening to burst through it at any moment. He felt her nails dig into his back, scratching down it. His fingertips dug firmly into her waist. Draco rolled his hips with more force, pulling more of those sweet cries from her. Her body was already trembling from the explosion of her

magic recognizing his. Each thrust left her gasping, "That's it, baby." He growled into her neck. "Come for me, darling." Draco moved the arm under her waist to push her knee further back towards her. Forcing a deeper angle that rubbed directly against the magic spot inside her.

Hermione threw her head back, digging her nails in deep enough that Draco was sure she was drawing blood. Her core clamped down around his cock, gripping it tightly causing him to hiss in restraint. "That's a good girl, that's a good fucking girl." He groaned before slowing his movements as she came down from her high. When she seemed to have returned to earth he sat up to lean on the heels of his feet, moving both her legs to his shoulders where he pinned them with one of his arms, thrusting into her again frantically.

"Oh god! Draco!" Hermione screamed as she threw her head back against the mattress.

“Herher!” Draco called out. “Guys!” Theo had stopped dead, his face against the glass of a shop whose windows were littered with little drawings. “Oh, it’s a tattoo shop,” Hermione explained stumbling to a stop. Draco had to admit he was impressed with how well she was doing in those high heels, they definitely didn’t look comfortable but damn did they look good, they made her legs look so long and deliciously slender. “A what?” Draco mumbled. “You know like the dark mark, ‘cept not linked to a dark lord of evil.” Greg stepped forward to watch in the window as the tattoo artist worked on a woman’s ankle. “It looks pretty cool, and they can do whatever picture you like?” “Yeah. Yeah, whatever you want man. If Theo wanted a unicorn on his dick they could do it.”

It’s a pretty name. Hermione. Hermione. Hermione. Hermione. Herm—

“Hey guys?” Theo called out

“-ione.

Heeeerrrrrrmmmmmmmmiiiiioooooonnnnnneeee.

It sounds a bit strange though when you say it too many times. Like it’s not a proper word. Hermione.” Draco continued. Hermione stared at him wide-eyed for a moment before bursting into laughter.

“Guys!” Theo called again a bit more urgently, causing them to look up. Theo was looking in the shop window, lazily pointing towards one of the tattoo stations.

“Oh shit!” Hermione laughed before rushing into the shop.

“Greg, what the hell are you doing!” She chuckled.

“What does it look like? I’m going to get a tattoo, prove you guys wrong.”

The tattoo artist looked up at the approaching group from his stool with an

The energy between them was terrifying, it was hot and snapped like fire, sparking and crackling away. Her arousal flowed freely, coating him in the hot sticky mess with every snap of his hips. The pleasure building in the pit of his stomach was blinding, the feel of her walls fluttering around him with every thrust. Her fingers groped at the sheets, scrunching them tightly. “Fuck, Hermione. That’s it, baby.” He encouraged. He curled one arm around her thigh, his thumb coming down to circle her clit. His speed picked up to match the speed of his thrusts. Her moans were loud and like music to his ears. “Come on my love, give me another one.” He groaned “You can do it, you’re fucking gorgeous, especially when you’re coming all over this cock, it’s yours you know. I’m fucking yours, Hermione, forever. So use me, use me to make yourself come.”

into his forearm before flying up to meet his where he eyed her for any reaction but she had none. She held no ill feelings toward him and his involvement in the war. They had all been children, something that had become more and more apparent with every passing year.

With a flick of the button, he discarded his trousers and boxers, revealing a fully naked version of himself. Hermione’s eyes widened at the size of him, she had felt it the other morning sure, but it was another thing to see him so up close. His eyes were so dark they were nearly black. He came down to balance above her, those eyes staring down at her, his rigid member pressed against her.

“Tell me again.” He demanded. She didn’t need him to tell her what he meant, she knew.

“I’m in love with you Draco. I’m in love with you and I’m yours.” She told him, looking him in the eyes. He rolled back

Elated when she pulled out the mobile phone Draco had gotten her for her Christmas last year. Her heart dropped a little when she saw that she had 8% battery and no service. She looked around at the buildings of the seemingly deserted area.

“Hey Gin I’m going to go try to get service okay? Stay here in the shade.” She called over her shoulder absently. Making her way to the first and the tallest building here. It was indeed deserted, and after a few minutes, she managed to find her way onto the roof.

“Come on.. come on..” she grumbled, desperately trying to find a bar of service. She nearly leapt for joy when she got one.

Ring
Ring
Ring

“Mione..” Theo’s voice sounded on the other end.

“Theo put Draco on. I need his help.”

signs of writing she could see were all in a language she did not recognise.

Behind her, she heard the distinct sounds of Ginny vomiting almost violently into a discarded trash can.

Her wand was gone, who knows where. Luna, Daphne, Millicent and Astoria were nowhere to be seen. In fact, there wasn’t a single soul as far as she could see.

She tried to think, to remember anything about how they had gotten to this point, again. Panicking, she looked at her hand and was relieved to see her wedding ring still on her finger.

“Hey Gin..” Hermione turned, stumbling toward the redhead. “Do you remember anything about where we might be?”

The girl gasped in the air that she had been struggling to get while emptying her stomach. Still breathless she shook her head.

“I was afraid you were going to say that,” Hermione mumbled, patting her pockets.

The hotel clerk was rather amused by the sight of them but when Hermione dumped hundreds of thousands worth of chips onto their counter they obliged with pretty much every request she gave them, including to reserve the honeymoon suite for Astoria and Blaise as she later explained was to make up for the craziness. Her feet were raw and her skin was torn and bleeding just below her Achilles heels as well as on her pinky toes.

“Christ Granger,” Draco grumbled in second-hand pain just from looking at them. He waved a quick healing charm over both her feet as she fell backwards on the bed, barely bothering to brush her hair out of her face. He walked down the hall to find Theo but found his room already empty, likely to go fetch Blaise. Frankly, he was tired and sore and his head hurt. Perhaps it would be best to leave their hotel key in his room in case he had trouble remembering which one they were in once morning time arrived.

Stumbling back off to his and Hermione’s room he was shocked to find her clothes had been discarded on the floor. “Hmmm, there he is, my husband.” Hermione giggled from the bed, only a sheet covering what appeared to be her very naked body.

“Granger.” He chuckled. “What are you doing?!”

“It’s hot and my clothes are constricting and they were making me feel sick.” She mumbled with a pout. “Besides, what does it matter if you see me naked, husband?”

“I suppose it doesn’t. It is hot isn’t it?” He realised just how overheated he felt and he couldn’t decide if it came from the desert heat or the excessive amounts of alcohol still coursing through his system. It wasn’t until he was sitting still on the edge of the bed that he realised how much the room was spinning.

“...NEARLY ONE YEAR LATER...”

The sun was barely in the sky and it already felt like a thousand degrees. She was hot, sticky and her head felt like it had been split open. She squinted as she looked around the desert surrounding them.

Where the fuck were they?

A total of six buildings stood tall next to them, surrounded by desert wasteland. Any

CHAPTER 25: WHERE IT ENDED:



There was a long pause of silence. Hermione checked to make sure the call hadn't dropped out.

She just opened her mouth to speak again when Theo responded.

“I would Mione.. but uh... I don't know where he is. It um... it happened again.”

Her heart dropped. “No... no Theo!!”

“I know Mione but listen I'll find them and it will be okay and I'll get him to call you back.”

“No Theo. You don't get it. My phone's going to die soon...and it happened again with us too. I don't even know what country we're in, and Ginny is the only one with me..” she groaned.

“Well fuck.” Theo laughed. “I guess Blaise got his revenge after all...”

“Theo, you're supposed to get married tomorrow. What are we going to do?!”

“Mione. It will be okay. I promise.”

“You should take your clothes off. I feel so much better.” Hermione mumbled half asleep.

Draco ripped his shirt off, suddenly feeling it was too tight, his eyes closing as he shredded the rest of his clothes. “Goodnight wife.” He mumbled.

“Goodnight Draco” her barely coherent response came. He was already asleep before his head hit the pillow.

smirk on her face. “Think of it as payback for us being married.” She giggled.

Hermione was somehow still coherent enough to think to wipe the cameras as they hitched themselves and the shrunk-down penguins over the wall again. She was clearly hitting the wall though because they were halfway between the wedding chapel and the motel Blaise was locked away in when she stopped, leaning against the wall of a building with an alarming lack of balance.

“I'm tired.” She whined. Draco looked around and spotted a bigger, more comfortable-looking hotel.

“Get on.” Draco bent down, offering his back for her to climb on.

“Naww, what a good husband looking after his wife.” Theo teased but Hermione grinned.

“He is a good husband isn't he?” She stumbled over and climbed onto Draco's back.

were helping pull up Theo when Greg fell
 with a thump onto the path below them,
 completely blacked out.
 The three of them sat, peering down at him
 from the top of the wall and giggled at him.
 “We will deal with him later, come on, we
 need to find an owl,” Hermione whispered
 and dropped down looking at the map for a
 moment and then crept off towards the
 birdhouse. She felt bad when she charmed
 the poor thing but they needed to get help
 quickly.
 The zoo was a different time at night, most
 of the animals were asleep in their
 enclosures, the odd animal waking to peer
 out at them from within.
 “Hey guys, what are these things, they look
 so cute!” Theo exclaimed pointing into an
 enclosure with some odd-looking black and
 white birds.
 “Those are penguins,” Hermione
 whispered back. “They are really interesting,
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they mate for life, and then when it’s mating
 season, they all huddle together, taking turns
 to be on the outside, the males keep the egg
 warm while the females go off to hunt the
 fish but they are incredibly loyal to their
 partners.”

“Nawww like Blaise and Astoria. It’s a
 shame he’s in such a mood, he would like
 these guys.”

Draco stared at him. “Theo. You
 kidnapped him and the rest of us and didn’t
 even plan a way home. I think his mood is
 warranted.” Draco stated obviously.

“We should borrow a few for him, cheer
 him up.” Hermione giggled. Draco grinned
 at his new wife.

“No.” He shook his head.

“Oh come on, live a little husband.” She
 exaggerated that final word, turning his own
 words back on him.

He regretted his choice to give in though
 when they approached Gregory’s sleeping

All she could do was sigh and think 'Well
shit. Here we go again.'

When she turned she had a devious little levitated him in to join the rest of the gorillas. replaced Greg's sleeping form before she her wand over him and a gorilla slowly levitated Greg over to the enclosure, waving fine but he's too heavy to carry." Hermione "We will come back and get him, it will be "Malfoy." Theo corrected absently.

hissed. "Granger, what are you doing?" Draco handed Draco the penguin in her hand.

Hermione scoffed. "Hold this." She forms just like Greg. several large gorillas all sleeping in spread-out now." He pointed into an enclosure that held chuckled. "These guys look like Greg tight they would be able to carry him. Theo he wouldn't wake up and there was no way named Peckory and Millibcak, and realised their hands, Theo with two that he had form, each with a shrunken down penguin in

perhaps that the man sell her a men's wedding band.

She was more annoyed when they stumbled across a wedding chapel only a little way down the road. Both Theo and Greg insisted they go in and get the ceremony over and done with and she was even more annoyed when she found that Malfoy was rather enjoying this little joke of theirs. She cursed herself when she found herself enjoying his kiss or the way he would throw his arm around her and pull her closer. She reminded herself that they were just drunk and having a bit of fun and the lady there was so sweet and cheerful it was hard to argue that this was a mistake.

Breaking into the zoo was far easier than she had anticipated it to be. Theo, Draco and her had hoisted Greg up the wall, then Draco had lifted Granger up, whistling as he snuck a look up her dress. Hermione and Greg helped pull Draco up, Draco and Hermione

to him.

on the bench. Hermione's eyes drifted over
 "Hey, Granger?" Greg called from his spot.
 mouth hanging open staring at him in shock.
 clutching the velvet box in one hand and her
 in shock. Then he was gone, leaving her
 react, her hands just waving around in the air
 closer. Hermione was too shocked to even
 arm winding around her waist and pulling her
 slamming his mouth against hers, his other
 the back of her neck and pulled her in,
 Draco reached forward and grabbed her by
 "Malfoy, shut up. You do not—"

"I might," Draco stated with a shrug.

to marry me—"

and I aren't getting married, he doesn't want
 frown. "Greg, don't be ridiculous! Malfoy
 "What?" Hermione looked at him with a
 Greg called out.

"Oh, you two totally have to get married!"
 and Hermione, in surprise.
 at the ring in the box, looking between Draco

"You dared me to get a tattoo, it will be on
 my body permanently for the rest of my life.
 I think it's only fair that I dare you two to get
 married."

"Gre—"

"Okay." Malfoy shrugged. Hermione
 glared at him.

"We are not getting married! We're not
 even friends for fuck sake!" She screeched.

"I'm sorry what?!" The tattoo artist asked.
 "Do you typically go around buying jewellery
 that costs thousands of dollars for people
 you're not even mates with?"

"Well no but we don't typically go around
 getting our friends tattooed either." Theo
 offered.

"Oh come on Granger, live a little! How
 many years did you spend on the—"

Hermione's eyes widened at how close he
 was to revealing their secrets to the muggles
 in this shop but Draco seemed to catch
 himself in time.

“Goody two shoes train. Go wild for once. Unless you’re a pussy. Greg isn’t a pussy. He didn’t back down from a dare. You’re not gonna let a bunch of snakes beat you at your own game are you, little lion?”
 Hermione narrowed her eyes at him. She knew somewhere deep within herself that she should say no. This was a terrible idea, they were all incredibly drunk, in a foreign country and stranded. Instead, her pride got in the way and she slid the ring on her finger. “Fine.” She hissed.
 The tattoo man let out a shaky and disbelieving laugh. “You guys are out the gate.” He finished off the last of the tattoo on Greg’s butt cheek and sat back with a satisfied smirk. “Man, I wish I could be a fly on the wall of your hotel room tomorrow. All done.”
 She had promptly entered the same jewelry store that the ring had been purchased from, demanding rather rudely

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to leave the boys here as punishment, which would be fair, but she wanted to make sure Astoria got her wedding day. Astoria would be the best bet realistically, nothing like a pissed-off bride to get things done.

“Hermione!” Draco called out, stumbling into the shop again, both he and Theo wearing entirely new outfits apart from Draco’s suit jacket which he wore like a blazer. Theo grinning behind him. “I got you a present!” He shoved a little blue velvet box at her.

She opened it and felt her mouth fall open, her eyes wide as dinner plates.

“Malfoy! What the fuck dude!?” She screeched.

“It’s pretty right? Like you.” He grinned

“Malfoy this is an engagement ring, an incredibly expensive engagement ring by the looks of it!” She hissed a little too loudly. Unfortunately, it also got the attention of the tattoo artist and Greg who both looked over

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a grin. “Genitalia is a hard pass for me, especially this drunk. I can put a unicorn on your ass though?”

He asked Greg, he was clearly very amused by their little group. Greg yanked down his pants over his ass cheeks and flopped onto his stomach. The tattoo guy shook his head with a grin.

“Do not put a unicorn on his butt!” Hermione cried out exasperated.

“Something’s going on my butt Granger, I don’t care what it is.”

Hermione threw her hands up again, shaking her head in disbelief. “You might not care right now but I promise in the morning you will be glad that I didn’t let you get a fucking unicorn drawn onto you permanently.”

The guy, who was now wiping a cloth with disinfectant over Greg’s butt cheek nodded. “She’s right, man. You’re likely to still regret

this anyway but a unicorn will make it so much worse.”

“Aww!” Theo whined in disappointment from behind them. Hermione spun around so fast hissing at him to be quiet that Draco threw his own hands up in innocence. He gave her an appreciative scan though.

“Granger you’re sexy when you’re feisty you know that?” He bit at his bottom lip.

Hermione chuckled quietly, closed her eyes and let out an annoyed sigh. “You cut it out too. Christ.”

She turned back to the tattoo artist who was already drawing something onto Greg’s ass cheek with a marker. “How about that?” He said sitting back after a minute. Hermione peered down at the cartoon-style playing card, a king, with stick figure arms and legs that had cowboy boots on and a cowboy hat resting along its top side. “You said he won big on blackjack right?”

Hermione nodded "Yeah, a little over half a mill." She offered.

The artist whistled. "Congrats dude. That's impressive, I feel less guilty taking your two grand now. Do you want to go take a look in the mirror and make sure you're happy with it?"

"Nope, just do it," Greg stated with determination.

The tattoo guy shook his head but he started up his machine anyway and got to work. She looked up to tell the boys to come to have a look but found that they were not in the shop. "Oh for fuck sake." She sighed and collapsed into a couch pushed against the wall. The tattoo guy chuckled but said nothing.

The ten minutes that all boys were preoccupied doing lord knows what gave Hermione the chance to think about what she was going to do. Harry would be able to get to them quickly but he might be inclined

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amused grin. "I don't like to tattoo, when people are this drunk, they usually wake up regretting it but the dude won't take no for an answer. Threw two grand on the bench and said he's not leaving till he gets something, any suggestions?"

Hermione sighed. "He won big on the tables, like mega big. Natural at blackjack but a bit of an idiot it seems." She looked at Greg. "I was joking, I'm letting you off the dare, don't be dumb."

He looked up at her with a grin and pulled the finger. "Fuck you, Granger, don't be all nice about it now, I leave we both know ill never hear the end of it. Tattoo me, my dude."

"He really wants a unicorn on his dick," Theo said before he and Draco delved into fits of laughter.

Hermione looked back at them in shock. She had just turned to argue not to but the tattoo guy was already shaking his head with

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