



# Sæglópur

by femmequixotic

*At the top I turn around, and my breath catches. The entire valley's spread beneath us, wide and shallow, the inlets weaving through reeds and swamp. Magic pulses around us. I lay one hand against the stone, and a jolt goes through me, aching and painful, the agonies and joys of a millennium twisting around my body, burning into my skin. I can see the valley the way it once was, wild and rugged and filled with hundreds of tents and familial banners. They wait below, all of them, faces upturned, looking for the man who'll step up to this rock and speak to them, his spelled voice carrying across the throng.*

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## **Written October 2010**

**Summary:** After a difficult breakup, Draco finds himself dragged to the land of magic, law, and natural wonders where, of course, *nothing* goes as planned.

**Warnings:** EWE, public sex

**Disclaimer:** Characters within (with the exception of original characters) are the property of J.K.Rowling, Bloomsbury, Scholastic and Warner Brothers. No infringement is intended.

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## one

Breaking up with Harry Potter is surprisingly underwhelming.

I don't know what I expected. A typical Gryffindor strop, I suppose. Raised voices, possibly an explosion, certainly a shattered glass or two. I'll admit to twinge of pique that the Dorchester's stemware stays disappointingly intact. I'm a brilliant fuck, for Christ's sake.

Instead, at my *we're done, Potter*, Harry just shrugs and sets his whisky down. I'm irked by how his nonchalance stings. He drags a fingertip around the wet rim of his glass as he says, "So I assume you don't want to go upstairs." He doesn't look at me.

"No." That's a lie. Of course I do. For the past eight months we've met here at the Dorchester's bar for a drink or two at least once or twice a week--more that fortnight in April when the damned departmental budgets were due Ministrywide and we were attempting to avoid our respective department heads--and then gone upstairs to fuck each other senseless. We've kept our affair private, meeting only in Muggle spaces and continuing our legendary arguments throughout the Ministry corridors as befits the Deputy Head Auror and a rising barrister of the Crown Prosecution Service (Wizengamot Division). Not even Pansy knows I've been spreading my thighs for the one man I purport to despise. She'll kill me if she ever finds out.

Harry rotates his glass, watching the whisky slosh up the sides. The mahogany bar curves past us; the bottles behind it glint in the dim lighting. I eye my watch. It's twenty after seven. The dinner crowd will be arriving soon.

With a sigh I straighten my cufflinks before I reach for my glass. "You do realise, I was quite clear when we started all this." I sip my wine and lean against the bar. I refuse to feel guilty. I'd told him from the first night that he was only a distraction, only someone to shag until Terry came home. He'd kissed me and agreed, his fingers fumbling eagerly at my trousers' zip.

"I know." Harry looks over at me. His hair, desperately in need of a cut, hangs over the rims of his glasses. He's slouched on the bar stool, his black jacket unbuttoned, his tie slightly askew. Even I know the proper way to wear Muggle clothing. And yet despite his rumpled, nearly unkempt appearance, every damned person in this bar has given him an appreciative glance at least once. It's really quite annoying.

"Well, then." I set my glass aside. "We understand each other--"

Harry's hand falls heavy on my wrist. I try not to flinch. "You mean Boot's back from Hong Kong."

"Yes." I watch as Harry's thumb strokes the back of my hand. "I told you--" I pull my hand away. I can still feel the warmth of his fingers against my skin. "I have to go. He's waiting."

"Here." Harry's mouth thins.

There's no sense in lying. "We've a booking for dinner." I hesitate. "At half-seven."

For a moment I'm not certain he won't hex me on the spot. I hold my breath, almost hoping he will. Instead he shrugs again and picks up his whisky. "Give him my regards."

He doesn't stop me when I walk away.

I tell myself I'm not disappointed.



## two

"You look blissfully happy," Pansy says as I sit down. I've barely seen her in days; I've spent as much time as I can--and yet not enough time in my opinion; his job's kept him busy more nights than I care for--in bed with Terry. I wonder briefly how Harry is. We haven't crossed paths at work. The waiter attempts to hand me a menu, but I wave him off before he can begin rattling off the day's specials.

"The salmon with pesto," I say, "and a glass of Chevalier-Montrachet '93." I glance at Pansy. "You've ordered?"

She lifts a Bellini at me. Her fingernails gleam scarlet against the glass. "And the insalata caprese since I'm quite aware you won't let me get by with drinking my lunch."

"Wise woman." I drape my napkin across my lap, and I smile faintly. "As for being happy, yes. I am."

Pansy eyes me over the rim of her glass, one brow raised. She sets her Bellini down and reaches for a breadstick in the basket between us. "I didn't realise you'd missed Terry so much."

"Neither did I." I meet her gaze, and my smile widens. It's been two weeks since he's been home, and I'm already used to waking up beside him again, his hand on my hip, his breath even and soft against the nape of my neck. Terry's gentle when we fuck, nothing like Harry with his rough hands and eager mouth, pressing me up against the headboard until I'm gasping, leaving me with purpling love bites and a sore arse the next day. Terry doesn't wake me up at three in the morning, his fingers already inside of me. Terry doesn't grab me when I walk past him and tumble me onto the bed, tugging at my clothes five minutes before we have to leave for work. Terry's more considerate. More careful. More...Terry.



Honestly, it's really quite a pleasant change not to be rutted raw by a randy ruffian. And if we're slightly awkward with each other still, well, that's to be expected. It's been a year, after all, that we've been apart--not by my choice, mind. I'm far from being selfless, no matter how good an opportunity it might have been for his career. But neither Terry nor the *Prophet* had listened to my protests. *It's only a year*, Terry had said calmly after I threatened to hex his balls to his arse--I might have had a touch too much to drink that night, I'll admit--*and then we'll see where we are when I get back*.

Arrangements had been negotiated in regards to our relationship, so that fucking someone else was acceptable--I'm not that great a fool to expect either of us to be celibate for twelve months, for Christ's sake; we were barely twenty-nine after all, and to waste a year of our prime wanking into tissues due to some emotional attachment is just bloody idiotic--and, while accompanying Terry to the departure Floopoint the *Prophet* had set up, I'd threatened Daphne Greengrass--the copy-editor who had been sent with him to establish the *Prophet's* Pacific Rim bureau--within an inch of her near-worthless life if she let anything untoward happen to him.

She'd just rolled her eyes and told me not to be an overdramatic queen. Bitch.

"It's nice to have him home," I say to Pansy as the waiter sets down my glass. "Mother's been pleased."

Pansy snorts into her wineglass. "I can only imagine. Granted this is your mother we're talking about, has she started planning the ceremony yet?"

"She did mention the Manor was lovely in June." I sip my wine and try not to smile. "Ridiculous, of course, as Father points out, though he did note that I'm turning thirty then--"

"Oh, don't even think about that, dearest." Pansy leans her elbows on the white damask cloth, her chin perched lightly on one oh-so-elegant fist. The sunlight streaming from the window next to us sparkles across the carved golden ring on her hand. "As for your mother, well, you *are* already ruining her chances for a lovely church service, what with the whole fancying lads thing you've going on. They take that as a personal affront--Mummy still hasn't forgiven me running off to Yorkshire with Blaise, you know, and the Very Reverend Doctor makes certain to remind her of it nearly every Sunday morning." She reaches for her wine. "Bastard."

I grimace. "Well, really, can you blame your mother? *Yorkshire*? At least Paris might have made more sense than exchanging your vows in front of a mob of Tykes."

"Don't be rude. At least none of them were related to me." Pansy turns her glass between her fingers. There's a smudge of red lipstick on the rim. "And it was horribly romantic on the moors, I'll have you know. Very Heathcliff and Catherine."

"Very what?" I ask blankly.

Pansy rolls her eyes. "Really, it wouldn't destroy you to pick up a book once in a while." She's silent a moment, lost in thought, a tiny smile curving her full mouth, then she sits up suddenly, her eyes narrowing. "Wait. Are you actually going to suggest marriage to him? He hasn't been back a month, and really, don't you have to go to, oh, I don't know--" she gestures with her glass, sending wine splashing across the pristine cloth "--Sweden for that sort of thing?" Her nose wrinkles. Pansy's opinion on the viability of the welfare state is notorious, even for our social set.

"Of course not." I snort. "Terry's not the sort for that." Yet, I think. At Pansy's sceptical look, I shrug. "I'm thinking of asking him to move in though."

Pansy just stares at me for a moment. "You're serious."

"Perhaps?" My stomach twists and I tense. I crave her approval. It always matters to me what Pansy thinks. It's one of the reasons I've not told her about Harry. She'd be ridiculously disappointed. *Potter*, after all. Not one of my best moments. "It just seems to make sense. He's not found his own flat yet, and he's staying at his parents', which is bloody inconvenient when it comes to sex. You don't think I should?"

Pansy hesitates. She studies me for a moment, her face inscrutable, then she lifts her Bellini to her mouth and drains it. "If you're happy, darling," she says finally, "then you should." She frowns towards the kitchen, her fingernails drumming against the cloth. "Really, how long does it take to throw a salad together?"

Shoulders relaxing, I lean back in my seat, relief flooding me. "There's the question of my salmon, you realise."

"I do hate it when you order something that has to be cooked, you know." Pansy crosses one leg over the other, her black skirt riding high on her pale thighs. She catches the eye of the waiter and raises her empty glass. At his nod, she beams. "That's a dear, yes." She tilts her head. "Lovely boy, really. Beautiful arms. Do you think I could talk him into coming home with me for the afternoon? I'm certain Blaise would be thrilled to leave work early for *him*."

"Pervert."

"Pot, cauldron, darling." Pansy tucks her hair back behind one ear and slides her skirt a little higher. "Pot, cauldron."

I just laugh and sip my wine.



My world falls apart twelve hours later.

"What?" I say, my voice dangerously nearing a too-sharp screech--the one that always makes Father wince and tell me to calm myself immediately.

Terry sits up, his dark hair mussed, the scratches I left on his shoulders just minutes ago now purpling and swelling beneath the skin. "Draco," he says, in that placating tone that makes me want to plant my fist firmly in that perfectly chiselled jaw of his. "It's not that I don't want to--"

I'm already off the bed, the crumpled white sheet tangled around my hips. I'm too angry to be naked right now. "Except that you don't."

"Except that I can't." Terry runs one hand through his hair, pushing it back out of his face. "Come back to bed. It's late, and I've a meeting in the morning--"

"Fuck your meeting." I'm being crass, I know. I don't care. I've just laid my heart bare, only to have it carved open in front of me.

Terry just looks at me. He sighs and pulls his knees to his chest. I don't even care that I can see the swell of his balls through his spunk-sticky thighs.

We're silent. My fingers twist in the fine cotton of the sheet, holding it close to my skin. I can feel the rapid thump of my heart in my chest.

"Why?" I ask after a moment of quieting myself. I don't want to know the reason. I don't. I can't stop myself. "Why can't you?"

He looks away and I know before he says it. "I've met someone else."

The world tilts on its axis; my knees buckle. I barely manage to land on the edge of the mattress. I stare out the darkened window, out into the faint glow of Bloomsbury Square. "Oh."

"It doesn't have to affect us," Terry says as though he's rehearsed this and reaches for my hand. His fingers are warm against mine. They grip my palm tightly. It hurts, but I don't pull away. "There's no reason for her to know--"

"Her." My voice is flat. I turn my head, blinking slowly. He shifts into focus. "You're seeing a *woman*?"

He hesitates. "I didn't mean for it to happen. It just..." His fingers flex around my hand. "We're going to be married in June."

"In June." As hard as I try, I can't stop the brittle, bitter laugh that wells up. "Lovely time of year for that sort of thing." I pull my hand away. "But you'd like to shag me in the meantime."

"I came home to you," he says quietly.

"No." I shake my head. "No, you didn't." I'm calm. Too calm. I should be throwing something at him. Hexing him. *Anything* other than just sitting here on the edge of the bed, trying to keep from shaking. I take a deep breath. "Is she still in Hong Kong?"

Terry doesn't answer.

"I see." But I don't. Blankly, I wrap the sheet more tightly around me. "And she doesn't know about us, I assume."

"She does." He touches my arm. I jerk back, and he looks miserable. "Daphne told her before--" He breaks off and runs both hands through his sleek brown hair with a frustrated sigh. "It doesn't have to change things. I still want you--"

I feel like retching. "You want us to *share* you?" I'm not entirely certain why the thought of this makes my stomach twist. Until Terry I'd never been in a monogamous relationship of any sort. I shouldn't give a damn if some nameless cun--*Draco*, I hear Mother's voice sharply in my head--oh, fine, for Circe's sake, *woman* has no idea her husband's sneaking off nights to bugger me seven ways from Sunday. Her loss is my gain, right?



Except this doesn't feel that way. I'm the loser, not her. Because it's Terry.

A horrible thought strikes me. "You've not been working nights, have you?" At least I keep the tremble from my voice this time. "All those times you've firecalled and said Cuffe wanted to keep you late..."

Terry can't look at me. He picks at the antique, hand-stitched white quilt I'd bought on our last trip to Provence a year ago. Terry'd picked it out, the two of us standing in a tiny shop just off Rue Paradis in Marseille, sunlight streaming through a narrow window beside us and gilding the dust floating in the air as the plump, rose-scented owner chattered at us in French nearly too fast for even my ear to catch.

My throat tightens. "I am such a fool."

"You're not," Terry says. At my sharp glare he looks away again. "Draco. Love--"

The endearment infuriates me. He doesn't have the right. Not right now. Not any longer. "Who is she?" I snap. It doesn't matter, but I have to know.

Terry moves closer. I pull away. My back hits the footboard, the heavy mahogany digging into my skin. He stops, irritated. "Why do you care?" His fingertips brush my thigh, sliding beneath the folds of the sheet. "She's not an issue --"

I knock his hand away, teeth gritted. "Who. Is. She?"

He just looks at me. "Daphne's sister," he says at last.

"Astoria?" I swallow back the bile rising in the back of my throat. Astoria and I had seen one another--if that's the right term--for six months not long after leaving Hogwarts, back before my parents had come to terms with the idea that their son *wasn't* going to marry and provide a Malfoy heir the proper way, no matter how angry they got. I'd liked Astoria. She'd been droll and bright and had reminded me a bit of Pansy. Briefly--oh, so briefly, until Viktor Krum had got me in bed and shown me exactly how much I enjoyed a fat prick up my arse--I'd almost thought I could tolerate her enough to marry her and perhaps even father a son or two.

The irony of the Fates can be quite cruel.

"She came for a visit," Terry says. He stares down at his hands, lacing his fingers back and forth. "To see Daphne."

"Of course. And you enjoyed having her about: she reminded you of home. Somehow, after a night of dinner and wine you both found yourselves back at her--what, hotel? Or Daphne's flat?" I don't wait for him to answer. "It doesn't matter. You kissed her, she kissed you, who cares who moved first, but you ended up in bed."

"Something like that," he says softly.

My stomach twists. Daphne must have been thrilled. She'd always hated me, always thought Astoria could have done better. I suppose now she's proved herself right.

"You can't tell me you didn't fuck someone else while I was gone," Terry says. I look away. "Or multiple someones. Your flat had a revolving bloody door when we met." I give him a baleful look--it doesn't matter if he's right--and he lifts his chin mulishly. "We agreed--"

"I gave him up," I say, my throat aching and voice high and sharp. "I gave him up when you came back." I'm too close to the edge; I can feel it in the tightness of my shoulders as I cling to the last shreds of my dignity. "You..." I draw in a deep breath. "Do you love her?"

He doesn't answer.

"Terry."

"She's pregnant," he says, and I feel as if I've been punched. I can't breathe.

Silence spreads between us, the only sounds in the room the rumble of the N38 bus in the street outside and the muffled voices of late-night passengers.

"We didn't plan..." He glances back up at me, his face anguished. I don't seem to care. I'm numb. I might as well not be sitting here for all it matters. "I'm not like you, Draco. I need to marry--I *want* to. My family expect--"

"As if my family don't--" I choke on a protest so violent it makes me weak at the knees. Of all things, if there was any way--I would. And Terry knows this, knows I've tried, and the words just won't come out of my throat. This is an unhealed wound, and he's just torn it open again.

"Don't." I stand up abruptly, the sheet still wadded in my other hand. It's all I can say at the moment. "Don't."

"Draco."

I can hear the mattress creak behind me as he stands. I don't turn around.

"Get out, Terry," I say dully. I walk to the bedroom door and push it open.

"Draco."

I grip the door frame tightly, staring out into the darkened hall. Hearthlight still flickers in the sitting room, casting shadows across the white walls. My knuckles whiten. "I said *get out*."

He's silent for a long moment, then I hear a soft sigh and the rustle of clothes being picked up from the floor. I catch a glimpse of my pale reflection in the hall mirror. I can see him move past me, see him hesitate and almost touch my shoulder. I flinch. He drops his hand.

"I do still want you," he whispers. His breath gusts across my shoulder, and I can barely suppress my shiver.

"That's not what I want from you," I say. Our eyes meet. We're both liars. "But you can't give me what I want, can you?"

Only when the Floo in the sitting room whooshes softly behind him in a burst of green flame, do I let myself slide to the floor, the sheet pooling around me, my face buried in my hands.



Blaise hands me a double whisky. Sixteen-year Lagavulin, the kind Professor Snape used to drink when we'd come to his quarters late at night with some ridiculously angst-ridden teenage problem. Merlin knows how the man had kept his patience with us, but he had. We'd been his, and he had protected us fiercely, even when we were too damned foolish to realise what he was doing.

I still miss him. He'd been more of a paternal figure than my own father had ever been, if I were perfectly honest.

The whisky's strong, and I swallow half of it in one gulp. The smell of it reminds me of Severus. I clutch the glass tighter. At the moment I half-wish he'd sweep through the wide French doors of Pansy and Blaise's sitting room, telling me tartly to pull myself together for Christ's sake and frowning at me in that inimitable way of his.

Blaise sits next to me. I hardly notice his bare chest and blue silk pyjama bottoms--a pity, I suppose. Blaise is one of the most spectacularly gorgeous human beings I've ever met. It's irksome at times to be his friend; one is always aware that no matter how well-put-together one is, all eyes in the room are always on him.

He pats my knee self-consciously. Blaise never has been good with emotional maelstroms; they unsettle him.

"I've made a decision," I say after a moment, the glass clenched still in both hands. I'm tired. The clock in the foyer chimed three a few moments ago. To Pansy and Blaise's credit they'd both flown out of bed as soon as I'd firecalled, Pansy insisting I come over immediately.

Pansy shifts in the overstuffed chair across from me, pulling her velvet dressing gown tighter around her tits as she curls into the cushion and stifles a yawn. "What?"

I take another sip of the whisky. "I'm done with sex." It's the only logical solution. I don't care if I sound petulant.

Blaise snorts, then shrugs when I snarl at him. "You," he says bluntly, "are far too fond of cock to be celibate."

"Don't be ridiculous," I say into my Lagavulin, although I'm afraid he might have a point. Blaise exchanges a pointed glance with his wife. I have the distinct urge to throw my glass at the both of them, but I'm not fool enough to waste good whisky. The spectre of Severus would be horrified.

"It's just tonight, darling." Pansy stretches one perfectly arched foot. "You'll change your mind when things settle."



I shake my head. It aches and I press one hand to my temple, resting my elbow on the arm of the sofa. I breathe out slowly, then inhale again. I feel like my lungs have been crushed. "I don't think so."

Everything hurts. Another breath--it sounds horribly like a sob. I catch myself and press my lips together, closing my eyes.

*Breathe. Inhale. Exhale. Breathe.*

Blaise takes my empty glass from my numb fingers. I can hear the soft thunk against wood as he sets it aside. Another breath. Slightly less even.

His arm drapes across me, heavy and warm, and he only hesitates a moment before pulling me up against him. He smells faintly like the French lavender sachets Pansy has the house-elves scent the sheets with.

I take a ragged breath. "I--" My throat closes and I press my face against Blaise's shoulder. I loathe this feeling of helplessness, this tight, angry, aching clench of my heart with every shuddering exhale. "He made me *care*," I choke out, and my fingers twist thoughtlessly in the jumper I threw on just before Flooing over. I don't even mind that I'm stretching the cashmere.

"Oh, Draco," Pansy says gently, and then she's there with us, kneeling next to me, her long, cool fingers carding through my hair, pushing it back from my forehead as she whispers against my cheek.

There, with the fire crackling behind us to stave off the chill of a spring morning and the too careful, too awkward touch of my friends collapsing what little control I have remaining, I let myself, for the first time since the war ended and we buried Vince, cry.



I've come to my senses the next morning, or so I tell myself. No more giving in to emotional outbreaks. I'm a Malfoy, for Christ's sake, and I've more than enough pride. I lie in the spare room bed that Blaise had deposited me into a few hours earlier, staring up at the white plaster coffers and elaborate rosettes lining the ceiling. It's past breakfast, I'm certain, judging from the light streaming through the sheer white curtains. A pot of Assam steams on the bedside table next to me, along with a warm plate of buttered toast and bacon.

The smell of it makes me want to gag. I push myself out of bed, only wobbling slightly as I stumble to the bath, propelled forward by the painful protests of my overtaxed kidneys and bladder. My head aches. My throat hurts. I glance in the mirror. I look like hell. It doesn't matter. Neither does the fact that I'm without doubt late for work. Chaudhry will be apoplectic. I don't have it in me to care.

The house-elves have left clothes for me, neatly folded on the bench at the foot of the bed. They're Blaise's, I know, Transfigured to my size--or a size larger, I realise as I button the trousers. They hang loosely from my hips. It's been too long since I last spent the night in Holland Park.

Before I step into the Floo Pansy stops me and casts a glamour, hiding the puffy, dark circles beneath my eyes. She touches my cheek. "You could stay here today," she says. "I've a meeting for the St Mungo's ball this afternoon, but--"

I shake my head. "I'm fine." I feel empty. Blank.

"Liar." Her thumb smooths across my skin, a soft, gentle sweep that reminds me of my mother. I can smell the faint traces of her perfume--ylang ylang and Bulgarian rose. "Come back here tonight, then." She drops her hand. "You know how morose you get when you drink alone."

I don't even have the energy to protest.

I'm not entirely certain I should.



Chaudhry, as expected, is furious with me. Somehow his anger is easier to take than Pansy's sympathy. My assistant looks terrified when she tells me the moment I walk in that the senior barrister wants to see me. *Immediately.*

"It's half-eleven," he roars at me when I push his door open. A thick folder stuffed with parchment flies at me, barely missing my head. It thunks against the wall, rattling the photographs of Chaudhry's smiling children. They dash out of the frames, looking alarmed. Wise brats. Their father's temper is legendary. Scraps of paper drift to the floor; the battered folder quivers in mid-air, breathing hard. I hold out my hand and it drops into my palm, gratefully. One of its corners is bent and ragged. I smooth it out.

Chaudhry glares at me. "Late," he snaps, pointing his blood-red quill at me.

"I think we've established that." I stroke the file folder, calming it. Merlin knows how it's managed to survive this long in Chaudhry's cabinet. They're all neurotic once he sends them out. Last week, Susan Bones found her most recent case research hiding behind the ficus in her office after a meeting with Chaudhry. It'd taken her nearly half an hour to coax it to come out. "This is?"

"The Selsher case." Chaudhry scowls and scrawls something angrily across the parchment on his desk. "I've switched you and Bones. Give her your files on Kirkup."

I stare at him. The Kirkup case is a career maker. A husband's murder by Dark curse, the certainty that he was carrying on torrid affairs with his mother-in-law *and* sister-in-law--which guarantees a top position in the *Prophet* once it goes before the Wizengamot: we British do love our sex scandals--four months of investigative work by the Aurors to discover that he'd been killed by the wife's nineteen-year-old son from an earlier marriage, not to mention my *own* careful work compiling an airtight case. "I've spent six months on that--"

"And the request for the switch came down from the MLE." Chaudhry puts his quill down. "I've no idea what you've done to annoy Potter now, but he's refusing to work with you--"

"I've spent *six months* on it!" My fingers tighten on the file folder. It flutters in my grip. "It's nearly ready to go before the Wizengamot!"

Chaudhry just looks at me.

"I went to Newcastle for two weeks! *Newcastle!* For *two weeks!* Do you know how bloody dull Newcastle is? Why anyone lives up North is beyond me: no wonder they're so grim--I'd slash my wrists if I were them or drink myself into a bloody stupor, and don't even get me started on the way they talk. You want a sodding translation spell just to ask the weather--"

"Draco," Chaudhry says.

"--and as for actual conversation, you're absolutely buggered. I mean, really, do you know how long it took me to figure out what the hell *hadaway* meant--"

"Draco!"

I fall silent, my cheeks warm.

Chaudhry runs a hand over his face. "The Selsher case is yours. The Kirkup case is Bones'." His tone brooks no argument.

"Fine." My shoulders are tight. "If there's nothing else?"

Chaudhry stops me at the door. "A piece of advice, if I may, Malfoy?" I glance back at him. He gives me his kindly paternal look--which amounts to a condescending smile and steepled fingertips. "It would behoove you to not annoy Potter, I think."

I grind my teeth, struggling to keep my voice even. "I'm certain." It takes all I have not to slam the door behind me as I stalk out.



"You utter fucking *wanker*."

Harry just leans back in his chair with a sigh and a nervous, sideways glance past me and out the half-open door of his office. I'm fully aware that his assistant is trying to eavesdrop at his desk just outside. "Draco--"

I kick the door shut, not caring that the glass rattles in its frame. "Don't *Draco* me."

His eyes narrow behind those stupid glasses of his. "*Malfoy*, then--"

"Fuck off." I lean over his desk, both fists planted firmly on the stacks of parchment lining one edge. He swipes a miniature Firebolt replica out of the way before I knock it from its stand. It's one the Weasley girl had given him before they broke up two years ago. She'd had it custom-made for him from fragments of the broom his godfather had given him. I almost hate myself for knowing that. "Can I be any clearer, Potter? The case is mine."

Harry sets the Firebolt on the side of his desk blotter. Notes and Floo points are scrawled in his atrocious handwriting on it, some nearly obscured by smeared ink. "You don't particularly want to work with me either," he says without looking at me.

"That doesn't mean I want to be taken off the *one* bloody case that didn't bore me to tears."

Harry lifts his chin. "It's *my* case, Malfoy."

"Is it?" I reach over the parchment piles and pick up the Firebolt. The scrap of wood and neatly trimmed twigs is smooth and polished against my palm.



Harry grabs my wrist. “Put it down.” His fingers dig into my skin, hot and tight, and his eyes hold mine. I can see the clench of muscle as he tightens his jaw and all I can think of is Terry and the way his jaw tensed as he shuddered over me, his body spasming against mine.

I’m angry. Furious. Bitter. I want to hurt someone, and Harry’s the closest at hand. It just takes the slight pressure of my thumb, and the tiny broom snaps, scattering across Harry’s desk.

He drops his hand. My wrist feels sore and oddly bereft. “Leave,” he says softly, not looking at me. I hesitate, and Harry’s wand is pressed against my forehead. “Now.” He doesn’t raise his voice.

This time I don’t bother to hide my temper. The door crashes shut behind me.



Photo by bond.edu.au

## three

“This is getting ridiculous, Draco.” Pansy picks my court robe from the floor where I’ve just tossed it.

I fall on the sofa, tugging at my grey-striped silk cravat. It’s been a long day before the Wizengamot, arguing the Selsher case, and I’m exhausted. And annoyed. “Leave it. Whichever house-elf Mother’s sent over this week will take care of it.”

Pansy lays the robe over the arm of the chaise next to the hearth and sits primly on its edge, crossing one leg over the other and sending her knee-length black skirt halfway up her thigh. Her heels are ridiculously high and spindly, and the knobby plum ostrichskin sets off her pale skin marvellously. Pulling an engraved silver box from her bag, she taps a cigarette from it into her hand. “Do you mind?”

I wave my cravat towards her before dropping it on the floor next to me. “Whatever.” I kick off my gleaming black Derby shoes and stretch across the sofa cushions.

Pansy lights the cigarette and takes a slow puff, closing her eyes as she inhales. “Oh, Christ, I needed that,” she says in a huff of grey smoke that twists upwards, disappearing into the shadows of the high ceilings. “Blaise is such a horrid tyrant about it now: he can smell it the moment I walk in, no matter how many charms I use.” She wrinkles her nose. “Honestly, it’s not as if I demanded he stop; I’ve no idea why he can’t just leave me be.”

I just shrug and rub my hands over my face. It’s an argument I’ve heard for the past half-year, and I’m tired of it. I hold out my hand and she passes the cigarette over.

"But as I said--" Pansy tugs at the hem of her skirt. "--this *is* getting ridiculous, you know. The whole Ministry's talking."

"Let them." I blow a stream of smoke towards her. My hair tumbles into my eyes. It wants cutting; I'm fairly certain I missed my last appointment with Trumper. Somewhere I've a sharp reprimand from Mother about it. I eye the stack of unread parchment piled high on the side table. It's been at least two weeks since I've bothered to open the post.

Pansy sighs and leans back against the arm of the chaise. "You've been sniping at Potter for three months now. While I recognise your need to take the Terry situation out on *someone*, bless, darling--" She takes the cigarette I pass back to her. "--and Merlin knows Potter's an excellent choice, still, really, it's becoming terribly old. Not to mention clichéd. We've all moved past Hogwarts by now." She looks at me. "Well. Most of us."

"Oh, get stuffed," I snap.

"You're always such a bitchy cunt when you're celibate, you know," Pansy says, her mouth drawn into a tight line. "I don't know who the hell you were fucking when Terry was gone, but thank *God* for him. Or them, however many it was. It was a whore, wasn't it? Blaise said that must be the way of it, as you weren't talking about him, although Millie thinks you were just cottaging in a nightclub loo every weekend. Really, darling, I don't even care if you have to pay someone to put up with you long enough to wring one orgasm from you. Please for the love of all that's holy, find whomever it was again--"

"Pansy, what part of *get stuffed* was unclear?" My voice rises.

She rolls the cigarette in between her fingers, watching me with slightly narrowed eyes, utterly oblivious to the ash drifting onto the upholstery. It's a sign of the state of my mind at the moment that I don't chide her for it. I drape my arm over my eyes and breathe. I'm so tired. I'm always tired now.

"Draco," Pansy says softly after a moment.

I don't answer. A pause and the quiet creak of shifting cushions, then Pansy's hand rests lightly on my forehead. I move my arm with a sigh and look over at her. She's squatting next to the sofa, and her fingers smooth my hair back. It's lank and limp from a day beneath that damned curled horsehair wig.

"I'm sorry," she says.

"You should be."

She hesitates. "Were you fucking a whore last year?"

"Don't be ridiculous." Technically, I suppose I wasn't. Harry and I never exchanged money, obviously, but I wouldn't say that neither of us whored ourselves out to each other. We certainly hadn't wanted to advertise the fact that we rather enjoyed sucking each other's cock, and we'd both used that particular secret to our advantage time and again when we'd wanted the upper hand at work. Harry Potter's surprisingly more Slytherin than he lets on.



Pansy raises an eyebrow. "So that's a no." I scowl at her, and she shrugs and takes another drag off the cigarette. "Right, then."

We're silent for a long moment.

"You need a holiday," Pansy says finally. She strokes her thumb over the arch of my eyebrow. Her dark eyes are worried. "I know you've not taken one this year--"

"I was going to take Terry to Prague this summer," I say dully. "I'd already started looking at hotels." At her sympathetic cluck, I shake my head. "Don't."

"All right." Pansy Banishes her cigarette with a flick of her aubergine-tipped fingernails. It's the one wandless spell she's mastered over the years. With a sigh, she sits on the floor, kicking her heels off and flexing her feet. She rests her head next to mine. "Blaise and I have been talking."

"God help us all," I murmur.

She shoots me a narrowed glare. "We've decided you should come on holiday with us."

"Absolutely not." I don't want to go anywhere other than my own bed. Not even to work, though at least every few days I have the satisfaction of a public screaming match of one sort or another with Harry.

Pansy sits up and frowns at me. "That wasn't really an invitation, you realise. We've already made the booking. Or Blaise has at least."

"I'm in the midst of a hearing--"

"Which is scheduled to be over by Wednesday next." Pansy's brusque now, all trace of gentle camaraderie gone. "Look, darling, even your father's suggested that we take you out of the country for a week and if you'll allow me to be frank--and given the fact that you've already had me examine your balls close up that time Theo convinced you that you'd all the symptoms of dragon pox I'd say I've that right--Lucius isn't going to win any awards for Sensitive Father. If he's firecalling Blaise worried about your emotional state because you've moped through yet another Sunday dinner or exploded one more set of doors into Auror Headquarters--" she waves off my protest "--don't even try to deny it; Millie came by my office to tell me the day it happened--then we're very well going to assume that you're on the edge of losing your mind. Your father is not exactly the most perceptive of individuals."

"I'm *fine*," I insist. I burrow into the sofa cushions, my posture utterly belying my words. There's a small part of me that's pleased. As much as I'd prefer to be left alone, I'd also not like to be. No one ever said depression was rational, I suppose, and I won't admit my father's uncharacteristic concern gratifies me. Still, I pull a tufted pillow up to my chest and huff.

Pansy purses her mouth. "Of course. Certainly. One would never doubt that fact." At my scowl, she just shrugs. "Look, darling, there's a brilliant spa at the hotel." She watches me from the corner of her eye, knowing that she's just offered the one thing that might tempt me. I *hate* myself for responding.

I lower the pillow. "Really?"

"Really. And your skin's begging for a good facial. I can see your pores."

"You hateful cow. You can not." I raise up on one elbow, touching my jaw. The bitch is right. My skin's parched. I haven't bothered to take care of it lately. "A decent spa?"

Pansy has the good sense not to look smug. "Top-rate, according to Antigone."

I consider. Blaise's mother has impeccable taste in such matters. Not to mention expensive. And the dark circles under my eyes *have* been annoying me. Since regular sleep's not a possibility at the moment and my glammers only last a few hours, the possibility of a proper aesthetician casting skin charms is tempting. "Blaise is paying?"

Pansy rolls her eyes. "You do realise for someone with as many Gringotts accounts as your family has, you're ridiculously penurious?"

"Oh, don't be so middle-class." I sniff. "The whole point of having connections is to use them. It's how society survives. Besides, Blaise still owes me from the Boat Race. Idiot, wagering against the Tabs."

"I really do not understand the two of you at times." Pansy sighs. "You'll put in for holiday then?" At my nod, she pushes herself up, reaching for her shoes. "Good. Now I should locate my husband if I can. He mentioned some sort of *cleansing* he'd scheduled for this evening, and, really, I'm rather afraid to know what body part it involves this time."

I catch her wrist. "Thank you," I whisper.

Pansy shifts her shoes to her other hand before ruffling my hair. "We worry."

"I know." I don't bother apologising. There's no need to. I sit up, tossing the pillow aside. "So, Paris then? Or Switzerland? Mother's favourite spa's in Geneva--"

"Reykjavik."

I blink. "Iceland?"

"I'm fairly certain that's the only Reykjavik," Pansy says dryly.

"Aren't there volcanoes exploding?"

"Erupting, darling. And only one."

"So far." I wave my hand towards the ceiling. "But the ash clouds--"

"Have cleared." Pansy steadies herself on the edge of the sofa as she slides her heels back on. "Blaise says the chi there now is utterly phenomenal."

"The what?" I don't know what to say. I'd been hoping for something a bit more...glamorous. Not to mention the fact that the damned ash had forced the Ministry to ban Apparation *and* broom travel for nearly two weeks in April, causing the Portkey Office almost to shut down under the tonnes of applications they'd received, and the Floo Network to back up. It'd been nearly impossible to go from hearth to hearth without arriving in someone else's Floo. I'd ended up shunted into the *Witch Weekly* offices one evening instead of to the Manor. What an utter nightmare that'd been.

"Chi. Energy. Or something like that. All the volcanic activity, I presume. He and Antigone have been fire-calling each other at least once a week about it. She swears it's done wonders for her skin, and don't even get me started on what her guru's been saying. The way Blaise carries on you'd think the Second Coming was about to happen." Pansy smooths her skirt and hooks her bag over her shoulder, pulling out a pair of dark glasses. "You know I always stop listening when he starts in about that sort of thing. I entirely blame that Yank stepfather of his for this. It's so very..." She huffs a sigh and slides the glasses on. They're half the size of her pointed face. "I'm just trying to keep him away from Mummy and Daddy right now. They're far too Oxford Movement. Mummy nearly has the vapours when they put the Agnus Dei before the beginning of the Great Thanksgiving; I can only imagine what she'd say if Blaise started in over the Sunday roast about energy pulse points and proper breath patterns during meditation."

I can only nod. Wealth aside, the Parkinsons are so very particularly upper middle class about so many things. Unsurprising, I suppose; after all, it'd only been a generation before Grindelwald that Pansy's family had been quite firmly in trade. Not that we mention that, of course. It would be crude. Still, as Mother points out, one can't quite ever lose one's roots, and as much as I adore Pans, I have to agree.

"Anyway," Pansy says, "all I care about is that he's over the moon about being there for Midsummer, and he thinks it's just what you'll need to pull your sorry arse out of this funk you're in. And, frankly, as long as some lovely Nordic brute is willing to line hot stones along my back whilst another pours me a martini and promises me the mud bath of my dreams, I don't care where we are." She kisses my cheek, then the other. Her lips are dry and soft. "So pack your bag, darling, and don't forget a swimsuit. The geothermal baths are to die for, Blaise tells me."

She stops at the hearth and looks back at me, mouth pursed. "And pack those black trousers. The ones that make your arse look phenomenal."

"Why?" I peer over the arm of the sofa at her.

"Because." She pushes her sunglasses up and glares at me before dropping them back again. "Young strapping Icelandic lads? Really, darling. As I said, *no one* should be forced to endure you celibate for three months. Honestly, I swear to God Himself it's been enough to drive me out of my mind."

She's gone before I can throw the pillow at her.





Photo by femmequixotic

## four

Even in June Reykjavik is cold.

I wrap my arms around myself, pulling my black wool robe tight, and shiver. The wind toys with my hair, ruffles the pages of the book in my hand. The sky above is the same clouded grey it's been since our arrival two days ago: not even the darkest hours of night brings much relief from the pale light. It's different in winter, our host--one Thorkell Thorkelsson if one can believe the madness of that name: honestly, not even a Black determined to humiliate their newborn would have gone that route--had cheerfully explained to us as he'd checked us in to our rooms. Come December there's only three or four hours of mildly adequate sunlight. With the too-bright smile of someone more than eager to take our Galleons (even the Reykjavikian Gringotts had been affected by the country's recent financial meltdown), he'd handed us our room keys--iron skeletons with heavy wards weighing them down--and told us we'd timed our visit wisely.

He's obviously an idiot. I scrub at my dry, prickly eyes. I've barely slept in thirty-six hours. Even darkening charms on the curtains don't seem capable of blocking the incessant Nordic light. I'm tired, and yet, in some intrinsic way, I'm inexplicably not. Over breakfast Blaise had gone into some ridiculously monotonous exegesis on how the current volcanic and seismic activity obviously affected our sleep cycles. He'd been rather put out when I'd told him to fuck off, but really, I'm not in the mood.

Ducks waddle in front of my wrought iron bench, looking at me speculatively as they shake the water of Tjörnin from their tailfeathers. One quacks at me and tilts its bottle green head. I hold up my hands. "No bread. Sorry." The duck turns his back on me, miffed, and heads back to the small lake--or pond, really, I suppose, given that's the direct translation of *Tjörnin*, or so says the guidebook Pansy had pressed upon me when I'd announced my intention to go wandering around the miniscule downtown.

It's peaceful here. Quiet. The Muggle parliament's only a street away; I'd accidentally wandered into its small walled garden without realising it, drawn by a glimpse of a circular white gravel path and red poppies against the dark grey stone walls. Across the water rises the sharply pointed white steeple and green roof of Friirkjan. The choppy waters of the lake lap at the walking path in front of the church; an elderly Muggle man sits on a bench watching them as he eats a sandwich, his white-tipped cane perched next to him. Two boys, barely old enough to be in Hogwarts, ride their bicycles at breakneck speed down the bricked ramp behind me, their gleeful shouts echoing against the clapboard walls of the sharply peaked-roof buildings around us.

Despite its being the middle of the afternoon, I've seen barely anyone wandering about. A few tourists, certainly, the Americans intent on photographing every quaint cottage window and commenting loudly on how very Minnesotan it all looks, whatever that might mean; the English making note of every nightclub's hours whilst arguing on the proper pronunciation of *bórshamar*; the French wrinkling their noses at the idea of hákarl--not that I entirely blame them, mind. I've no intention of eating fermented shark myself, but really, a culture responsible for bringing *cuisse de grenouille* and *steak tartare de cheval* into the culinary lexicon ought not be so damned quick to curl a lip. But then what can one expect from the Frogs, after all?

Still. The city is calmer than London. Less frantic, less crowded. Unsurprising, I suppose. According to Pansy's guidebook, the whole country's population totals just barely above 300,000. There are more people living in bloody Wiltshire.

The almost empty streets confuse the Muggle tourists though. It's the one thing that's amused me today. I've caught glimpses of the wizards from the corner of my eye, stepping from one alleyway to another. They don't use the Muggle shop entrances that line the narrow, curving tangle of streets. The whole island's wizards and witches and the occasional Squib, all the families intermarried in one way or another as happens when one's world is so insular and isolated, save for a foreign Muggleborn union every so often. His Lordship would have thrived in a society like this, particularly given the strict immigration laws. Even Father's not as staunchly pureblood as the Icelanders, but then my great-grandmother was Belgian, after all.

I've stayed among the Muggles today. I'm not entirely certain why. They've eyed my robe warily, obviously not entirely certain I'm not off my nut, though I heard one man tell his wife I must obviously be one of those tattooed goth blokes, having caught sight of the Mark faded on my forearm. I've not cared. I've just wished to be someplace unfamiliar, someplace different, someplace where I'm alone, if only in my head.

That blessed solitude is short-lived.

Blaise sits down beside me. I sigh and close the guidebook. He just tosses a scrap of cheese towards the ducks. They descend upon it en masse, their wings flapping. "Are you all right?" Blaise asks. He wraps a grey scarf around his throat, an easy, graceful motion that for some reason annoys me.

"Do you care?" My voice is more waspish than I mean it to be.

"Pansy wanted me to ask." Blaise breaks another bit of cheese off the small hunk in his hands. I can smell it, sharp against the wind, and my stomach rumbles. It's been hours since I've eaten breakfast. I glance at my watch. Nearly ten after four. I hate the light; it throws my internal clock off. It feels like morning still.

"You do realise," I say, staring out over the water to the houses on the opposite shore, a jumble of black and red and green roofs peeking out over the dark trees, "that for someone as supposedly obsessed with enlightenment as you are, your comfort with emotion is nonexistent."

Blaise shrugs. A piece of cheese skitters across the grey slate paving stones. The ducks chase after it. "Zen is necessary to live with Pansy." He licks crumbled cheese off his thumb. "Besides, I'm more interested in what enlightenment can do for my biceps, if I'm honest. And sex life." He eyes me. "You'd be surprised at how Bikram affects your stamina."

"I don't care." A downy grey duckling waddles over to my foot and honks up at me. I push him away, gently. "At least you're honest, I suppose."

"You're not?"

"Am I ever?" I hold my hand out. He breaks off a chunk of cheese and hands it to me. I bite into it. It's almost hard, and it's tangy and thickly smooth against my tongue, almost like a too sharp cheddar. I chew it slowly, not entirely certain I like it.

Blaise gives me an even look. "You can talk to me or to Pansy."

I'm silent for a long moment, then I bite into the cheese again. The ducks walk to the narrow strip of cobblestones edging the lake's edge, preening their feathers before they hop back into the cold water. "I'm tired," I say finally. "I lost the Selsher case." I rub my hands over my face. "Chaudhry's a bit annoyed with me." Or rather his exact words were *get your head settled on holiday, Malfoy, or don't bother coming back*. Not that I blame him, to be honest. It was an open and shut case. Absolutely airtight. I've no damned idea what I did to swing the Wizengamot just enough in his favour to keep the bastard out of Azkaban. Bones had tried to cheer me by pointing out that his barrister's suggestion that the wizarding statutes had a grey enough area to allow the damned fool his freedom might actually have legal merit. As if I care. Innocent, guilty, not guilty by reason of Wizengamot stupidity--none of that matters. Law's a chess match with high stakes and my king had been checkmated. That's enough to depress me. I never have cared for the humiliation of failure. Particularly not when Father delights in bringing it up over dinner. It's enough to put me off my lamb.

There's nothing Blaise can say, and he knows it. Public failure is without excuse, and no kindly meant words of comfort can ameliorate its rough burn. It was the one thing Harry and I had consistently agreed upon, both in and out of bed.

I frown and sigh, brushing aside thoughts of that particular idiot for others. Blaise raises an eyebrow. "And?"

Another huff of annoyance. I look away. "And of course I ran into Terry and Astoria last week." It'd been an awkward moment in the political memoirs section of Flourish and Blotts. I'd just picked up the new Fudge book--really, who the bloody hell names a memoir *A Journey: My Political Life*? What utter arrogant tripe--when I'd looked up just in time to see him helping her up the curving staircase from the lower floor. I hadn't been able to slide back into the shadows of the bookshelves; old Flourish insisted that politics, unlike religion, sold books and therefore had the thick tomes with polished, well-coiffed politicians gazing appropriately sombrely from the dust jackets set front and centre. Terry had hesitated, his hand on Astoria's arm, and I'd seen the glint of a golden ring on his finger. I'd incinerated my invitation to the wedding. Mother had gone. She'd said it was lovely and then never mentioned it again.

"Draco." Astoria had spoken first, and I'd glanced at her then, taking a perverse pleasure in how elephantine she looked and utterly ignoring how well pregnancy dealt with her. Terry, however...well. It was impossible not to realise how happy he seemed. More than he'd been with me, that was obvious. A

curt nod was all I could manage. My throat was too tight to speak. I'd merely side-stepped them both, still clutching Fudge's inane book in one tight fist, and somehow managed to manoeuvre the steps without stumbling down them. A shopclerk had stopped me before I reached the door, reminding me politely to pay for the book, sir, and I'd just wanted so badly to get away that I'd somehow managed to buy Fudge's memoirs. It's still sitting on the ottoman in my sitting room. If nothing else it'll horrify Father on his next visit.

Blaise is just looking at me. I swallow, coughing softly into my jacket collar. "Marriage suits them," I say finally. I rub my hands over the strategically worn leather of my jacket. "It's cold."

"Yes."

I take another piece of cheese from him and pop it into my mouth. "Where's Pansy?"

"Hotel bar," Blaise says. He wraps the cheese in its paper again and tucks it into his pocket. He leans forward, his elbows resting on his knees. A black wool hat covers his close-cropped hair. "Ordering martinis, I suspect."

I nod and stare out at the grey water. "Blaise," I say softly.

He turns his head, eyebrow raised.

"This will get easier, won't it?" My chest aches.

Blaise glances back over the pond. "I'll be damned if I know, Malfoy."

The ducks ruffle their feathers, sending water arcing into the air. The drops glitter in the cool sunlight, tiny prismatic sparks that splash back into the choppy grey waves.

It starts to rain.



The Hotel Borg is on Pósthússtræti, across from a square, green and lush and filled with dark statues of grim-faced men wrapped in heavy fur-trimmed cloaks. One looks so much like Severus it takes me by surprise and makes my breath catch for the smallest moment as we pass him. I touch his iron boot lightly. Blaise pretends not to notice.

There's something almost English about the Borg, with its six storeys and smooth white Art Deco façade. I wouldn't be surprised to see it on a Mayfair street. It seems slightly out of place here, settled next to a modern Scandinavian plate glass office building. Or perhaps it's the office building itself that seems grumpily off-kilter beside the neatly elegant rows of tall, paned windows.

Inside, the lobby is warm, despite the wide expanse of marble floors, cream and black and brown spilling across it in geometric order towards the reception desk made of rosewood so polished one could see one's reflection across the room. I've just side-stepped one of the small, tufted leather ottomans scattered across the lobby when a shock of messy black hair catches my eye.

I stop. Blaise takes a few more steps before realising I'm not at his heels. He looks back at me. "Draco?" he asks, and his voice carries across the silent lobby to where I'm standing, staring.

Harry turns, one hand still resting on the counter. He looks deliciously rumpled in jeans that cling low to his hips and a long-sleeved red shirt that's faded and soft. Bags are at his feet, one a familiar battered leather duffel that he'd brought those rare weekends we'd decided to fuck outside of London. The others I know aren't his.

Our eyes meet. He doesn't look surprised. He doesn't look much of anything, to be honest. His face is shuttered, unreadable. He might as well have been looking at a complete stranger.

The guidebook falls from my fingers, landing with a loud thud against the marble. Light filters across the floor from the wide arched windows. Outside car tyres hiss against the wet street, and bright umbrellas bob past as tourists run for early suppers and government workers hurry home to spouses and children and pets.

"Draco," Blaise says again, quietly this time, and I know by his tone he's seen Harry too.

"Mr Potter?" Thorkell Thorkelsson clears his throat discreetly, and Harry looks away from me. "Your key."

I stoop to pick up the book, my hands shaking. I draw in a ragged breath. "Damn."

A porter gathers Harry's bags and Levitates them discreetly onto a cart. "Fifth floor, sir?"

Harry nods and glances back at Thorkelsson. "You'll send my friend up?"

"But of course, sir."

I have the distinct urge to knock the wide smile off the obsequious fool's square face.

"Harry." A light voice behind me causes me to turn. "So sorry, but you know what Portkey travel does to my bladder--" Luna Lovegood brushes past me, blond curls bouncing and silver bells jangling softly from one wrist. "Oh," she says, blinking at me. "Draco Malfoy. I didn't see--"

"Luna." Harry's voice is sharp. The porter's already at the lifts with their bags. She glances back at Harry then at me, an odd expression on her curious face.

"I think perhaps I'm being summoned," she whispers, and a bright smile wrinkles her eyes at the corners.

Harry touches the small of her back when she reaches him. My stomach twists. He'd done the same to me in the Dorchester every time we'd walked to our room. A light press of his palm that promised so much once the door finally closed upon us. "Zabini," he says, with a curt nod towards Blaise. He doesn't bother to speak to me. I might as well be invisible. He turns away, and my jaw tightens.

The lift dings.

"Potter," I say loudly. The porter drags the cart into the lift and Lovegood follows him. Harry glances back, stopping the closing doors with one hand. "What are you doing here?"

Harry lifts one shoulder in a lazy shrug. "What do you think?" He glances back at Lovegood and smiles.



Somehow the guidebook flies out of my hand, slapping against the side of Harry's head just before the lift doors close. I'm breathing hard, my whole body shaking.

The lobby's silent. Thorkelsson looks away quickly when I glare at him. He shuffles papers behind the desk, refusing to meet my eye.

"Draco." Blaise puts a hand on my arm. I shake him off.

"I need a goddamned drink," I say, my voice tight with fury. I hate Harry. Hate him.

Blaise trails behind me as I storm towards the bar. "Are you going to tell me what the fuck that was about?" When I don't answer he sighs. "Look, you're at least going to have to buy Pansy a new guidebook. I'm on holiday, and I bloody well want sex. I'm not going to take the fall for this one."

Pansy's perched on a brown leather bar stool, legs crossed and a martini glass in hand. She drains the last dregs of vodka and sets the glass down. "Darlings," she says cheerfully, and then she catches sight of me. Her brow wrinkles. "What's wrong?" She motions to the bartender. "Three more. Heavier on the vodka this time, I think." She eyes me, and the bartender nods, reaching for the bottle of Reyka.

With a snarl, I drop onto the stool next to her. She looks at Blaise.

Potter, he mouths. She blinks, confused. Blaise sighs. "Here."

"Here?" Pansy glances at me, then back at Blaise. "In the hotel?" At his nod she slumps against the bar, her shell pink fingernails drumming lightly against the dark wood. "Shit."

"Precisely," Blaise says, taking the stool on the other side of me. When the bartender sets a martini in front of us, Blaise slides towards me. "Drink."

"What happened?" Pansy watches me as I down half the martini in one gulp. She winces slightly.

I find my voice. "Nothing." I can barely choke it out.

Pansy looks sceptical.

Blaise snorts. "Threw your guidebook at him, that one did. Hit him too." He takes the martini the bartender hands him with a small smile and a wink. The man flushes slightly and looks away. Honestly. I'm in the middle of a nervous bloody breakdown and the arse is trying to chat up the help? I kick Blaise's shin, ignoring his sharp yelp.

"I need to pack," I say to Pansy. I'm gripping my martini glass so tightly I'm half-afraid it'll shatter in my hand. It's the only way I can stop shaking. "I need a Portkey home."

"Darling, you can't." Pansy touches my wrist. "It's..." She checks her watch. "After five already. You'll not get anyone at the Portkey Office."

She's not taking me seriously. "This is an *emergency*," I shriek. I'm about to start hyperventilating. I can feel it.

“Not,” Pansy says tartly, “the kind that will provide an Emergency Portkey.”

I glare at her. The bartender casts a cleaning charm over a sinkful of glasses, pretending to ignore us. I know damn well he’s hanging on every word.

Pansy hooks one heel over a rung on her stool. “Honestly, Draco. It’s just Potter. Who cares if you’re sharing a hotel with him? It’s not the end of the world, and I suppose even he’s entitled to holiday if he wishes.” She sips her martini.

How little she knows. “This week. Of all weeks. He comes to *Reykjavik*.”

“In fairness,” Blaise says, “there is a special holiday rate for Midsummer. I’m assuming Lovegood of all people would know that--” A glare from me stops him. He looks at me calmly. “Well, she would.”

I bury my head in my hands. “What am I going to do.” It’s not a question. There is no answer.

Pansy sucks an olive, licking lightly at her fingertips. “Aren’t you being a slight bit melodramatic, darling?” she asks gently.

I give her an incredulous look, blowing hair out of my eyes. “No!”

Pansy and Blaise exchange a glance over my head. “Really.” Pansy wipes her hand on a cocktail napkin. She waits, expectantly.

“Fuck,” I murmur. I rub my hands over my face and reach for my martini, finishing it off quickly. I raise the glass for another. I’m going to need it for this. I draw in a deep breath. Best to get it over with. “I slept with him.”

I’m met with complete silence. Even the bartender is staring at me, the bottle of vodka still in his hand. I bare my teeth at him, and he hurriedly pours the vodka into the shaker, his cheeks reddening. They speak English fluently in Iceland, I’ve found. It can be most annoying at times. I shift on the stool. The edge bites into my thigh.

“When Terry was gone,” I say finally. “I slept with Potter.” I pause, my fingers smoothing across Pansy’s discarded napkin. I shred one corner of it, rolling it between my thumb and forefinger. “Harry.”

“Harry.” Pansy sits back, stunned. “You call him Harry.”

I shrug. “It seems appropriate given the number of times he had his cock up my arse.”

Blaise snorts; Pansy pinches him. “So you were...” She hesitates. “Seeing him?”

“No,” I say sharply. “I was fucking him. There’s a difference.”

“Semantics,” Pansy says. I don’t bother to argue with her. It’s useless. She drains her martini and sets the glass aside. “Potter.” She twists her mouth to one side on Harry’s name. “Once? Twice? I’m assuming you were pissed.”

"The first time," I admit. Blaise and Pansy both eye me. I take the martini the bartender hands me. He's attractive if you like that sort--tall, gangly, and blond. I've always preferred dark hair, sadly. It's been my downfall more than once. I turn the glass, watching the olive bump against its sloped sides.

"How many times did you fuck him?" Pansy asks. Her voice is far too even and careful. A frisson of unease twists through me.

"Enough."

"Draco." Pansy gives me a pointed look over her steepled fingertips.

I sigh. "Oh, once. A week. For about eight months, give or take."

Pansy's shriek makes us all wince. She digs sharp nails into the skin over my elbow. "I can't believe you," she says, voice low. "Are you serious?"

"Fucking hell, Draco," Blaise says in exasperation. He pulls Pansy's hand away, and I rub my arm.

"It's not as if I meant to," I say, not bothering to hide my sullenness, "but he really does have a decent cock. Of *course* he's an absolute Neanderthal--or Cro Magnon at best--but the things he can do with his mouth..." I trail off, caught up in a memory of being thrown against a wall, Harry's hands on my hips and his mouth on my prick. I shake myself. "Anyway. To sum up, I lost my mind temporarily. I broke things off when Terry returned and we all know how well *that* worked out. And to top it off, *Har-Potter* is here to fuck Lovegood and destroy my holiday." I jab at the air with a finger. "The bastard."

"I rather doubt that." Blaise moves my martini glass back from the edge of the bar.

"You don't know him," I say darkly. No one realises how utterly evil Harry Potter can be at times.

Blaise snorts. "Obviously not as well as you do." I flip two fingers at him, and he just laughs.

"Don't say that." Pansy shudders delicately. "I don't even want to think about it." She makes a face at me. "You and Potter? Really, if you wanted to slum about with Gryffindors, you could have at least picked a decent one. Neville Longbottom, perhaps." Blaise and I both look at her in horror, and she shrugs. "He's a Hogwarts professor."

"Honestly, Pansy," I say over the rim of my glass, "I'm fairly certain I don't want any Longbottom anywhere near my cock."

She picks up the fresh martini the bartender's just set in front of her. A small smile quirks her mouth. "Well, of course not, darling. We're all quite aware you'd prefer his long cock near your bottom."

I groan and throw a napkin at her. It skitters across the slick surface of the bar and falls to the floor. Pansy laughs, and I know my appalling lapse in taste is forgiven.



I collapse in a sweaty, exhausted heap, gasping for breath as Blaise stretches beside me, arching his back. My whole body aches in ways I never thought possible.

"I hate you," I mumble against the sticky surface of the yoga mat. The shorts I'd borrowed from Blaise this morning are twisted around my hips. I tug at them. "I hate you so very much."

Blaise just snorts and rolls to his feet. "It was a bloody beginner's class, you lazy ponce." He nudges my hip with his foot, and I groan, rolling onto my back. My hair flops against my damp face. I grimace.

"I should have gone with Pansy." She'd at least had the sense to tell her husband to go to hell when over tea and toast and bacon he'd suggested starting our day with a workout in the hotel spa. I'd been entranced by the description of relaxing stretches and mind-calming meditation in a tranquil setting Blaise had read me from the hotel brochure. Wanker. "Bloody sodding fucking *lying* wanker." I glare up at him. Then again, perhaps I'd been too distracted by the sight of Lovegood coming into the restaurant, laughing up at Harry. He hadn't even noticed me sitting three tables over; he'd been too entranced with *her*. Bastard.

Blaise looks entirely unsympathetic. "You can't get all your exercise from fucking, you realise. That only works your arse."

"Sod off." I'm not in any frame of mind to deal with a snide Blaise. Particularly given that no one's been near my arse in months. I push myself up off the floor, every muscle in my body protesting. My legs feel like they've had a Jelly-Legs Jinx cast on them. I rub my thighs. Harry'd looked remarkably refreshed this morning. Well-shagged, Pansy had said, with an apologetic glance my way. My stomach lurches, and for the hundredth time this morning I tell myself I don't give a damn what Potter does, in or out of bed.

Blaise flicks his wand at the mats, and mine nearly knocks me sideways as it jerks from beneath my bare feet, rolling itself up with a snap.

My temper flares. "Do you *really* want me to tell Pansy you were ogling *her*?" I nod towards the lithe witch at the front of the room who'd led the class and looks remarkably like a much younger version of my mother. Unsettling, that. Particularly when she'd taken the downward dog pose.

Blaise shrugs. "She wouldn't care." He grins at me. "Knowing Pans, she'd probably start planning on how to talk her into coming upstairs."

"The two of you truly are perverse." I've never understood their casual attitude towards their marital bed. It'd been one thing when they were dating, barely on the edge of acceptability, but now it was just unseemly, in my opinion. The one time I'd seriously quizzed Pansy about it, she'd just sighed and told me that she was willing to do whatever was necessary to keep Blaise from becoming his mother with her excessive string of husbands and lovers, and she'd frankly rather have whatever tart he was planning on shagging in bed with both of them than have to worry about him coming home late every night with lipstick on his collar or spunk on his trousers.

I suppose in a way it makes sense. And God knows it's nearly impossible to keep Blaise's trousers done even then. As besottedly devoted as he is to Pansy, he has his mother's omnivorous sexual appetite. Still, I wish they didn't have to be so bloody open about it. It makes me feel a prude, and I hate that.

We carry the rolled mats over to the birch cubicles next to the door. The instructor smiles at us--or rather at Blaise, I should say--and tucks her pale blonde hair back behind one ear. I pull Blaise away with a sharp glare, much to her obvious disappointment. The last thing I want is to watch him flirt with my mother's doppelganger. Some things are too disturbing for words.

"Bastard," Blaise murmurs at me as I drag him into the hall. He cranes his neck to look back around the door. "You know, I must say she rather looked like--"

"Don't even go there," I snap. At his amused smirk, I narrow my eyes. He shrugs and ambles down the hall, long and lean and striking. He stands out here in this land of pale skin and blue eyes; everyone who passes looks at him. Blaise thrives on attention, but I can tell it's beginning to wear on him after two days. "Does it bother you?" I say. At his raised eyebrow, I sigh. "The stares?"

"Sometimes." Blaise doesn't glance at me. He knows what I mean. We've yet to see anyone black, and we're both aware that the heads that turn when we walk down the street aren't just in admiration of Blaise's beauty. "A bit different to Britain."

"Yes." The carpet is thick and soft beneath my feet as we walk. "I would suppose."

That earns me a long, cool look. "Would you." Blaise stops and turns towards me. "I said it was only a bit different. You don't think I'm not looked at askance some places there as well? A young black wizard?"

I hesitate, uncomfortable. "I didn't mean--" We've had this discussion before, late at night, back at school over a bottle of firewhisky nicked from Severus's office and after a particularly nasty (and physical) encounter with Marcus Flint, who had the intelligence of a Flobberworm and the morality of a Acromantula. Blaise had refused to let me heal his split lip, preferring to wear it defiantly for two days until Severus had pulled him aside and demanded to know under what circumstances he'd acquired it.

Flint had spent the next week in the infirmary, vomiting mercilessly. Hell hath no fury like a Potions Master outraged. Severus hadn't seemed to give a damn about our pureblood prejudices, but he refused to allow judgment of others based on something as inane as the colour of their skin or the size of their parents' Gringotts accounts. He'd shouted at me more than once for the latter. I'd never understood why until after he died.

Blaise just watches me. "I've told you before," he says, his voice low and even, "that this is something you won't ever understand, Draco. You might not see my skin, but I can promise you someone else always does. You will never know what that's like, always wondering who that person is, what idiotic assumptions they're making." He looks away, his mouth tight. "Or what they might do."

Neither of us says anything for a long moment.

"I'll hex their cocks off," I say finally, viciously, an echo of the promise I'd once made over sparking whisky, and that earns me a faint smile.

"Not if I get them first," Blaise says, and for a moment I can see the schoolboys we once were. He nudges my shoulder with his. "And don't fret. So they stare here. It's annoying, but it's not the worst."

"Still." My voice is cold. I touch the wand stuck in the side of my shorts.

Another bump against my shoulder and another smile, wider this time. "I should shower," Blaise says lightly. "I'll find you and Pansy?" I nod, and we stop in the intersection of two corridors near the lifts. Blaise hesitates. "You're all right, Draco?"



I shrug. He knows the answer to that. I'd barely slept last night. "I will be."

Blaise just studies me for a long moment. "Why Potter?" he asks finally. "Out of everyone you could have picked--"

I give him an even look. "Really?" It's another question he already knows the answer to. There's something to be said for fucking one's rival. Particularly when he's hung like Potter. I may hate the bastard, but I can't fault his delectable cock.

Blaise smiles faintly. "That good?"

"Go shower, Blaise," I say, and his laughter follows me down the hall.



Pansy's in the baths, lying on a padded table next to the heated pool with only a towel draped over her hips and a line of wide black stones along the curve of her spine. I thank whatever deity's lurking about that she's on her stomach rather than flashing her breasts around. I don't hold out hope that will last; I've been on too many holidays with her.

There are candles surrounding her, reeking of rose and sandalwood, and a veritable rainforest of magical plants arching towards the high white ceiling. Somewhere I can hear the faint clang of chimes. It's all designed to delude one into the sense of peace and well-being.

It might have worked, I suppose.

What draws me up short is the sight of Harry on the table next to her in quite similar condition. Where Pansy's skin is pale above the thick white towel, though, his is pale gold, with the slightest swathe of cream where the small of his back slips into the smooth sweep of his arse. My mouth feels dry. I swallow, unable to tear my eyes away from the stretch of muscles beneath his skin as he shifts beneath the stones, turning his head to say something to Pansy. Our eyes meet and the small smile slides from his face. He looks me up and down, taking in my dishevelled hair and tight, sweat-stained t-shirt before resting his chin on his folded arms. Light filters through the wide bank of steamed-up windows along the wall, glinting off the glasses that threaten to slide down Harry's nose. A bead of sweat trickles down his forehead.

Pansy glances over. "Darling," she says pleasantly, but her eyes are slightly narrowed at me. God only knows what the arsehole's said to her. I square my shoulders. "I've just been having the most lovely chat with Harry."

"I'm certain." I drop my shoes and sit on the edge of the pool, sliding my legs into the warm, slightly bubbling water. I'd rather run out of the room, but I refuse to give Harry that. There's the faint scent of sulphur in the air. A proper geo-thermal bath would be outdoors, but we're too deep in the city centre for that. Still, the hotel's tapped into a spring deep beneath the surface, siphoning the water up with magic. I watch as the skin on my legs pinks. It feels oddly wonderful against my aching muscles.

I can feel Harry's eyes on me. I don't dare turn around. Instead I grip the side of the pool, kicking one foot so that water splashes up. I try not to think of how badly I'd like to walk over and press my hands

against his warm back, pulling the towel down over his soft arse and stroking my fingertips along his crease. I shiver, despite the heat, and when a door clangs behind me, I jump.

A wizard steps out of the back room, clad in a tight white robe. His shoulders are broad and his hands are wide. He could almost be the younger brother of Viktor Krum, I think, with his close-cropped dark hair and his prominent nose. He moves gracefully across the stone floor, stopping beside Pansy to take the stones off her back, replacing them with steaming towels. He turns to Harry, reaching for the first stone.

Pansy sighs happily and stretches, sending the towels rolling down her back. I catch a glimpse of her breast, and I frown when I realise that Harry's looking as well.

"Do you mind, Potter?" I glare at him.

Pansy smiles, a sharp, feral curve of white teeth. "I don't." I turn my glare on her and she shrugs.

"Lovegood might," I snap.

Harry has the decency to flush. "I wasn't," he says, and then he stops. The masseuse runs a hand down Harry's bare back. It irritates me.

"Oh, please." I curl my lip. I can't tear my eyes from the masseuse's hands kneading Harry's golden skin. Small pink ovals from the stones line his damp spine. Harry flinches as the masseuse presses across them. He twists and bites his bottom lip, groaning slightly and then pressing back up into the touch. My breath catches, much to my chagrin, and Pansy shoots me a sharp, shrewd look. I turn my head, staring down into the bubbling water at my knees.

The room's silent save for Harry's soft breaths and the quiet slap of hands against skin. My face is burning; I can feel it. I don't think. I can't.

"In the pool," the masseuse says, with one last smack, and I still. "Good for your muscles now."

I glance out of the corner of my eye. Harry's looking at me, his cheeks pink beneath his tan. "I..." he says, and then he shrugs and sits up. "What the hell."

Pansy rests her chin on her fist, her eyes widening slightly as Harry slides off the table. His towel drops to the floor. "Oh, my." At my scowl she raises an eyebrow and tucks her towel tighter around her breasts. "Well, you didn't mention *everything*, Draco."

"Shut it," I hiss, but Harry's already walking towards me, a small smile on his face, and utterly starkers.

If I had any self-respect at all, I'm quite aware, I'd sit still, acting as if Harry Potter's naked prick bobbing in front of me as he walks along the edge of the pool means nothing. Instead my fingernails are digging into the stone edging, and I can barely breathe. All I can think of is what that beautiful body felt like beneath my hands. What it tasted like on my tongue.

Fuck.

"I..." I lick my bottom lip. "Where the hell is Lovegood?"

Harry slides into the pool. The steam fogs his glasses; he pulls them off and sets them aside. He looks calmly at me as the water bubbles and pops around his nipples. "Looking for puffins, I believe."

"Shouldn't you be with her?" I pull one foot from the pool. Warm water slides down my ankle, puddling beneath my heel. Harry's gaze drifts down to the wide vee of my legs and the cotton jersey pulled tight over my balls. Flustered, I push myself up, tugging at my tee shirt. Bloody ridiculous Muggle clothes. I'm going to kill Blaise. Really.

"We're not joined at the hip," Harry says. The warmth in his eyes has faded. He settles back against the side of the pool.

"You might have fooled me."

"From what I hear that's not hard to do."

His cool tone feels like a slap in the face. I can barely breathe. I don't know what the hell is wrong with me, but I don't like it. "I'm sure I've no idea what you're on about."

"Really." He looks back at me, his face inscrutable. "It was a lovely wedding, you know."

I don't say anything, not wanting to give Potter the satisfaction of seeing me upset.

"Pity you weren't there to kiss the groom." There's a sharp tone to his voice that twists through me. "He seemed quite happy, I must say. Couldn't take his hands off the bride."

I stiffen. "How lovely for him."

Harry's jaw tightens almost imperceptibly. "She certainly thought so. Quite a few wagers at the tables about whether or not they'd actually make it upstairs or shag at the reception. You know what they say about pregnant women and their hormones." His mouth is a thin line. "Then again, not really your cuppa."

"Yours either." I meet his furious gaze. "Or so I've heard."

There's a moment's stunned pause before Harry draws a sharp breath.

"Fuck you," he says, his voice low and strained. I've crossed a line and I know it. Ginevra Weasley's miscarriage right before she left Harry wasn't a secret. The fact that Harry hadn't wanted a child at the time was. He'd confessed his guilt late one night after a bottle wine and a brilliant shag, certain that he'd somehow wished the miscarriage into happening. "No wonder Boot tossed you aside. I doubt anyone could stand you for long, you hateful cunt."

I take a step back, blinking.

"Belt up, Potter." Pansy sits up, the protests of the masseuse be damned. She clutches a towel to her chest, covering half a breast, her wand in her hand, Lady Justice sans scales and blindfold.

"Pansy." I swallow, my throat tight. It's not anything I haven't thought myself, on a dark, empty night. Hearing it said aloud though...

"He can't talk to you that way." She tilts her head, and the tip of her wand circles lightly in the air. The masseuse looks between us, his brow furrowed. Not the brightest wizard, I'd say, though his hand's on his wand hilt, just in case.

I give Harry a contemptuous glance. "He's not worth it."

"And?"

Harry just watches her, his mouth a thin line. He doesn't flinch. Why should he? You'd have to be mad to attack the bloody Saviour of the Wizarding World. I look back at Pansy, my fists clenched at my sides, trying desperately to stop my hands from shaking.

"I'm leaving." It's cowardly I know, but I can't stand to be in the same room with him. Not right now. My heart thuds against my chest and I'm certain I'm going to be ill.

"Draco." She starts to slide off the table. "I'm not going to let you --"

I cut her off. "For God's sake, Pansy, just this once, don't." I can't deal with her concern right now. I just want to leave.

She sinks back onto the massage table as if she's been struck. I feel a twinge of guilt. I do my best to ignore it. "Fine then. Go." She turns her head, but not before I see her too-bright eyes. Still, I can't back down. I won't let myself. I glance at Harry out of the corner of my eye. He's studiously looking away.

"Bastard," I spit out, my voice cracking, and I slam the door behind me, determined to put as much space between me and Harry Fucking Potter as I can.



"May I help you find something, sir?" The slight, pale shopclerk eyes me speculatively over his thick black glasses. He scratches absently at his patchy, scraggly beard. His accented English is perfect; I've yet to find anyone under the age of thirty who isn't fluent. A name tag pinned to his plaid shirt identifies him as Hjálmar.

I shake my head. I'm on the second floor of Mál og Menning, perusing the shelves of guidebooks, hoping to find one to replace Pansy's. There are moments I regret letting my temper have the best of me. "Merely looking." Most of the books are in the incomprehensible string of consonants and squiggles Iceland calls a language, but the shop has a small collection of English-language volumes in this corner.

Hjálmar lowers his voice. "There is a section in the back you might be interested in." His eyes flick towards a black door in the corner, heavily carved with what look like runes. It's entirely out of place in this Scandinavian haven of birch and chrome and plate glass. "More..." He glances around furtively. "Esoteric texts."

I'm hoping he's referring to magical books rather than pornography. I think. I set the Fodor's Guide back on the shelf. "Really. Do you have Umfraville?" I try to sound bored.

A small smile curves Hjálmar's mouth. "And Whisp." He crooks a finger at me and I follow him. "His Llewellyn biography is quite good if you're interested in Welsh Quidditch."

"How'd you know?" I ask as he slips his wand out of his pocket and taps the wooden door. I can hear a heavy clunk and the squeak of hinges needing oiling. I'd rather thought I'd done an adequate job with my clothing choices. Black wool trousers and a black jumper--both seemed appropriate enough to me. I hadn't thought it best to go out in a robe again, although judging by the attire I'd seen up and down Laugavegi, a robe was among the tamer choices.

Hjálmar snorts. "You don't look like a Muggle. My guess was priest or wizard and, well..." He looks at my arse pointedly. "No priest wears trousers that tight." I suppose I can't argue the point. I'm rather pleased, actually. Pansy was right about these trousers. Hjálmar pushes the door open, revealing a narrow flight of steps that lead to a third floor which, from the building's exterior, seems non-existent. "Besides," he says dryly, "Gladrags showed that jumper last fall in Paris." At my raised eyebrow, he shrugs. "We import *Homme Magique*." He gestures up the stairs. "If you need assistance..." A gleam of interest I recognise all too well from nights spent clubbing flashes in his eye, but I'm not in the mood, as tempting as a public encounter might possibly be at the moment.

"No." It comes out more sharply than I intend. "Thank you," I add, my discomfort obvious.

"Pity." He shrugs and turns. I consider calling him back--Pansy, I daresay, would claim I'd benefit from having my cock sucked by a weedy Icelandic boy with cheekbones to rival my own. Instead I climb the dusty, shadowed steps up into a room twice the size of the one below and packed with tall, dark wooden bookshelves filled with manuscripts and books in every European language (not to mention a few African and Asian dialects.) I'm impressed despite myself. It's no Flourish and Blotts, certainly, but for a city of this size...

"Amazing, isn't it?" A light voice behind me sends me whirling about. "All the volumes?"

Luna Lovegood's sitting on the floor next to the wide window, books surrounding her, thin rays of sunlight setting her golden hair aglow. She beams up at me, the picture of angelic contentment. "But perhaps," she continues, "that's rather Anglo-centric of us. After all, Iceland does have the highest per capita of readers in Europe, did you know that?"

I take a step back. Of course I'd run into her. There are times I curse my horrific luck, but there aren't that many places to hide here. "Aren't you supposed to be studying puffins?"

She gives me a pitying look. "Black guillemots, actually, and Brünnich's variety as well although I quite enjoyed watching the puffins feed their young this morning. Have you been to the bird cliffs yet?"

"No."

"Oh, but you should!" Lovegood scrambles to her feet, her curls bouncing around her face. Silver fish swing from her ears. "They're just north of the city--Hafnaberg and Krysuvikurbjarg--right across the bay. I'm quite certain I saw a Golden Snitch there this morning, and you know how very rare they are this day and age." She claps her hands. "I've been trying to talk Harry into going down into the Reykjanes peninsula tomorrow. The lava fields are utterly amazing, and there's the Blue Lagoon as well--"

"The what?" I interrupt her, completely lost.

She blinks at me a moment. "It's a rather famous geothermic bath in one of the lava fields," she says gently.

I curl my lip. "Of course it is."



“You should join us,” Lovegood says, but I’m already shaking my head.

“I think not,” I say stiffly. I’d rather spend time in the ninth circle of hell, to be honest. Or have dinner in France with my parents. “If you’ll excuse me--” I start to turn.

“We’re not sleeping together, you know.”

I stop, looking back at her. She tilts her head, smiling at me. Her skin is almost translucent in the light and her bones are delicate and fragile. If I hadn’t known her since childhood, I might actually think she had a bit of fae blood in her. I’m still not entirely certain she doesn’t.

“Harry and I,” she says. “We’re not--”

“I heard you.” There’s a flutter in my stomach. “I can’t imagine why you’d think I care.”

She stands, brushing off her straight black skirt. Her buckled shoes at first glance seem sensible, until one notices their thick high heels. They don’t seem to bother her though. “You’re jealous.” She hefts a heavy satchel onto her shoulder.

“Ridiculous.”

Lovegood just smiles at me still. I fight back the urge to hex her. “Of course. Emotions usually are. That’s what I tell Harry, but he never listens to me.” She shrugs and pulls her grey cardigan tighter around herself. “But I thought you should know that despite what he’d like you to think, we aren’t--” She hesitates. “I mean, it’s not like we never did. After Ginny--well, it was only two months, and we decided we’d be much better as friends instead.” Her face takes on a wistful look. “He does have a lovely penis, though, wouldn’t you say? Possibly one of the nicest I’ve seen, and I’ve seen quite a few over the years. Not too long but quite thick.”

I just look at her. I don’t know what to say, even if I thought I could choke something out. “You,” I finally manage. “And Ha--Potter.” I swallow, trying not to imagine her riding Harry’s prick the way I once had, her head thrown back as he slammed up into her. “Yes. Well.”

“Not any longer,” she says earnestly. “That’s what I’m saying.”

“I see.” My voice is flat. Dull. I just want to get away from her. I should have arranged for a Portkey the moment they showed up at the hotel. All it would have taken was waving a stack of krónur in the right direction. Or Galleons. The Icelandic economy was in such tatters that surely someone would have jumped at bag of coins.

“I don’t think you do.” Lovegood places a hand on my arm. I jerk away. “Draco, he knew you were coming here. Office gossip and all that. He asked me--” She sighs. “Well, I told him it was a terrible idea, but you know how he can be sometimes when he thinks he’s right. I love Harry, I do, but he’s such a Gryffindor, and really, we all know how they’ll just cut off their noses out of sheer spite--”

I’ve reached the end of my patience. “What are you trying to say?”

There’s a moment’s pause, then she says simply, “He wanted to make you jealous.”

We’re both silent.

"Rubbish," I say quietly. After that argument in the spa, I can't believe her.

She shakes her head. "He did." She twists her earring. "He'll hate me for telling you this, but someone ought to. You hurt him, you know. Horribly. And maybe you should ask yourself what you have in return now. You don't seem very happy yourself."

I clench my fists. "That is none of your damned business."

"Perhaps not." Lovegood doesn't look away from me. "But when you've seen one of your dearest friends devastated twice--" She lifts her chin. "Ask yourself, Draco Malfoy, why your throwing him aside the way you did hurt him just as much as when Ginny left him for Neville. Not that you care of course."

Throat tight, I don't move as she brushes past me. She stops and digs in her satchel, pulling out Pansy's guidebook. The binding's slightly scuffed, but it's in one piece. She presses it into my hand. "This is yours."

My fingers close around it. I hesitate, then nod. "Thank you."

"He was different with you," she says softly. "For eight months, he actually smiled."

I close my eyes, my arms folded tight across my chest. I don't even turn around when she pauses at the top of the stairs. There's a crackle of magic as she pushes through the wards, then her footsteps fade away.

I don't go back downstairs for quite a while.



Dinner's a quiet affair.

I'm not in the mood for talking, nor for the meaningful glances my dinner companions are exchanging over the top of my head. I poke at my grilled puffin, dragging the tines of my fork across the charred flesh, and sigh.

"I'm fine," I say through gritted teeth at Blaise's third *are you quite certain you're all right, Draco?*

He snorts into his wine. "By whose definition?"

"Blaise is just worried, darling. All things considered..." Pansy twists her glass between her fingers. The moment she takes the last sip, the hovering waiter pours more. Pansy beams up at him. "Lovely." It's her fourth glass of the evening. "But I'm not." She lays a hand over mine. "Worried that is. Of course you're fine. You're always fine. Fine, fine, fine. That's Draco Malfoy."

I pull my hand away. "You're a horrid drunk."

"I most certainly am not." Pansy licks wine from her bottom lip and turns to her husband. "Am I drunk, dearest?" Blaise has the common sense to shake his head, and she looks back at me. "See? And anyway, you are a bit of a cad." She takes a bite of monkfish.

"What?" My fork clanks against the china plate.

Pansy chews slowly. "Well, you were rather awful to Potter when you were seeing him." She frowns down at her plate. "At least so he says. We had a discussion after he talked me out of hexing his prick to his forehead."

"I cannot believe," I say, voice ice cold, "that you're honestly taking his side."

Blaise motions to the waiter for more wine and watches him walk to the back of the restaurant.

"I didn't say anything of the sort." Pansy shrugs and picks up a piece of asparagus. "I just said that you were--"

"I *heard* what you said." I throw my napkin onto the table. "He called me--"

Pansy wipes her fingers on her napkin. "I know what he called you, and you can be quite certain--" Her eyes narrow. "--that he won't be using that language again about you."

"Bollocks." I don't care if I'm rude.

"Draco," Blaise says soothingly, and I turn on him, jaw tight.

"Don't start with me. I'm bloody well *tired* of being the one who's always at fault."

Blaise just eyes me. "No one's suggested--"

"The hell she hasn't!" I take a deep breath as the entire restaurant turns to look at me. Pansy just reaches for her wineglass.

"I did nothing of the sort and you know it," she says calmly over the rim. "And I'm certainly not taking his side. Merlin knows Potter of all people doesn't need me to. But there's no sense in your being delusional about what you've done, and really, Draco, since when do you care if you were awful to Potter or not? I rather thought that was your *joie de vivre* since first year." She arches one perfectly plucked eyebrow. "You fucked him and then you threw him aside for Terry which turned out to be an absolute nightmare, but that's not your fault at all--"

"Oh, do shut up, Parkinson." I say to her. I'm in a foul mood and I know it. Pansy just looks at me reproachfully. I'm going to regret my temper tomorrow. I always do. And she'll forgive me. She always does. But for now...

I push my chair back. "I'm going out. Don't wait up."

"Please get stuffed. Properly," Pansy says. She sets her wineglass back down. "At this point I'm seriously considering paying someone to appear in your room and blow you."

My scowl doesn't faze her. Blaise lets the waiter refill his glass. "She has a point," he says, leaning back in his chair. "It would do you good. You've been in a horrid mood since this morning--"

"Since Terry," Pansy murmurs into her wine, and then has the gall to give me a wide-eyed, innocent look when I glare at her.

"Fuck you both," I snap, and I don't look back as I storm out of the restaurant, nearly knocking over the head waiter.

I grab his arm. "Gay bar. Closest to here."

He blinks and coughs, smoothing the sleeves of his jacket. "That would be the Barbara, sir. On Laugavegur." He hesitates. "It's the pink building."

I sigh. “Of course it is.” Really, there are times I despair of my tribe. Must everything be so bloody *camp*?

Still, I glance at my watch. Half nine--plenty of time to drink, dance and perhaps even have the fuck shagged out of me in a filthy loo reeking of sweat and urine and spunk.

The perfect end to this wretched day.

I pull the collar of my coat up and step out into the cold night wind.



Photo by femmequixotic

## five

The bar is packed. A few tourists like myself have wandered in, obviously, but the great majority of the men and women crowding the dance floor are locals, judging from the buzz of Icelandic around me. There's something oddly comforting about the foreignness of it, combined with the steady familiarity of the gay bar setting. Let's be honest: wherever you find a throng of gay men, there will always be too loud dance music, ridiculous lighting, brilliant cocktails, and pretty, half-dressed twinkles willing to do whatever might be required for another drink. I eye the latter fondly. It wasn't terribly long ago I was one of them myself.

I take my fourth martini from the bartender, holding it high as I slide through the crowd back towards Hjálmar and his group of friends. I'd found them as soon as I'd come in; the waifish boy from the booksellers had waved me over once he saw me and introduced me to Ari and Jónatan and the tattooed and pierced Snorri, who had sized me up immediately and pronounced me fuckable. I'd been pleased and had let him buy me my first drink as a reward. After the second I'd allowed him a kiss. I'm contemplating coaxing him to the loo--and maybe even back to the hotel, depending upon how talented he is with his tongue.

Music throbs around me, the lights above pulsing in time to the rhythm. I've missed the club scene. Terry had never cared for it, so I'd stopped going out as we'd become more serious. And while Harry and I would occasionally find ourselves at a Muggle club, we were far more interested in fucking than cruising. Most of our time together had been spent in hotel beds.

Sweat trickles down my temple into my hair. My hairline's already begun the infamous Black family retreat, damn Mother and her ridiculous genes. Still, judging by the rather lecherous looks I get, that doesn't seem to be a problem here. One tall, broadshouldered man grabs my waist, pulling my arse up against his hips. I nearly spill my martini, and when I turn to chide him, he captures my mouth with his in a lazy, slow kiss.



"Viltu dansa við mig?" he shouts over the music when he finally pulls away.

My lips are still wet. "I don't speak Icelandic."

He just grins and grabs my hand, tugging me out among the throng of dancers. "You. Me. Dance. Yes?" He takes my martini and sets it on a passing tray before I can protest.

"Look, you," I start, but he's pulled me closer, his hands heavy and warm on my hips.

"You're English," he says with a smile. His hair's red-gold and there's a smattering of freckles across his nose. I have a horrible feeling a Weasley ancestor made it this far North at some point.

I snort, but I don't pull away. I've enough gin and vermouth in me not to care. Besides, his cock pressed into my hip feels rather impressive, and perhaps Pansy does have a point. It's been too damned long since I've had spunk over anything but my own hand. I drape an arm across one of his shoulders. "You're observant," I say, sliding my fingers over his wrist. A gentle tug and his hand slips over the curve my arse.

His smile widens; his fingers flex against the back of my trousers. "Among other things."

I give him my most alluring look, letting my hips rock forward against his. His breath catches. "I can imagine." He's lovely eyes. Blue edged with grey, and his lashes are thick and gold. I let him kiss me again, wondering whether he's Muggle or wizard or Squib before I decide it doesn't bloody matter given how utterly talented he is with his tongue.

"Malfoy."

My fingers are tangled in the back of my lovely Icelandic boy's hair. "Mmm?" I murmur against the corner of his mouth.

A strong hand twists in the back of my shirt, right above my trousers, pulling me back up against a warm body. "Malfoy." I blink, turning my head finally. A muscled arm is holding me still; I follow it up to see Harry scowling at me. "Fuck off," he says to my partner, and the lovely man melts away into the crowd with an apologetic shrug at me. Traitor.

It's only when Harry's fingers brush my hip that I realise I'm still pressed against him, swaying slightly to the music. I twist around, pushing him away. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

"I could ask you the same." Harry glares at me. "What, were you going to fuck him on the dance floor?"

My temper flares. "So what if I had?" I push past him, shoving through a crush of dancing bodies to the edge of the bar. "Martini," I say to the bartender, fishing a 1,000 krónur bill from my pocket and slapping it on the scarred wood. "Dirty and heavy on the gin."

Harry's right behind me. I knew he would be. He's not one to give up so quickly when his ire is up. "He might as well have had his finger up your arse."

I grip the edge of the bar. "Why on earth do you care? You're not my mother; you're *definitely* not my lover; it's none of your bloody business if I want some complete stranger to get on his knees on the bloody street corner and suck me off."

"Don't be crass." Harry tosses some coins on the bar. "Lager. Skjálfti, if you have it."

The bartender nods and reaches for a brown bottle with a red and gold label behind the bar. He uncaps it and hands it to Harry at the same time he sets my martini in front of me.

"Takk, Björn." Harry says. I just look at him.

"How many times have you been to Iceland?" I ask after a moment. My curiosity gets the better of my irritation.

Harry shrugs. "Four, I think." He lifts his beer to his mouth and takes a long drink. I look away, suddenly unsettled. "I like it here. It's quiet and pretty, to begin with." He sets the bottle on the bar and rubs his thumb across the gilded wheat on the label. "Easier to pull as well. Not as many people who give a damn that I'm Harry bloody Potter." He says the last bitterly.

I press my lips together. "You never told me that."

"You never asked." Harry takes another sip of beer.

There's really nothing to say to that. I shrug and drink my martini. It's dry and sour.

Harry leans on the bar, his arms folded. "I could have also told you that bloke you were dancing with? His name's Óðinn. Quite nice. Brilliant dancer. Rather good at cocksucking too. But, when it comes to fucking, he's a bit of a problem with actually hanging on long enough to get you off properly before...well." Harry raises one shoulder expressively.

To my shame, I'm appalled. "You've..." I trail off.

"More than once." Harry gives me an even look. "Does that bother you?"

It does. I have no damned intention of telling him. "Don't be an idiot." I finish off my martini and motion for another. Harry just watches me, his face curiously blank.

"I think it does," he says finally.

"In your dreams, Potter," I snap. I pop the olive from my martini glass in my mouth and chew. It's filled with too-sharp cheese and I grimace, swallowing quickly. I take Harry's beer from his hand, desperate to rinse the taste from my mouth somehow. "Besides, Lovegood claims you followed me here." I smirk. "So perhaps you're..." I search for the phrase Pansy always throws at me. "...transferring your own feelings onto me."

Harry grabs the beer bottle back. "Shut up." Lights from the dance floor arc over us, flashing pink and gold across Harry's face.

"Such an effective rejoinder," I say dryly. I take the martini the bartender sets in front of me. "Bravo."

Carefully, Harry sets the bottle down again. It thunks softly against the sticky bar. God only knows how many drinks have been spilled across it this evening. I eye him over the rim of my glass. "What?" I ask, suddenly uneasy at his determined expression. A purposeful Potter never bodes well, I've learned to my chagrin.

"This more effective?" he murmurs, far too close to my ear for my comfort, and then his palm presses hard and rough against the fly of my trousers.

My martini slides from my fingers, the glass titling just enough to send a splash of gin across the bar, as Harry's mouth finds mine.

I should move. I should pull away. I know I should, but I can't. Harry's lips are soft and warm and just the slightest bit chapped as they move across mine. Kissing him has always been like this. Inexorable. Slow, breathless, his mouth pressing lightly until mine opens beneath him and his tongue sweeps across my teeth as he pushes me backwards. The edge of the bar hits my waist, digging into my spine. I don't care. Harry's teeth scrape over my bottom lip, and I groan. Without thought, I clench one hand on his hip to steady myself, and his fingers push harder against the wool of my trousers. My cock swells against him, and Harry laughs, a soft warm huff against my jaw. I can smell the alcohol on his breath.

"How many pints have you had?" I whisper.

"Enough."

With his left hand, Harry takes my glass from my numb fingers and sets it aside. My breath catches. He's always been ridiculously dexterous, even two sheets to the wind like this. Bloody Seeker.

"Do you really think," Harry says against my ear, his hand smoothing over my prick again, "that I would stand by and watch some other bloke get you off?" His teeth nip my earlobe. I breathe in sharply, my thumb hooking through a belt loop in his jeans.

"I thought you liked that sort of thing." My brain tells me to push him away. I don't listen. I can smell him, smell his sweat and his skin and the faintest trace of the horrid cologne Granger had given him last Christmas. "Stop," I say, the word catching in the back of my throat, but it's a weak protest, and we both know it.

Harry snorts and his fingers twist around my cock, hard and fast, wrinkling my trousers. "You have no damned idea what you look like, do you?" His lips brush my jaw, and my eyes flutter closed for a moment. "When you take that first sip of a drink?" I lick my lip, just looking at him. His eyes are shadowed behind his glasses, and he leans in as his hand presses hard against me, making me grab his hip again with a rough gasp. "All the way across the room tonight," he says, voice raw, "watching you drink, and Christ, that face you make--" He breaks off for a moment, drawing in a deep breath. His fingers still work at my prick, smoothing and twisting, and I don't stop him. I couldn't even if I wanted to.

"What about my face?" I murmur. His mouth hovers above mine. The man next to me jostles my arm and says something apologetic, but I'm not paying attention. It doesn't matter that we're standing at the corner of a crowded bar in a mass of beautiful men dancing to some throbbing, almost primitive beat. I'm pissed enough to know that Harry's my whole world at this moment, his mouth, his fingers, and as humiliating as that realisation is, the fact remains that if he moves his hand right now, I will hex those bloody glasses off his face into sodding oblivion. My hips buck up against his palm.

His thumb smooths across the damp fabric over the head of my prick. I grab the edge of the bar with one hand, my fingernails digging into the stained wood. I hate him. I do. I hate the way he's always made me *want* him all these years, the way my whole bloody world has revolved around Harry Fucking Potter since I was eleven, for Christ's sake--

"Your face," he says breathlessly, and I can feel the press of his heavy cock against my hip as he rocks forward, one leg sliding between my thighs. "Same as when you slid your legs into that bath today, you fucking cocktease-" He kisses me again, wet and open and desperate, and I can't help but arch against him. I'm drunk and randy and it's been months since anyone's touched me like this, the minutely cognizant portion of my brain whispers. It doesn't matter that it's Harry. I'd be this reckless with any man who grabbed my prick.

I'm a master at lying to myself.

Harry presses me back against the bar. His tongue flicks at the corner of my mouth, drags across my damp bottom lip. My hand works its way beneath the hem of his jumper, pushing at the thick fabric until I can touch warm skin beneath. Harry bites my jaw, and I make a small soft noise that's swallowed by the din of the bar. He hears it though and he smiles, a slow, almost predatory curve of his lips. "It's like watching you come," he whispers against my ear. "That look on your face." His mouth slides down my neck, kissing lightly. His hand squeezes me, firm and tight. I shudder. My legs wobble for a moment, and I'm horribly afraid I'm going to end up on the filthy floor, but I push myself back against the bar, clinging to it instead of him. I've at least a modicum of dignity. "That was always my favourite part of pounding you into the duvet, you know." Harry rubs the ball of his palm against my cock, rolling it over the head in one quick, aching twist. "Watching you come beneath me, stretched out and begging." He presses his mouth to the pulse in my throat and sucks lightly, his teeth scraping my skin. "Your mouth open and your face flushed while you jerked at your prick --"

I can't stop myself. My fingers tangle in his hair, and with one rough, nearly painful tug, he sends me over the edge, pulling away as I bite my bottom lip, my whole body shaking as I come against his hand.

We're still for a moment, both of us, my breath ragged and wispy, my legs trembling with the effort of holding myself up. Music blares around us, and I can hear the fragments of conversation in Icelandic next to me. I turn my head. Three men are next to us, beers in hand, watching us with heated expressions. One purses his mouth at me and rocks his hips forward, grabbing at his prick. His friends laugh. I flick two fingers their way.

Harry's cock is a hard ridge in his jeans, pressed tight against me, and he moves slightly, his fingers digging into my hip. "Draco," he says, softly, still oblivious to the tumult around us, and I know what he wants.

I've no intention of giving it to him.

My trousers are damp with come and sweat and all I want to do is throw myself into my bed, my fingers up my arse as I wank myself raw thinking about Harry arched over me, my legs wrapped around his hips. Or save myself the trouble and let Harry do it for me. I pull back, my eyes fixed on his face. "Fuck off, Potter," I murmur, stepping around him, and I walk away, pushing through the writhing crowd.

At the steps, I look back. Harry's still at the bar, watching me. Our eyes meet, and he raises his beer bottle before grabbing the arm of a passing boy--tall, blond and barely old enough to be out of Hogwarts--and pulling him into a rough kiss.

I slam the door behind me.



I'm hungover in the morning. Afternoon, rather. Pansy wakes me at half-two, pounding on my door. When I open it, groggily, in pants, and none too pleased, she pushes past me and shoves a potion in my face.

"Ow." I squint at it. "What's that?"

Pansy presses it into my head. "Just drink," she says. I don't bother to argue. There's no use, and frankly, the sight of the tiny blue glass bottle is a relief. My head's killing me.

I down the potion, trying not to taste it or to think about what it's comprised of, as Pansy wrinkles her nose. "For God's sake, shower." She sniffs me, then shudders. "Blaise and I will meet you downstairs. I've no intention of letting you sleep the day away."

"God forbid." I head for the bath. I've got to piss and brush my teeth. Not necessarily in that order.

"Did you pull?" Pansy calls out. I can hear her rifling through my wardrobe, pulling out clothes and tossing them on the bed.

I hesitate, toothbrush in my mouth, guilt flooding through me. "No." I look at my reflection in the mirror. My hair's mussed and filthy, and the pillow's left pink creases in my cheek. My skin's too pale. I look like hell. I wonder who Harry took home last night, and whether he's thrown him out of his room yet. I don't know why it matters. I'm the one who walked away.

Still. I've been up all night, telling myself I didn't make a mistake.

Pansy doesn't say anything for a moment. The wardrobe door bangs shut. "Pity." She appears in the doorway, arms across her chest. "Twenty minutes? There's a settlement exhibit near the lake that I'd like to see."

"Since when have you been interested in history?" I spit into the basin, then rinse my mouth out.

She shrugs. "Just get dressed."

The door clicks shut behind her, and my shoulders slump.

It's going to be a long day.



The settlement exhibit is located beneath the Hotel Reykjavik Centrum. It's a preserved archaeological dig, or as Blaise pronounces it with a bored yawn, "a great bloody hole in the dirt." That earns him Pansy's bony elbow in his side, and I wince along with him.

"It's one of the earliest residences in the country," Pansy says tartly as she walks around one corner of what was once a Nordic longhouse and now is just a pile of orange-tinted rocks. I'm less than impressed, despite the two fur-clad ghosts that sit on an edge of the hole, their feet dangling over the side. They watch us suspiciously. "Older even than Hogwarts."

"Except Hogwarts is still standing," Blaise murmurs.

Pansy gives him a sharp look. "Do you mind?"

"Not usually." He grins at her, and I roll my eyes. Sometimes they nauseate me. I have the distinct feeling this will be one of those days. I'd rather spent the afternoon curled up in bed. Preferably wanking.



I trail behind them as Pansy oohs over the various artefacts set into displays on the walls around the wide, dirty hole. I've no idea why she's wanted to come here. She's never been interested in museums, and she'd refused to go with me to the Bodley exhibit at the V&A. I watch her carefully, taking note of her quick glances at her watch and the way she positions herself in order to see the entrance. I finally grab her arm, pulling her back next to me.

"What," I ask under my breath, "are you playing at?"

Pansy's eyes flick to one side. "Nothing."

I tighten my fingers on her elbow. "You hate museums. Why are we here?"

She pulls away. "I've no idea what you're on about, Draco."

"Bollocks." I glare at her, then my attention is caught by a familiar head of black hair bobbing over what once was the longhouse porch. "Pansy," I say tightly, and she glances over. The guilt that flashes across her face answers my unspoken question. "You didn't."

"It's for your own good," Pansy says, chin lifted, and when I look at Blaise, he just studies his fingernails.

"Her idea."

"Oh, there you are, Pansy." Lovegood turns the corner, Harry at her heels. The smile on his face drops immediately when he sees us. "So sorry we're late."

"Luna." He stops, hands in his pockets. "What..."

Lovegood tucks her hair behind one ear. "Really, Harry," she says calmly, "it's the only thing we could do. Pansy and I discussed it over breakfast, and the two of you are just never going to get past any of this if we leave you both to it. And let's be honest, you wanked him in public--"

I make a strangled noise, and Harry looks at me. His face is red. "Shut it, Luna," he says, in a low voice that sends a shiver up my spine.

"We all know about it," Lovegood says, looking distinctly cross. "So don't use that tone with me, Harry James Potter. I'm not afraid of you."

I, on the other hand, most definitely am.

Pansy grabs my shoulder, keeping me from running out of the damned room. "We've decided that Luna's going to join us for the afternoon. And the two of you--" Her eyes narrow at me. "--are going to actually talk. Or fuck. Or do whatever it takes to stop being such utter *shits*." She cuts off my protest. "Really, darling, I'm finished with your excuses. You've been an absolute beast for months, and it's time you dealt with that."

"Blaise," I say, but he shakes his head.

"I agree with them."

Bastard.

I look at Harry. He's wrapped his arms around himself and his face is miserable. "I thought we were going to Þingvellir," he says to Lovegood.

She shakes her head. "I'm not coming with you. But I think you should go," she says softly, her hand on his arm. "It'll give you time together." She drops a set of keys in his hand. "Please, Harry?"

He turns away, his jaw tight as he looks out over the remnants of the longhouse, and she sighs.

"Just leave them," Pansy says sharply, and Luna nods.

"Sorry," Blaise whispers as he brushes past me. I ignore him.

And then it's just me and Harry.

Neither of us say anything, and then Harry sighs and leans against the barrier. "So."

"You can do whatever you'd like," I say. "I'd rather not spend the afternoon with you either."

Harry turns his head, looking at me. His silence makes me tense. I pull my robe tighter. One of the long-haired ghost floats past us and says something in a language I don't understand. "Éttu skít," Harry says, and the ghost scowls at him. Harry waves him off. "They won't leave us alone if we don't do what they want, you know. Or at least Luna won't."

"Frightened of a girl, Potter?" I try to sneer.

Harry snorts. "And I see you defying Parkinson so very often."

He has a point.

The ghosts have decided to take on a Muggle family, taunting them. One pulls at the youngest girl's pigtails, and she looks around suspiciously, glaring at me and Harry. I sigh. "This is ridiculous."

"Of course it is." Harry shrugs and swings the keys in his hand. "Fancy a drive out of the city?"

"A what?"

"Drive." Harry starts off towards the exhibit entrance. "I've my driving licence, and I wanted to go out into the country. You can come or not. I don't care." He doesn't wait for me.

I find myself following him, much to my chagrin. This won't go well. I glance back at the ghosts. But I've nothing else to do, I suppose.

I curse Pansy beneath my breath as I hurry to catch up with Harry.



Photo by femmequixotic

## six

The car is miniscule. I've always ridden in large black Ministry cars, driven by solid, silent men in dark robes, or in Grandfather Abraxas's charmed Bentley. Father'd never approved of that. It was far too Muggle for him, and he'd sold it off to some French family a month after Grandfather died. Still, this tiny scrap of metal and glass barely looks big enough for Harry, let alone me. Wizarding space or not, I can't imagine how my knees won't be up at my chest.

"You can't expect me to ride in that."

"Your choice." Harry unlocks the left door and opens it. He knows as well as I do that I'm not going to back out now.

"I can't drive," I say quickly. I hate the admission--it galls me that Harry can do something I can't, but there's no sense in pretending otherwise. I've no desire to kill myself on the road.

Harry looks back at me, one leg in the car. "Just get in; they drive on the wrong side of the road here." He doesn't bother to hide his annoyance.

"Oh." I peer into the car. The steering mechanism's on Harry's side. "How barbarian of them."

"Yes, and the rest of Europe." Harry's mouth quirks as I slide into the seat next to him. It's surprisingly roomy. "Not to mention three-quarters of the world."

I sniff and stretch my feet out. "Just because they're all lemurs doesn't mean we're required to jump off the bloody cliff with them."

"Lemmings." Harry turns the key and the engine catches.

"What?"

"Lemmings," Harry says again, patiently, as he twists in his seat, looking out the window as he pulls the car out of the parking space. "Lemurs don't go over cliffs. Lemmings do--or at least that's the popular misconception. They don't actually commit mass suicide, Hermione tells me."

I grab hold of the door as we slide into traffic. "Don't be ridiculous. Everyone knows--" I slam my hand against the window, my heart in my throat as a large lorry comes barrelling towards us. "Watch out!"

Harry swears and swerves back onto the right-hand side of the road. "Sorry." He taps his wand against the wheel, casting a driving charm. "That should help."

"You utter pillock." I slump back in my seat. "If you kill me, my father will have your guts for garters."

"I'm trembling," Harry says dryly. He keeps his hands on the wheel, which does nothing to ease my fear. I've never seen anyone drive the Muggle way.

The city whizzes by in a grey blur. I pull my robe tighter--it's still chilly and damp outside--and Harry glances over. "Cold?" My casual shrug is undermined by a shiver, and Harry switches the warming charms on, steaming the windows for a moment before they clear.

It's odd driving along the opposite side of the road. I feel slightly off-kilter somehow, as if the world's shifted out of focus. I don't particularly like it, but then I'm a strong proponent of the status quo. I stare out the window as the low-slung buildings of the industrial sector are slowly replaced by softly rolling hills covered in patches of purple lupine. A misty rain drifts down, barely wetting the dark grey and speckled white road surface.

"Where are we going?" I ask finally, as Harry takes the turn marked *Mosfellsbaer*. The road's wide and curvy, with several lanes of traffic flowing along with us. We've been silent for a good fifteen minutes, the only sound in the car the steady slap of wipers across the windscreen.

Harry sighs and rolls his shoulders. "Þingvellir."

I nod as if I've any idea what he's talking about and look out the window again. "And we couldn't Apparate because?"

The snort next to me lets me know I've said something stupid. I scowl at my reflection in the window. "It's warded," Harry says. "No Apparation in or out."

That piques my interest. "Why?" I turn in my seat, looking over at Harry. His hair is rumpled and hanging in his eyes. He pushes it back with one hand.

"Old magic." We pass a car smaller than ours on our right, and Harry looks over his shoulder before pulling back into the lane. "There's a continental rift there--the North American and Eurasian plates meet at Þingvellir. Lots of earthquakes around the area."

"Ah." I pleat the charcoal wool of my robe between my fingers. I seem to recall Binns mentioning something about Iceland in one of his numerous dull lectures on magical geographic formations around the world. "High

levels of energy then." I pause. "I haven't had to sleep much this week. Well. With the exception of last night, but I blame that on gin." I scowl at him. "And you."

The reference to the club hangs between us for a moment. I feel my cheeks warm. Harry's fingers flex against the wheel. "That relaxed, were you?" He keeps his eyes on the road ahead, but I can see the flutter of breath in throat above the vee neck of his dark blue jumper.

"Get stuffed." I look back out the window at the bracken-covered fields next to the road. The hills behind them have steepened and become craggy, towering over the small houses and sparse evergreens. A white church is nestled against one hill, its dark grey steeple jutting sharply up against the lighter grey-white sky. "I merely meant I haven't required as much sleep as usual."

Harry laughs softly. "Not this time of year, no. Between the volcanic activity and the constant light--"

"Does it ever get dark?" I stare up at the swathe of clouds above us.

"In summer, no more than a few hours of twilight. Winter's a bit more grim. Although the Aurora Borealis does help make up for that."

"I've never seen those," I say. The road curves around a rising hillside. The top is shrouded in light fog. "Severus said they were remarkable."

Harry doesn't answer for a moment. "I didn't realise he'd been here."

I shake my head. "Norway. He did his potions apprenticeship in Oslo before coming back to Hogwarts." I hesitate. "His Lordship arranged it."

"Oh." There's an uncomfortable pause. Neither of us particularly care for the reminder of the Dark Lord, and the thought of Severus still aches. It never gets easier.

I turn back to the window, staring blankly out it. The hills blur together in a rush of red and grey dirt covered in patches by green grass and swathes of wildflowers. It's entirely different to the rolling countryside of Wiltshire, but for some reason watching it pass makes me wistfully homesick. The signposts on the side of the road jump out of our way as the car takes a particularly hairpin curve.

Harry reaches over and flips on the radio, twisting the dial before he finds the Icelandic Wizarding Wireless. Soft music fills the silence, a quiet tremble of violins joined by the deeper sweep of cellos. Harry's hand hesitates, then drops. "You don't mind, do you? I'm rather fond of the Tallis Fantasia."

"No." I settle back against my seat. It's one of my favourite pieces; I'd dragged Terry to see the London Wizarding Symphony perform it just before we'd broken up. He'd been bored to tears. "I didn't realise you liked Vaughan Williams. You don't strike me as the classical type."

"I'm not all sex, drugs and rock and roll, you realise."

I give him a blank look. I have no idea what he's on about. "Well of course not. That would be impossible."

Harry hides a smile. "Never mind."



Imbecile. I frown at him, then shrug and close my eyes, letting the music wash over me. "He was related to the Blacks, you know," I murmur.

"Who?"

"Ralph." My fingers glide across the door handle, drawing circles in time to the solo viola. "Phineas Nigellus' sister Elladora married a Vaughan Williams cousin."

"I thought Isla was the one who was burned off the family tree for marrying a Muggle," Harry says.

I'm suddenly tired. It's been a long day and the music is soothing. "She was. The Vaughan Williams weren't Muggles. Squibs, some of them, but fairly decent wizarding stock. Attached to the Darwins, you know." I yawn. "And Wedgewoods. Bit of intermarrying going on between those two families, but what can one do?"

Harry snorts. "Not marry your cousins?"

"If that happened, there'd be no wizarding world," I say dryly. I kick my shoes off and curl against my seat, my eyes still shut. "Hush. I'm trying to listen."

"Yes, milord," Harry says, but I can hear the amusement in his voice.

I smile and lose myself in the fantasy.



When I wake up, the car's stopped. I stretch and rub at my face. "Are we there?" The green and yellow light of an Olís sign glows through the windscreen.

"Nearly." Harry's door is half-open. "I just need some petrol. Are you hungry?"

I look out the window at the shop across the concrete car park. "That's *not* a restaurant."

"Obviously. They'll have food though."

I wrinkle my nose. "I think not."

"There's nothing to eat at Þingvellir," Harry says.

My stomach rumbles audibly at the thought and Harry's mouth twists to one side. "Oh, fuck off," I say, irritated. "Fine. Food of some sort, but if it's disgustingly vile I won't eat it." I catch Harry's arm as he stands. "Nothing Muggle."

"This is Iceland, Draco." Harry rolls his eyes and pulls away, his good humour slipping. "I shouldn't think you have to worry terribly much about soiling your precious pureblood roots." He slams the door behind him.

I watch him in the mirror as he walks around the back of the car. I'm ashamed to find my gaze drifting to his arse and the way his faded jeans cup it. Harry's always been my dirty little secret, even before we fell into bed. I'd wanted him in school, and I'd hated him for that. I still do.

With a flick of his wand he connects the car to the petrol hose, then heads for the shop. I open my door, turning in my seat so my feet are on the pavement. It's still cold and grey outside, but the drizzle's stopped. I watch the curious machine fill the petrol tank. I've never considered how wizarding cars move. I've always assumed it was magic, though I suppose the amount required to propel a vehicle this size down the road would be significant. Still. Harry of all people should be able to manage it.

I'm flipping through maps I've found in the compartment beneath the dash when Harry comes back, a bag in hand. He slides back into the driver's seat. "Here," he says, handing me a bottle of water and a wrapped sandwich.

"Are we on the 36?" I ask, smoothing out a map and peering at the road.

"Just outside Skálabrekka." Harry starts the car, resetting the driving charms. "You've been asleep about twenty minutes."

It feels longer. "This would be a lot easier if we could Apparate," I grumble, unwrapping the paper around my sandwich. The slabs of bread are thick and soft, and the roast beef between them smells heavenly.

"Already told you we can't." Harry rips open a bag of crisps, settling them between his thighs. I glance away, my cheeks warming. "Besides, I like driving here. It's..." He thinks, his mouth full of crisps. "Peaceful."

I take a hesitant bite of my sandwich and chew slowly. I want to hate it. I can't. The bread's slathered with a tangy herbed-and-capered mayonnaise and the roast beef is covered with crispy fried onions and sliced gherkins. Harry watches me, smiling.

"Not terrible?" he asks.

I flip two fingers towards him and bite into the sandwich again. A few golden brown onions fall onto the map, staining it with grease. "Edible," I say through a mouth filled with bread and beef. Harry laughs and hands me a scrap of paper napkin. I daub at the corner of my mouth. "How much further?" I ask, as Harry pulls the car back onto the empty road. "And is this place truly worth all this trouble?"

Harry reaches for his bottle of water. "It's only an hour drive, Draco. Hardly what I'd call trouble. You should try going up north to Akureyri. You can't make it through the middle of the island in winter--all the roads are closed."

"And that would be what Portkeys are for." I pick up the second half of my sandwich. I'd no idea how famished I was. "Honestly, Harry."

"That's the first time you've said my name since we arrived."

I still, the sandwich just at my mouth. "Oh."

Harry's just looking at me.

"Harry!" I slam my palm against the dash. A fat sheep rambles slowly across the dip in the road in front of us. Harry swears and slams on the brakes just as the driving charm sends the sheep tumbling head over arse into the ditch on my side of the car. Dust from the roadside swirls around us.

We sit still for a moment, the dust settling. The sheep bellows in irritation, then trots off across the open field. I banish the window. “Horrid beast.” I fire a Blasting Curse out after it. It hits the ground, splattering the turf. “There’s a bloody stewpot waiting for you.”

The sheep ignores me.

“For fuck’s sake. Your driving charms are shit.” I sit back.

Harry’s shoulders are shaking. “I don’t normally use them,” he admits, still laughing at me.

“Stop it.” I’m highly annoyed. “We could have been killed.”

“I doubt it.” Harry watches another sheep cross over in front of us. He grins at me. “Although we’d have been fined for running over the damn sheep.”

I slide my wand back into my pocket. “Why? The idiot sheep walked out in the road. Alone. Where’s their shepherd?”

Harry taps his wand against the steering wheel and the car moves forward again, slowly. “There aren’t any. During the summer they wander free. No fences. They’re rounded up in September before it gets too cold.”

I just look at him for a long moment. “Bloody sodding socialists.”

Harry laughs. “They’re all tagged so the farmers know which ones are theirs. And that’s where the fine comes in. You hit a sheep on the road; you have to pay the farmer its worth.”

“That’s ridiculous.” Damp wind ruffles my hair. It feels pleasant, but I can’t bear the chill for long. I reconstruct the window with a sigh. The road curves around a flat lake. There aren’t any other cars, and only occasionally do we pass a small farmhouse tucked beside a rare cove of trees, its windows squares of light in the faint mist. The hills are sharper here; the grass patchier; the valleys flatter. The subdued bustle of Reykjavik has been replaced with a hushed silence that hangs over fields filled with sheep. Every so often a shaggy pony races alongside of us, tossing its mane as it paws the wet ground.

The Weird Sisters come on the radio, and Harry sings along with them under his breath, surprisingly on-key.

“Stop,” I snap.

He looks over at me, obviously confused. “What?”

“You’ve an awful voice.” I stare out the window, my thumb pressed to my mouth. I can see him reflected in the glass darkly. I’m annoyed, but I don’t know why. Or rather I do, but I’d prefer not to think about it. Unfortunately that’s impossible to do so when the source of my distress is singing *Norns’ Wail* at me.

Harry falls silent. After a moment he reaches over and shuts the radio off with a snap. We’re back to the steady thump of the windscreen wipers and the hiss of tyres against damp road.

I catch another glimpse of the wide lake, slightly lower than we are now. Trees line the side in clumps, tall straight evergreens alongside scraggly scrub bushes and flat boulders.

We drive on, neither of us speaking. I'm not tired any longer. Instead I sit up, my breath quickening. A sense of unease prickles across my skin.

Harry turns to the right, and for a moment I'm certain we're headed straight into the flat sweep of tufted green grass that stretches towards the mountain ridge and the lakeshore. We stay on the road, though, a narrow curve of asphalt that ends in a car park next to a low, glass-paned building. Harry parks in front of a sign that reads *toi-lets* with an arrow pointing to the left.

I'm utterly unimpressed with the appearance of the place, though still unsettled by how it feels.

Harry shrugs. "Welcome to Þingvellir."

"This had better be worth it," I mutter, shoving my stockinged feet back into my shoes, and I push open the door.

My foot hits the ground and I feel it then, shuddering through my whole body, taking my breath away. It's old. Deep. I'd felt only the faintest coils of it in Reykjavik, where the wizards mix with Muggles. Here, though...

"Magic," Harry says next to me, and he closes the car door behind me, locking it. I'm afraid to move, afraid the ground might shift beneath me. "You'll get your bearings in a minute."

He stands beside me, leaning against the car as I breathe again, slow shallow gasps of cold air at first. I hold my hands up. They're shaking, and I swear I can see faint white sparks dancing across my fingertips.

Rain mists down lightly, dampening my hair. I push it back behind my ears. The magic's still roiling inside of me. Over me. It's unsettling. It's exhilarating. I look at Harry. He's smiling.

"Just wait," he says.

I follow him slowly over to an outcropping of rocks. There's a railing over them, to keep fools from throwing themselves off, I'm certain. A footpath curves around them, and Harry walks up it, his boots thudding against the wooden planks. He stops and waits for me to catch up with him.

The sight nearly takes my breath again. The lake stretches out to the right of us, wide and blue-grey. Curving rivers connect it to smaller ponds and glassy pools across the wide plain beneath us, as if some giant hand had smashed an enormous mirror into bits and strewn it over green grass and grey rock. Mountains rise up in rough peaks on the other side of the lake.

I lean against the railing, my fingers gripping the thin metal bars tightly. In front of us is a deep fissure in the rock, a crevasse I can't see the bottom of. "Harry," I say quietly.

"I know."

My eyes flutter closed for a moment. The air is cold and wet against my skin, and with each breath, I can feel the magic twine around me, filling my lungs, my mouth. I swallow it in. My head buzzes.

I look at Harry. His eyes are bright and clear; his cheeks flushed. "We could do anything right now," he says, and I nod.

*Anything.*

A soft trill from a bird echoes above, and then the bird swoops in front of us, diving into the gaping crevasse, its tiny brown wings spread wide.

Harry touches my elbow. "Come with me."

We walk down the footpath, taking a sharp right at the end. Another path stretches before us, steeply downhill through a gorge lined with black-brown craggy rocks spotted with white patches. I hesitate. We're alone, the two of us. No one else is about.

"Do you trust me?" Harry asks softly. His eyes are fixed on mine.

I step past him. "No," I say, "but I don't think that's the point."

He follows me down the trail. It's black dirt, covered with black and grey gravel, and my shoes slip slightly on the crushed rock. Harry steadies me. I pull away. My robe billows around me, caught by a burst of wind through the rift.

The rocks loom above us, rough and splintered. Boulders line the path from where they'd fallen--years or centuries before. Lichen grows on the lower crags, and I see a small sapling growing in a chink on the cliff face. The ubiquitous lupine blooms at their base, a bright splash of violet and green against the dark granite.

I can feel the magic more here, thrumming across my skin. It startles me. I grew up in Wiltshire on the chalk, among stone circles and burial mounds and white horses carved into green hillsides. Magic has been in my blood since birth.

But nothing like this. The stones feel alive.

No wonder they don't live here, the Icelanders. No wonder they favour the calm of Reykjavik and other shore towns. It's nearly too much to bear, this magic. It's old and wild and utterly untamed.

Glorious.

I turn, waiting for Harry to catch up. "This is why you come here," I say. My voice catches. "This feeling--"

Harry nods. His hair blows in the wind and his glasses are speckled with rain. "You can't explain it," he says. "Hermione says it's because the valley's a sacred place." At my wrinkled nose, he shakes his head. We walk down the path together. "Not in a religious sense, really. Although there's been a church of some sort on the lakeshore for a thousand years. They gathered here every year though, all the wizards, in the summer, to meet and discuss laws and any breaches in them." He grins. "First parliament in the world, the historians say. That's why they call the government in Reykjavik the Alþingi, you know. It's from here. It's been called that since the ninth century when they first started meeting in this valley."

"Since when did you turn into Binns?" I eye him. "As I recall you loathed History of Magic."

That makes Harry laugh. "Didn't we all?" He pulls his glasses off and wipes them with the hem of his jumper. It does nothing but smear the rain across the lenses. "Does it annoy you?"



Surprisingly, no. I shrug. "Not in particular."

"Pity," Harry says, but the barb hasn't any sting.

I take his glasses from him and cast an Impervious on them before handing them back. "Idiot."

Harry just smiles at me.

The cliff on our right breaks off into a sharp tumble of jagged rocks and weatherworn boulders. Harry stops on the path, staring out over the sudden view. "Look." Silvery river inlets curve towards the lake and tall, pointed firs peek over the top of a side gorge. "That's the Öxará, out there. According to the sagas, one New Year's, two priests went out and drank the river water and it tasted like blood. Later that year, in the summer, a battle took place here. Many men died on that plain." Harry huddles in his jumper, his arms wrapped around himself. "They say the river ran with their blood..."

A shiver runs through me. I've never been fanciful, but for the briefest moment I'm almost certain I can hear the clang of swords and the shouts of dying warriors.

"There's another tale in the sagas," Harry says, after a moment. "About Gunnlaugr Serpent-Tongue." He doesn't look at me. "He fell in love with Helga the Fair, but her father married her to another man. Gunnlaugr fought a duel with him here over her."

"Hasn't that story been done to death?" I try to sound bored. "Who won? Gunnlaugr, I assume?"

"Actually, neither of them." Harry shoves his hands in his pockets and starts walking again. "And the Alþingi outlawed duelling the next morning."

I glance over at him. "Rather anti-climatic, that."

He kicks up some gravel, sending it skittering into the wet, green grass on the side of the path. "Yes, well, they fought again, not terribly long after, and killed each other. Stupid of them, really."

"And Helga pined to death after, I'm certain."

Harry snorts. "Not quite. She married some other man and lived a long and relatively happy life. Lots of children." He looks at me. "But she died holding a cloak Gunnlaugr had given her."

We reach the bottom of the incline. The path stretches out in front of us, curving into the mist. A tall, broad rock rises above us. At the top a flag flies, a red and white cross on a blue background, so similar and yet so different from our own Union Jack.

"Law Rock," Harry says. "The Alþingi gathered here." There's another wooden platform around it. Harry leads me onto it; it juts out over the plain below and steps lead up to the rock itself. We climb them, our feet splashing in the puddles that have gathered on the weathered wood. "The barrister in you should like it here. This is where the Law Speaker would climb up to recite the law of the land every summer."

At the top I turn around, and my breath catches. The entire valley's spread beneath us, wide and shallow, the inlets weaving through reeds and swamp. Magic pulses around us. I lay one hand against the stone, and a jolt goes through me, aching and painful, the agonies and joys of a millennium twisting around my body, burning into

my skin. I can see the valley the way it once was, wild and rugged and filled with hundreds of tents and familial banners. They wait below, all of them, faces upturned, looking for the man who'll step up to this rock and speak to them, his spelled voice carrying across the throng.

Harry catches me before I stumble and helps me sit on the steps. I lean forward, my head nearly between my knees breathing hard. "Are you all right?" he asks.

It takes me a few ragged breaths before I can reply. "I think so. What the hell was that?"

"The stones absorbed all the magic from the assemblies. That many wizards and witches meeting together for so long?" Harry sits next to me. "It's a bit like Hogwarts, the way all the castle stones took us all in over the years and became sentient in away. Should have warned you."

Wind ruffles my hair, blowing it across my cheek. I push it back. The drizzle's stopped now, but it's still cold, and the grey clouds above give the pale light a watery glow. "Today's Midsummer's Eve," I say finally. I'm surprised to be spending it with Harry, of all people.

"Yeah."

"Mummy's throwing a party tonight at the Manor." I sigh. "Bonfire and all. It's the first time I've missed it."

Harry pushes his glasses up his nose. "No strewing rose petals about this year then to coax your true love out."

I roll my eyes. "Or any other year, thank you. I leave that sort of thing to Pansy, not that it ever worked, mind. Blaise entirely surprised her."

"They're odd," Harry says thoughtfully. "And possibly dangerous together."

"Obviously."

Harry shifts next to me, lifting his arse off the steps for a moment as he pulls a small tin from his pocket, dumping the few remaining aniseed balls out in his hand. He offers me one, and I shake my head. I can't abide the taste of anise.

"What are you doing?"

He pops an aniseed ball into his mouth and drops the rest back into his pocket. "Building you a bonfire," he says cheerfully, and the next thing I know he's conjured a bluebell flame in the tin and set it floating in front of us with a levitation charm. "Happy Midsummer."

"You're mad," I say, but I'm touched nonetheless. Harry just leans back against the step behind us, looking far too pleased with himself.

"I remember doing this back in Hogwarts," he says.

The small fire burns bright and warm, its blue flames holding steady against the wind. We sit together, Harry's thigh pressed against mine, warm and firm. It feels oddly comfortable. Oddly right. "I can't believe I'm thirty," I say. "How did we end up old?"

"It happens." Harry gives me a small smile. "Though some people might object to you calling us old."

"My mother, for one. I'm beginning to suspect she resents my birthday every year just because it makes it harder for her to pretend she's still forty." The wind catches the hem of my robe. "Doesn't matter. I still feel old. I suppose you've an enormous fête being planned for your birthday."

He shakes his head. "I'd best not."

I'm not surprised. I wonder when I stopped being surprised by Harry--or if I ever had been in the first place. We've known each other for so long; I'm not entirely certain we could ever put each other on our back feet any longer. I turn my head and look at him. His jaw is sharp and angled, his cheekbones high. His damp hair falls in dark curls over his forehead, cups the curve of his ear. He's not beautiful, not like Blaise or Terry. He's too thin, too angular. But he's an roughhewn grace about him that appeals to me, as much as I hate to admit it.

"You're staring," he says, voice low.

"Am most certainly not." I can feel my face warm. I look back out over the plain.

Harry just laughs softly.

"Why'd you go to the wedding?" I say after a moment.

He doesn't have to ask which one. "Luna's friendly with Astoria. She had an invitation and thought it might do me good to go."

"Really." Annoyance flares in me. "To gawk at my humiliation, I'm certain."

"I was jealous of him." Harry meets my gaze. "Never could quite see what you saw in him."

I've asked myself the same question more than once. I still don't know if I have an answer. "He was Terry," I say simply. I'd been mad about him. Ready to settle down. But sitting here, in this empty valley on Midsummer's Eve, my body still humming with old magic, I can barely remember why. I rest my elbows on my knees. "Our breakup devastated me," I admit quietly. That much I do know. I still feel it every day.

"Good." Harry's voice is low. He tugs the cuffs of his jumper over his bony wrists and laces his fingers together. "Now you know how I felt."

"Don't be ridiculous." I look away. "We were just a fling."

Harry stands up. I miss his warmth immediately. He walks down the steps, and the tin of flames follows. I watch him as he leans against the railing of the platform, his hands flattened against the wood, his shoulders hunched. He stares out over the tangle of inlets.

"Harry," I say. He ignores me. The flames float over his shoulder, flickering blue against his dark hair.

I push myself up and walk down the slick steps. I touch his arm, expecting him to pull away. He doesn't. Instead he just sighs.

"We were, weren't we?" I ask softly.

He looks at me, and I can see the reflection of the blue fire in his glasses, obscuring his eyes. "If you say."

I'd known he'd wanted more than I would give him. I'm many things, but a fool isn't one of them. I'd just never cared. It hadn't mattered as long as he'd kept his feelings out of our bed. All I'd been interested in was his cock up my arse. Or at least that's what I'd told myself.

Now I'm not entirely certain.

"Harry."

He takes a deep breath and turns, leaning back against the railing. "It doesn't matter, does it?"

We just look at each other. He shakes his head and turns again, back to the plain. Away from me. I don't know what to say. It annoys me. I'm able to argue rather convincingly in front of the Wizengamot, but now here, with Harry Potter, one of the least eloquent idiots who's ever stumbled into my life---which given that Vince and Greg were my closest friends in school says something--now here, I've no words at all.

"You needn't be an arse," I say.

He doesn't look back at me.

"I don't know what you want." My voice rises. It's a lie. I know. The truth is that I don't know what I want.

Harry still doesn't move. We're silent for a long moment.

"I'm going," he says finally, "to leave the Aurors."

My stomach clenches. I can't imagine work without him. I don't want to imagine it. Whom the bloody hell else would I argue with? None of the other Aurors have the intelligence to keep up. "That's the stupidest idea you've had, Potter," I say, voice rough. "In a lifetime of idiocy."

Harry's mouth quirks at one corner. "You sound like your godfather."

"Severus wasn't a fool." I wrap my arms around my chest. "Unlike some Gryffindors I could name." I hesitate. "I hope you haven't submitted your resignation yet."

"No." Harry rubs his thumb over the railing. "Kingsley wouldn't let me. Told me to wait until I got back before I made a decision."

I catch the tin of flames, cupping it between my cold hands. "Which you have."

He nods. "I knew before I came."

"Why?" I have to know.

Harry looks over at me. "Because." He shrugs. "Kingsley's grooming me for Head Auror; everyone knows that. He plans to stand for Minister in the next election. And frankly, I don't want to be Head Auror. I don't even want to be Deputy Head, and the only thing that's made that even partially bearable has been fighting with you."

I can't speak. My throat's tight.

"Anyway," Harry says. "I'm going to resign. I've enough money saved up--"

"Of course," I snap, "given that hovel you live in. Merlin knows you certainly can't be paying that much to let it." I'm furious with him. I tell myself I don't know why. I'm an utter liar.

Harry just folds his arms over his chest. "No, I'm not," he says calmly. "And I'm tired of England--"

"Of course you are." I curl my lip at him. "So tired of being worshipped and adored--"

"It's not like that. You've no idea the pressure--"

"Don't make me laugh."

We glare at each other.

Harry looks away first. "I don't even know why you care."

I don't either. I just know I'm disappointed. And angry. I turn away from him, back towards the gorge and its gravelled path. "I want to go back to Reykjavik." I don't look back.

The walk back to the car park is silent. Harry's a few steps behind me. I can hear the shuffle of his boots. The rain's started again. It suits my mood. When we reach the car I pull out my wand, dousing the bluebell flames still flickering in my palm. The sudden absence of heat makes me shiver.

"Draco," Harry says, coming up next to me, and I hand him the cooling tin and open the car door. He stops me, his hand on my arm.

I pull away. "Just get in."

He drops his hand. Neither of us moves. Harry licks his bottom lip. "Draco," he says again. He moves closer, pressing me against the side of the car. At six feet, I'm taller than he is, but barely. A far cry from our early days at Hogwarts.

My heart thuds slowly, and I draw a ragged breath. "Don't, Harry."

Harry hesitates and then he steps back. "Right." He walks around the back of the car. "Get in then."

I slide into the seat. The warming charms are still in place, and they hum softly across my clammy skin. Harry slams his door shut without looking at me.

The road's empty again as we turn out onto it. I'm struck by how desolate the countryside is. How expansive. How lonely. It doesn't surprise me Harry is comfortable here. He's been looking for a place to hide all his life.

"Did you follow me to Reykjavik?" I ask finally, when the silence becomes too uncomfortable to bear. I can't look at him. "Lovegood said--"



"Luna talks too much," Harry says. He's quiet for a moment, then he sighs. "But I knew you were at the Hotel Borg from your office. Frankly, Eleanor's less discreet than Luna."

"I'll sack the cow when I get back," I murmur. Harry snorts. It's an idle threat, and he knows it. My assistant is ridiculously competent, and she's the first I've had in six years whom I haven't driven to tears or drink with my purportedly unreasonable demands. I glance at Harry out of the corner of my eye. "So you followed me."

Harry's hands grip the steering wheel. "I suppose."

"Why?" I turn in my seat, my knee knocking against the gear shift. Harry swears and grabs it, shifting it back. I don't apologise.

"I needed a holiday," Harry says. "Kingsley--"

"Rubbish. Lovegood said you wanted to make me jealous." I poke at his arm and he winces. "So which is it, Harry? Did you want me to think you were shagging her or did you just decide to run away from Shackbolt? Make up your mind."

He glares at me, but doesn't say anything.

"Right then." I shrug and settle back. "Coward."

"Fuck you."

I roll my eyes. "How very predictable of you. Really, Harry, your language."

"Don't pretend to be prim with me." Harry keeps his eyes on the road, but his jaw clenches. "After all we've done." I make an offended noise, but the bastard pays no attention. "And of course I wanted you to think Luna and I were shagging--I've been trying to make you jealous for three fucking months, you stupid twat."

I blink. "Oh."

"Yeah," Harry says grimly. "Not that it's done me any good."

I stare blankly out the window watching the fields of sheep blur past. "You're an idiot," I say at last.

Harry just shrugs.

I'm not certain if I want to punch him or hex him. "Pull over."

"What?" Harry gives me an incredulous look. "We're in the middle of nowhere--"

"Just pull over."

He slows the car and eases it off the road onto the edge of a flat green field under the greying sky. A few sheep graze alongside a shallow meandering creek, and there's a farmhouse near the bend in the road a hundred metres ahead. I don't care. I push open the car door and climb out, breathing in deep lungfuls of cold air. Rain falls lightly on me, cooling my flushed skin. I hear the slam of Harry's door behind me and the squish of his boots in the muddy puddles as he walks towards me.

"What the hell are you doing?"

I grit my teeth. "Trying not to kill you." I look back at him. "Trust me, it's difficult."

Harry leans against the side of the car. His hair is damp again, and it falls into his eyes. He pushes it back. "You do realise you make absolutely no damned sense, right?"

A sheep wanders past us, its thick cream fleece filthy with mud on the underside. I stare out over the field. There's a low-hanging roil of steam near a patch of mud and rocks, and the faint stench of sulphur drifts our way. Geysers, I suppose. The countryside's filled with them, and the recent volcanic activity's made more of the dormant ones active again.

"Draco," Harry says, and I turn on him.

"Just stop." I clench my fists tightly; my fingernails dig into my palms. "I don't trust you, Harry. I never have and I never will, and frankly even if I wanted to--God help me if I'm ever that desperate or stupid--the fact of the matter is that you're not bent enough--" Harry steps forward at that, protesting, and I push him back against the car with an angry shove. "You're not--there's been Weasley and Lovegood that I know of and how many other women since? I'm not an idiot. There's no bloody way you've been celibate all these years."

Harry folds his arms across his chest. "What does that have to do with anything? And as I recall, I've sucked your cock so well you couldn't walk a straight line afterwards, so who cares if I've enjoyed a bit of fanny over the years--"

"Oh, don't be crass," I say, irritated. "And I don't do bisexuals--"

"Really," Harry snaps. "Because I'm really quite certain both I and Terry Boot have been in that pretty arse of yours--" He breaks off with a grunt as I punch him, my fist landing squarely in his stomach. "You *bastard*."

I'm shaking. "And that's precisely the reason I'm not interested in anyone else who's just going to walk off with some bloody cunt--"

Harry grabs me and throws me up against the side of the car. The handle bites into my lower back and I try to move away. He's too close, and I freeze when his hips press against mine. "I don't want you," I whisper.

"Liar," Harry says. He's right. His hand settles on my hip, holding me steady.

We still, our eyes fixed on each other. Rain slides down Harry's cheeks, dripping from his jaw.

I breathe out. "I will never want you, Harry." I reach out, letting my knuckles graze his cheek.

"Liar," he says again. His mouth brushes my jaw and I shiver. I don't care that I'm wet and miserable. Harry's fingertips slide into my open robe, slipping over the belted waistband of my trousers. He hooks a thumb in it.

"Never," I murmur.

His other hand smooths my wet hair back from my cheek, tucking it behind one ear. "We'll see."

When I kiss him, he leans into me with a soft sigh, opening his mouth to mine. "Fuck," he whispers, and then we're grabbing at each other, pressing and pulling, our hands tangled in each other's hair.

Rain falls on us, slicking our skin. I can taste it on Harry, soft and clean with the faintest cold tang. I drag my tongue along the curve of his jaw, over his rough stubble. "Harry," I say against his throat.

He catches my hand, pulls it down to the swell of his cock in his jeans. He kisses me again, rough and eager.

I know what he wants. My fingers pull at his zip, the metal biting into my skin as I push my hand into his jeans, past the cotton of his pants. Harry groans, pushing me against the side of the car. "I..." He shudders when I stroke my thumb beneath the head of his cock. His hand hits the car window with a wet smack, and he inhales sharply.

I drag my tongue across my bottom lip.

"Cocktease," he murmurs.

He watches as I slide down his body. My knees hit the ground, sinking into the mud with a soft squelch. I've probably ruined my robe and trousers. I don't care. Instead I'm transfixed by his swelling prick, rising from the crumpled vee of his open jeans and pants. I touch the tip lightly, enjoying his quiet breath.

"Has Lovegood sucked you?" I ask. I push back his foreskin, rolling it over the smooth head.

"No," Harry says. His hand rests on my shoulder, a featherlight touch. "Not recently."

My fingers slide down his shaft, run along the vein. "Has anyone?" I look up at him. His hair hangs wetly in his face. His glasses have slid to the tip of his nose.

He nods slowly. His bottom lip is caught between his teeth.

I *hmm* in annoyance. "Male? Female? Goblin?"

Harry snorts. His hip rock forward; his prick moves against my hand. "Definitely not Goblin. Teeth are too sharp."

"When?" I push at his jeans, shoving them lower on his hips. More of his cock pops free. I swallow. I want to taste him. Desperately.

"Last week." Harry's fingers shift on my shoulder. He twists the wool of my robe slightly. I can feel the cold curve of the car door at my back. "Muggle club." He gasps as I lean forward, pressing my face against the rough denim of his jeans, sucking lightly at the soft skin at the base of his cock. "Oh, *fuck*."

I smile. I'm good at this. I always have been. I drag my tongue up the underside of his prick. He tastes salty-bitter, and I lick over the tip, curling my tongue around it before I suck him into my mouth.

Harry pushes forward; I catch his hips before he can gag me. He's shaking beneath my palms, his whole body tight and arched.

I love the way he moves, shifting against my grasp, desperate to slide deeper into my mouth. I suck him slowly. The soft gasps he makes go straight to my own cock, and I move one hand to my lap, working my trouser buttons loose as Harry's prick presses against the side of my cheek. I flick my tongue along the underside as he pulls back.

He pops out of my mouth, wet and slick and swollen red. He's watching me, the colour rising in his cheeks. "Show me," he says roughly, and I push my robe open, sliding my hand into my trousers. I pull my prick out, heavy and hot in my hand, and Harry draws in a shuddering breath.

With one swift movement he pulls me to my feet, up against him, his teeth scraping my bottom lip as he kisses me. Our cocks slide against each other, hot skin against hot skin, and I gasp. Harry wraps his fingers around them both, pressing them together. My head falls back against the window, and I grab his shirt, clenching it tightly. "Harry."

Our feet slip on the muddy grass. Harry goes down on one knee, splashing into a puddle and pulling me with him. I swear as I land on one hip. Mud covers my robe. "You fucking tit," I say, but Harry hushes me with another kiss, this one desperate and rough.

I love the press of his body against mine, the slow slide of our tongues, the gasp of our ragged breath. Sex has never been like this with anyone else--never this messy, this impetuous, this *good*.

Harry pushes himself up, then helps me to my feet. He jerks the door open and shoves me backwards into the back seat. I struggle out of my robe; Harry helps me between kisses. Our clothes are sodden and filthy.

Wind whistles around the open door, out of which our feet are hanging, socks and boots getting soaked in the rain. One of my legs is twisted at a painful angle, but I don't care. Harry's looming over me, his teeth nipping at my jaw, and his cock slips over mine again, making me shudder with want.

My hands slide beneath his jumper, my palms against his clammy skin. It warms beneath my touch. I can feel the flex of his muscles as he moves, our bodies sliding together.

I groan and grab the back of the seat in front of us, my fingers digging into the soft upholstery. "Fuck," I say, and Harry pulls back with a laugh. There's a muddy handprint on the seatback.

"Sit up." His cock bobs heavily in front of him.

I don't argue with him. We shift awkwardly, dragging our legs over each other. His bony knee presses into my side and I swear. This is far from comfortable. Neither one of us seem to care.

Harry slams the door shut and pulls me over him. I settle on his thighs, one knee on either side of his hips.

We look at each other.

"You're mad," I say.

Harry's dirty fingertip slides along my cock. "I don't think you mind."

He's right.

I catch his mouth with mine, pressing him against the seat. He grabs my hips and pulls me up against him. His hips rock up; our pricks slide together.

My body tenses. I arch into Harry's hips, desperate to feel him against me. He pushes my shirt up, and his cock slides over my skin. I grab the back of the seat, kissing him roughly. The windows are fogged; the only sound in the car is our gasping breath.

"Please," Harry says, and his voice breaks. His hands slide into the back of my trousers; his fingernails dig into my skin, pulling me closer. He presses his mouth to my throat. "Draco."

I roll my hips, bury my face in the curve of his neck. I can smell the heady scent of rain and earth and musk on his skin. "Now, Harry," I whisper, my mouth brushing his ear, and he jerks against me, holding me tight.

My hand slides between us, holding our pricks loosely, pressing them together as he ruts wildly against me, his soft breaths and cries filling the car. He arches with a groan, nearly knocking me backwards, and warm wetness covers my hand, smearing onto our stomachs.

Harry's gasps slow. His fingers knead my arse, sliding over the top of my crease. He draws in a ragged breath, then lifts his head from my throat, kissing me.

I smooth his spunk over my still hard cock, stroking firmly, but Harry knocks my hand away. "Bastard," I choke out, but Harry shoves at me, and I find myself sprawled across the back seat, my long legs cocked at impossible angles.

Harry bends over me, his body hunched, and he sucks me into his mouth, cheeks hollowing. My head falls back; the breath I take catches in the back of my throat. I flail out, my hand striking cool glass. I flatten my palm against it, pushing myself up into Harry's mouth. His tongue presses against my prick.

With a shout, I come, my whole body shaking.

I lie collapsed against the back seat, staring up at the roof. There's a hole in the fabric near the light, I notice blankly.

Harry moves over me. "Hey," he says with a faint smile. There's a bite mark purpling on his throat. "Guess you do want me."

"I loathe you so much," I say, but my heart's not in it.

Harry laughs and pulls me against him.

We don't move for quite a while.



Harry parks the car a street over from the hotel. The drive back to Reykjavik has been quiet, but not unbearably so. He glances over at me. "You look a fright," he says, but his smile softens the sting of his observation.

"Fuck off," I say in mock offence, and Harry laughs.

He opens his door and climbs out of the car. I follow him, reluctantly. I feel an odd connection to the steel beast now. I trail my hand along the side of the car as I step onto the kerb. Harry has his wand out, and he casts cleansing spells on both of us. Most of the mud disappears.

The clock on the church across the road says it's nearly half eight. It's not raining in Reykjavik, and I'm slightly disappointed. It would at least explain our bedraggled state should we run into any of our so-called friends. We walk slowly down the street, neither of us speaking. Harry's fingertips brush my knuckles, and I curl my fingers around his. He squeezes my hand gently.

Thorkell Thorkelsson is at the reception desk when we walk in. Harry nods to him calmly, and I ignore his *Mr Malfoy, there's a message from your friends—*, choosing instead to lead Harry towards the lift.

Harry raises an eyebrow at me. "Shouldn't you..." He jerks his chin towards the surprised hotel clerk.

"Shut up, Potter," I murmur, and I pull him into the lift. "I don't particularly care what they have to say." We both punch the buttons for our floors, then look away. I can feel my skin heating up, and for the first time since I kissed him on the side of the road, I feel uncertain.

The doors close on us and the lift shudders into life. "I see," Harry says. He trails a thumb down my cheek and across my mouth. My eyes flutter closed, and relief floods me. "So..."

"So." I turn my head and kiss the inside of his wrist. "I'm probably being a complete fool, but..."

Harry breathes in sharply as I slide my hands over the front of his jeans, up to his waist. "I really don't think I mind."

I laugh. The doors open to my floor. We look at each other, hesitating. Harry's eyes are unreadable. I lick my bottom lip. "Do you want..." I trail off.

"What, Draco?" Harry asks softly. My hands are still on his hips. The doors start to close again, and I stop them with my foot.

"Stay with me," I say. My throat's tight.

Harry takes my hand, lacing his fingers through mine. "What room?"

I smile.



He wakes me in the morning with a kiss. Light filters through the curtains, pale and grey.

"What time is it?" I ask, with a groggy yawn. I'm tired. Sore. Oddly content.

Harry's slick hand slides between my legs, stroking lightly. I let my thighs fall open. "Half five," he says against my mouth. A finger slides into me with a careful twist.



"Insanity." I arch beneath him, canting my hips. My hands settle on his shoulders, flexing. "We just went to sleep."

"Hours ago." Harry presses another finger into my arse. "Three, in fact." He grins down at me. "That's plenty of rest."

I push against his shifting hand with a soft hiss. "You," I say breathlessly, "are a nutter." My head falls back against the pillow, my neck stretched tight.

Harry's teeth skim my throat. "You seem to like it." He pulls his hand away and with his knee, nudges my legs wider. I dig my fingernails into his skin in anticipation. He pushes into me, gasping softly. "Merlin," he whispers as he sinks deeper, slowly, inch by inch. My whole body trembles. My prick aches.

"Please," I murmur, and he looks down at me through thick black lashes, his eyes an impossible green.

"Okay." He smiles.

My heart clenches. I can't breathe.

I know then. Sex isn't this good without something more. There's too much between us. Terry was just an infatuation. This is--

"Draco," Harry says, desperately, and I can barely bear it. I touch his face, my fingertips skimming across his soft skin. He's beautiful. I want him. And I think I always will.

When he comes over me, I cry his name.



I close my luggage with a soft click.

Harry lies sleeping on my bed, half-tangled in the rumpled white sheet. His dark hair is mussed against the pillow, his shoulders hunched as he curls against the mattress. I want to touch him, want to feel his skin against my palm one more time. I don't dare. If he wakes, I won't have the courage to do this, and I know I have to. I can't trust him. I can't go through Terry all over again. Not with Harry. It would break me.

The Portkey Office opens at eight. I've written a message for Blaise and Pansy. I'll leave it at the reception desk. They'll understand, I hope.

I stop at the door, my hand on the handle. I look back. I want to remember him like this, soft and beautiful. My Harry.

"I think I love you," I whisper. I open the door. A long stretch of warm light falls across the bed. Harry doesn't stir. I breathe out slowly, my throat tight. "I'm so sorry."

The door snicks shut behind me.



Photo by maize//

## seven

Pansy doesn't speak to me when she arrives home. Blaise just shrugs when I firecall and tells me to try later.

"You weren't there," he says, when I protest. "You didn't see his face at breakfast." He falls silent for a moment, then sighs. "I hate defending Gryffindors, Draco, particularly Potter of all people, for Christ's sake, but, really, you ballsed up. Again." He gives me an annoyed look through the green flames. "Maybe you should consider growing up for once."

I'm almost certain I hear two women in the background. "Is Lovegood there? At..." I glance at the clock. "Half-nine on a Sunday morning?"

Before he can answer, the Floo clangs shut and the flames glow orange again. I sit back just before my hair is singed.



Harry doesn't come back to work.

Word spreads quickly through the Ministry. Everyone wants to know why he's resigned so abruptly. Rumours fly about, everything from the possibility that he's eloped with the Weasley girl (which is quickly quashed by her elder brothers, much to my unspoken relief--and how it burns to feel the slightest bit of gratitude towards that ignorant mass of redheaded fools) to the certainty that he's lost his mind and been institutionalised. Rita Skeeter picked up the latter and ran it as a column in the *Sunday Prophet*. The head of St Mungo's locked wards had to give a statement assuring the public that Harry Potter had not been committed, which of course only made the entire wizarding world believe the rumour more.

Penelope Clearwater is promoted to Deputy Head of the Auror Force--the first woman to reach that position. There's great fanfare. I don't care. She's competent, I suppose, but there's no joy in sparring with her.

She arrives in my office two days after her promotion in a fitted robe and dragonhide heels that no Auror actually in the field would touch. Then again, Penelope's always been best behind a desk. She'd made an international name for herself in magical forensics.

"Draco," she says, taking a seat before I can rise. She crosses her legs and studies me like a specimen under a magnification spell.

I lean back in my chair. "You could have made an appointment, you realise."

Penelope gives me a sharp smile. Her lips are red and glossy. "I just wanted to be clear about the way our departments will interact now that I'm in charge. While I realise you're quite accustomed to a boy's club--"

"What?"

She regards me coolly. "I'm not a fool, Draco. You and Potter may have derived some sort of idiotic masculine pleasure from shouting each other down, but I suppose it did work for you, if one looks at your conviction rate." She folds her hands over her knee. "I, however, prefer not to work that way. Things will change."

"Such as?"

Penelope straightens in her seat. "You won't rail at me for one. If you have a problem with something I do, I expect you to address it in an adult manner and a civil tone." She twists the silver bangles on her wrist. "I want your paperwork requests to follow the proper procedure, which means sending them *more* than twelve hours in advance. And you'd best stop haranguing my Aurors in front of the Wizengamot."

"Even the idiot ones?"

Her mouth thins. "*Especially* the idiot ones." She sighs. "The Auror force has an image to maintain."

"I see." I pick up a quill, dragging it through my fingertips. "So I'm to alter my work practices based upon your preferences."

Penelope eyes me. "It's not an outrageous request. I'd simply like a working environment conducive to--"

She's annoyed me now. "Get knotted," I snap, glaring at her.

"Right then." Penelope stands with a sigh. "Don't make me go to Chaudhry, Draco."

I stop her at the door. She looks back at me. "You know," I say, pushing myself out of my chair, "no wonder you're desperate to wear the trousers around here. Rumour has it your husband's worn the skirts since Hogwarts."

Her face blanches. "You horrible shit," she says softly. The door slams behind her, knocking the photo of me with two members of the England team askew.

A moment later Eleanor steps in, a cup of Assam in hand. She sets it in front of me quietly.

Before she turns, I catch her arm. "I'm not going to the MLE any more."

Eleanor gives me a sad smile and nods. "I'll reschedule those appointments for our conference room then."

"Thank you." I sit back down and reach for a stack of folders. If I pretend I'm fine perhaps one day I'll believe it.

When she closes the door behind her, I bury my face in my hands.

Nothing feels right.



Father pulls me aside after Sunday dinner the next month. "Blaise is concerned," he says, obviously uncomfortable. He reaches for a decanter on the sideboard.

It disturbs me that my best friend is speaking to my father behind my back. "And?" I keep my voice even. Father never responds well to my dramatics, as he calls them.

"He believes you've made a..." Father hesitates, searching for the proper term, I'm certain. "...diplomatic error."

"Of course he does." I highly doubt Blaise has framed it in those words. I take the snifter of brandy Father offers me. "I suppose he told you everything."

"Mostly." Father sets the decanter down and turns to me. "Potter?"

I stiffen at his disparaging tone. "That's no one's business but mine." I look away. "And it doesn't matter, as I'm certain Blaise informed you." My hand shakes, sloshing brandy up the side of the snifter. I stand, walking over to the window and staring out. A white peacock struts across the lawn, his plumage spread as he eyes a peahen sitting on a stone wall.

Father eyes me over the rim of his glass. "Your mother and I have attempted to be supportive of your choices, Draco. Despite our firm belief that you have a certain familial duty..." He trails off, taking a sip of brandy.

I wait, certain of what's coming. My fingers tighten on my glass.

"We've spoken to the Quirkes," Father says smoothly. "You have dinner arrangements two weeks from Thursday with their daughter Orla." He cuts off my protest. "She's of good family and is willing to accommodate your..." He sighs. "Preferences."

"I think not," I say. My voice barely trembles. I lift my glass to my mouth. "You can't--"

"I can and I will." Father gives me a sympathetic look. "It's not as if I don't understand, Draco. But there are certain sacrifices one makes for one's family. After young Boot and now this?" He touches my shoulder gently. "It's time."

The brandy chokes me as I swallow.



"You're an arse," Pansy says to me, blowing a stream of smoke in my face. I don't care. It's only taken over a month and one panicked Floo call for her to agree to meet me for lunch.

"I know." We're standing outside Dolado, waiting for her to finish her cigarette. I lean against the wall, miserably watching the Muggles pass by.

She sighs and taps ash off the tip. It scatters in the light breeze. "What are you going to do?"

I shake my head. "Have dinner with Orla, I suppose." How bloody ironic. I run my hand over my face. I haven't slept in days. "I've bugged my whole bloody life, haven't I?"

"Yes. Repeatedly." Pansy looks over at me. "You should have seen him, Draco. He was more pathetic than you. Utterly miserable." She drops the cigarette to the pavement and grinds it out with her heel. "I actually felt sorry for him." Her mouth twists. "And you *know* how I despise that."

"This can't be fixed, can it?" I ask softly. In an odd way, losing Harry is far worse than Terry had been. For one, it's entirely my fault. "I'm a fool."

Pansy doesn't answer. Instead, she touches my arm gently.

I close my eyes and sigh.



Granger passes me in the corridor, throwing a vicious scowl my way without pausing in her purposeful stride. Her arms are piled with folders, scraps of paper flapping at their corners.

I stop and turn, calling her name. She looks back at me. Curls escape the messy chignon at the nape of her neck.

"What?" she asks sharply.

I hold out my hand. "I'll help with the folders." At her suspicious look, I sigh. "I'd like to speak with you, and it looks a bit less obvious if I'm assisting?"

She hands over a stack hesitantly. "Walk, then. These have to be at the Committee on Experimental Charms by half eleven."

We hurry through the crowded hallways, Granger eying me the entire time. I wait until we're in the lift, alone, before I ask her.

"Harry," I say, and her nostrils flare in irritation. I ignore her. "Is he all right?"

"No thanks to you." She pulls the stack of folders closer to her chest.

I loathe Gryffindors. Still I keep my temper. "Where is he?"

Granger just looks at me, her mouth a thin line.

"Fine." My jaw clenches. I hand her back the folders, punching the button for the next floor. "Just...tell him..." I hesitate, aching inside. "Tell him I'm sorry."

The lift doors open and I stalk out, leaving her staring out after me thoughtfully.





Photo by Photo Monkey

## eight

Orla Quirke is not horrific. In fact, I'm surprised to find that I enjoy her company. She's clever and amusing and refreshingly irreverent. Our first dinner goes well enough. Halfway through she sets her glass down and sighs.

"Whatever our parents think, this probably isn't going to work the way they'd like, you realise."

I look up from my veal. "What?"

She gestures between us. "This." She rests her chin on her fist. "You're gay, which happens to be the worst kept secret in wizarding society, by the way, and I'm..." She trails off.

"What?" I ask again.

Orla frowns. "Not attracted to you to begin with--no offence, but it's difficult to feel that spark when you know the other person would much rather you have a cock than a fanny."

I blink at her frankness. I don't expect it in women outside of Pansy. "Well, yes. That would be problematic."

"Besides," she says calmly, "I've been having an affair with Justin Finch-Fletchley for two years."

I try not to choke on my wine. "Penelope's husband?"

"Clearwater?" Orla takes a bite of her chicken Kiev. "Yes."

My curiosity about why she had been so willing to accept my sexual peccadillos is answered. I gaze at her in shock. "I thought he was gay."

"Justin?" She gives me an amused look. "Terribly sorry, dear, but no, he's not one of yours."

I sit back, glass in hand. "My God."

"Awful of me, I suppose." She cuts a bit of chicken and lifts it to her mouth, chewing slowly. "But I've had the horrible misfortune of falling in love with the bastard." She makes a face.

"He won't get a divorce, then?"

Orla shakes her head and lays down her fork and knife. She dabs the corner of her mouth with her napkin. "He would. I won't let him." She shrugs. "Frankly, my parents would never allow me to marry a Muggleborn." When she looks at me, her eyes are sad. "It's best this way. His marriage is adequate, and Penelope's good for him in some ways. I just wouldn't want you to go into any of this without knowing."

I order another bottle of wine, and we spend the remainder of the evening getting roaringly pissed. It's only when I wake up the next morning that I remember I've told her everything. Including the fact that I might possibly be arse over tit for the bloody Saviour of the Wizarding World.

We meet for lunch two days later, and I broach the subject cautiously.

"Don't worry," Orla says over a plate of green curry. She drags her chopsticks through the rice. "I'm not about to run off to the *Prophet* with your secrets." She gives me a crooked smile. "Justin, after all."

"We're pathetic," I say. I pour more wine for the both of us.

Orla clinks her glass to mine. "To unacknowledged love," she says. "Or at least unacknowledged lust."

"Cheers," I say mournfully, and Orla laughs.

Lunches and dinners become more frequent over the next few weeks. Our parents are pleased, much to our amusement. Pansy is enraged.

"You're mine," she snaps at me one evening over the Floo. "Not that tarted up Ravenclaw's."

I snort, exasperated. "I thought you and Blaise had a Ravenclaw of your own." I refuse to listen to the details, but I'm quite aware that Lovegood's still spending an excessive amount of time at Holland Park.

Pansy just huffs. "Not the same." Her eyes narrow at me. "Are you shagging her?"

"Oh, for God's sake." I give her a disgusted look. "No. But if my parents think I am, then fine." Pansy opens her mouth. I cut her off. "And no, I'm not going to marry her either."

"Good," Pansy says with a sniff. "Because I certainly don't approve." She sighs. "At least we know you're not in love with *her*."

I reach for the Floo disconnect, tired of this all. "Good night, Pansy."

The hearth falls dark.

I pour a glass of whisky and sit in the window seat, staring down at the street below.



Life goes on. Slowly. Excruciatingly.

Chaudhry takes Susan Bones off the Kirkup case and hands it back to me. "No sense in wasting you on something insignificant," he says. "Particularly now that Potter's gone." He gives me a knowing look over the rims of his glasses. I can't help but wonder how many people realised what was between us before I did.

Susan and I have a screaming row over the reassignment in the middle of the Ministry Atrium the next morning. It's the first time I've felt alive in over two months. When I walk away, though, flushed and triumphant, it feels hollow. She's not Harry. No one is. My shoulders sag. I miss him.

Orla schedules dinner with me the next night. *Meet me at Thanassis, half-eight*, she owls, and I smile. I wonder as I dress if Father was right. Perhaps marriage to her wouldn't be unbearable. There were alternatives to the usual method of conception. I could provide an heir. We don't despise one another. It could work, perhaps.

It won't, and I'm done with lying to myself. I fasten my cufflinks and head for the Floo.



Orla sips from her wineglass. The fairy lights dancing above, weaving their drunken way through strands of heavy grapevines, shine in her blonde hair. "It's a horrible idea," she says bluntly. "And besides, it'd make our parents happy, and I've spent far too many years doing my best to horrify mine. Anyway..." She trails off and sighs.

"Justin."

She nods. "And yours."

I shake my head and lean back in my chair. "He's not mine." I run my thumb along the stem of my glass. "I don't even know where he is."

"He can't hide forever." Orla leans forward, snapping a breadstick in half and handing me a piece.

"You don't know Harry," I say. I smile faintly. "Stubborn doesn't begin to describe him." I take a sip of ouzo. "Gryffindors."

"Bastards," she says in wry commiseration.

Our waiter coughs, and we look up. "Sir," he says softly as he sets a wineglass beside me. "Compliments of the, ah, gentleman at the bar."

I stare at the glass. A small bluebell flame dances inside of it, bright and sparkling. My heart skitters.

"Draco," Orla murmurs, and I blink, looking at her.

"It can't be."

She just raises an eyebrow.

We both turn, scanning the restaurant. It takes a moment, and then I see him, standing beside the small bar in the corner, his black robe a perfect fit, his hair still ridiculously untidy. I draw in a sharp breath.

"Go," Orla says, her hand brushing mine. She smiles at me, a wide happy curve of her thin lips. "You utter idiot. Go." She all but pushes me out of my chair.

I manage to stand, picking up the wineglass. It's warm against my palm, and the flames glow brighter, licking up the sides of the glass. "Tell me not to cock this up," I say, looking down at her.

"You already have. Now do it properly." Her eyes are bright. "Go tell him you've missed him."

Somehow I make my way across the crowded restaurant. Harry's eyes follow me the entire time, but give away nothing. I have no idea what he's thinking from his expressionless face.

"Harry," I say as I set the wineglass down next to him.

"Date with a woman?" he asks quietly. "I thought you didn't *do* bisexuals."

I quirk my mouth to the side. "I don't. I mean, I'm not. It wasn't..."

His eyes scan my face as though searching for a lie. I stop talking, somehow stumbling over my own words. I can't believe he's here, in front of me. I've imagined this meeting dozens of times, but now that it's real, I've no earthly idea where to start.

Harry's eyes move from me and I follow his gaze to where Orla is leaving the restaurant. She turns and gives us both a playful wave and a smile before stepping out into the busy street beyond. Father, I'm quite certain, is going to have definite words with me. I don't care. I'm too elated to see Harry. I touch his wrist.

"Harry..."

He stops me with a single gesture, his finger brushing my lips. "Sometimes you barristers talk too much."

"And sometimes you Aurors..." I trail off, looking at him. "I've missed you," I admit.

"I know." He leans against the bar. A small smile flits across his face. "I've heard from Hermione. And Luna. And Pansy." He gives me a pained look. "And I'm fairly certain Zabini was in the background of that last firecall, shouting something."

"You probably don't want to know," I say. "It's best not to ask about the three of them."

Harry shudders. "I don't even want to think about it."

My fingers slide along the edge of his sleeve. I want to touch his skin again. I don't think I should. "Where've you

been?"

"Wandering." He watches me. "Thinking."

"About?"

Harry catches my hand and holds it, his thumb tracing across my palm. I shiver. "Anything but you." He gives me a wry grin. "That didn't work out so well."

"I know exactly what you mean," I murmur. People around us are listening to our conversation. I don't seem to care. I move closer to him. I don't even care if we make the society pages tomorrow, although Father will be apoplectic. I just want to feel him next to me.

"I have something for you." He digs in his pocket and pulls out a small rock, grey-black on one side, darker and more porous on the other. He places it in my hand.

My breath hitches. I can feel the thrum of magic in the tiny nugget, burning into my palm. I look up at him.

"Þingvellir," he says quietly. "From the Law Rock. I thought you should have it."

I nod, rolling the rock between my fingertips. "Thank you."

Harry catches my hand, his eyes fixed on mine. "It's also a Portkey to Reykjavik," he says. "It goes off in two hours." He bites his bottom lip, worrying it between his teeth as he hesitates. His thumb strokes across my knuckles. "There's so much I want to show you. Geysir. The Golden Falls. Vatnajökull. Húsavík. Akureyri--"

I touch his face. "Harry."

"Eyjafjallajökull--you really should see the volcano--"

My kiss cuts him off. Harry's hands cup my cheeks; his thumbs smooth against my temples. I catch his shoulders, gripping them tightly. "I should pack," I say against his mouth, and I can feel him smile.

When I pull away, the entire restaurant is silent, watching us.

"We're definitely going to be in the *Prophet*," I murmur.

Harry laughs and kisses me again. "Is that such a problem?" He tugs my wrist gently, leading me towards the door. The head waiter pushes it open for us.

"No. Not particularly." I imagine the grim pleasure I'll feel when I hear Father's choked to death on his morning tea. It will save me the other lecture that's waiting.

We step out onto the street. The summer sky's fading into dusk above us. I miss the ever-present grey Arctic light.

"You're certain about this?" Harry asks. His hand rests lightly on the small of my back.

I turn to him. "Let me make one thing perfectly clear. If you leave me for a woman, Potter, I swear I will gut you and hang your entrails from that awful statue of Dumbledore in front of Gringotts." It'd been the Minister's idea, that monstrosity. It was a horrific conglomeration of war heroes standing on the supposed ruins of Hogwarts, looking wearied and haggard and depressing passers-by forever more.

His eyebrows rise, and he tries not to smile. "Not Snape's?"

I sniff. "I rather think Severus suffered enough by you when he was alive."

Harry laughs then, a bright, sharp bark of amusement that warms me. His hand slides to my hip, heavy and warm. "I never left Iceland," he says quietly. "I went around the whole damned island, dreaming of you."

"Idiot," I whisper.

People pass by us, pretending not to look. I brush my fingertips across Harry's stubbled jaw.

He leans his forehead against mine. "Come back with me."

I nod slowly. Life can wait. Chaudhry will survive. The Kirkup case can go back to Susan, and my father can go to hell. I'll owl them all postcards from Reykjavik. "This is mad, you realise."

"I prefer to think of it as adventurous." Harry pulls me closer. "I seem to have discovered my life's horribly dull without you shouting at me all day."

"Piss off, Potter," I say, but the smile I give him is warm and bright.

He grins, his eyes bright behind his smudged glasses. "Make me." He looks ridiculously young.

I kiss him, my body pressed against his. "You're a complete arse, you know."

Harry curls his hand around mine, trapping the Portkey between our palms. The magic throbs stronger through the rock, a heady rush that tingles across my skin. "But never boring."

No. Never. I smile at him. "Take me home, you prat."

We Apparate.

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