



# unkissed kisses & SONGS NEVER SUNG

by femmequixotic

*And again, this is what I remember: the rush of air as the doors fly open and the thud of Aurors' boots against the tile floor. Weasley's red hair and pale face looking at me as I run forward. Marietta shouting for clear beds.*

*Weasley's mouth moves, and he's saying something, but I can't understand him because Harry's there, lying on a stretcher, blood pooling on the white linen beneath his head.*

unkissed kisses

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**Written February 2011**

**Pairing:** Harry/Draco

**Rating:** R

**Warnings:** Major character injury, hurt/comfort

**Summary:** I sit silently in the shadows, staring at the tiny, pulsing ball of light that tells me my Harry's still alive.

**Word Count:** ~13,000

**Disclaimer:** All characters belong to J.K. Rowling, Scholastic, Bloomsbury, and Warner Brothers. Plot based on khasael's drabble series.

**Author's notes:** Thanks to noeon and supergrover24 for their wonderful beta work and to khasael for writing an amazingly heartrending drabble series that both captivated and inspired me. Title from Oscar Wilde's *Silentium Amoris*. Remix of khasael's [Promises](#) and [Sounds, Lines, and Meaning](#). Photographs are used under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 United States License. All photographs may be found at flickr.com. Cover photograph by BertBeckers.

**Author Site:** [Dreamwidth](#) or [AO3](#).



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Photo by See-ming Lee

i.

This is what I remember: the faint, slightly sour smell of Harry's breath as he presses his face against my throat, and the sleepy stretch of my body against his, and the brush of his thick fingers against my forehead as he smooths my hair back. A quiet *good morning* when I finally open my eyes. The soreness of my arse. The heavy warmth of his prick against my hip as he presses me into the mattress.

"Work," I say, but his skin is soft beneath my palms. "Twelve hour shift."

When he bites my jaw I know I'll be late.



And again, this is what I remember: larksong, and the cool of a spring breeze against my skin, and the scent of just bloomed lilacs and earth still damp from last night's rain. The gentle weight of Harry's hand on my cheek. The softness of his lips against mine. Green eyes behind smudged glasses as he pulls away. My fingers twisted in the scratchy grey wool of his Auror robe. A whispered *I love you* that he knows I'm too afraid to return, even after almost two years together.

He says it anyway, every morning that he wakes up next to me, and he tells me with infuriating Gryffindor certainty that one day I'll say it back.

*Be safe, idiot*, is what I say instead. It's as close as I can come to admitting my feelings.

As I Apparate to St Mungo's, he's watching me and smiling.



And again, this is what I remember: the beeps and whirs of monitoring spells in St Mungo's casualty ward and the bitter taste of the overbrewed tea Marietta hands me. Hannah's cheerful *Someone looks happy for a Monday morning, Malfoy. Harry shagged you out again?* and my *Fuck off, Abbott* as I reach for the first charts of the day.

The morning's slow. I check on last night's patients, then sit at the mediwitches' station, twirling in my chair as I listen to Hannah bring Marietta up to date on her wedding plans. There is nothing more excruciatingly dull than the debate over cymbidium orchids versus calla lilies for a bouquet. Everyone knows white roses are the only proper choice. I'll be at the wedding, of course, given that Longbottom's Harry's friend and Hannah's the only Healer in St Mungo's I can tolerate longer than five minutes.

Bored, I think of Harry's face beneath me as I rode him this morning, and I smile. I can't wait until my shift ends. I've plans for tonight that involve an old school tie.

When the Patronus arrives, sleek and silver, telling us wounded Aurors are on their way, we're on our feet, running for the ward entrance. We've work to do.



And again, this is what I remember: the rush of air as the doors fly open and the thud of Aurors' boots against the tile floor. Weasley's red hair and pale face looking at me as I run forward. Marietta shouting for clear beds.

Weasley's mouth moves, and he's saying something, but I can't understand him because Harry's there, lying on a stretcher, blood pooling on the white linen beneath his head.

*Harry.*

His glasses are gone, and there's dirt on his face, and more blood, and I can't breathe, but when Hannah puts her hand on my arm, I pull away, screaming at her to get out, get out, *get out*.

I don't even notice when she steps away. I lift Harry's head gently, and he's breathing, thank God, but there's a wound the size of my fist on the back of his head. Beneath my gloved fingers I can feel the shards of skull and the slick squish of blood and brain tissue.

"Weasley," I shout, and he's there, then, blood spattered across his robe. It's Harry's; I know it is. He looks at me, and I swear I can count the freckles on his pale face. "Spell?"

"Diffindo." He's staring down at Harry, at my blood-streaked hands holding the back of Harry's brain in place. "It went through the front and--" His voice catches, and he swallows before looking up at me. "You can't do this, Malfoy, He's--"

I've already tuned him out. No curse damage to counteract, then, thank God. Just a small entrance wound in his forehead leaking blood. "Marietta, we're taking him to theatre," I say.

She looks at me over Harry's limp body. "Draco, you can't--he's your boyfriend. Hannah will--"

"You heard me," I say softly, my eyes fixed on her face. I don't care if it breaks hospital policy. No one's touching him other than me. *No one*. "And I want you to scrub in."

Marietta hesitates, then nods. She levitates Harry's stretcher. I catch the side before she can move it. I lean in and touch Harry's cheek. My hand doesn't shake. I won't let it.

"He won't die, Weasley," I say. I don't look at him.

Weasley doesn't say anything for a moment, then he nods. "I know."

When I walk away, I can feel him watching me.

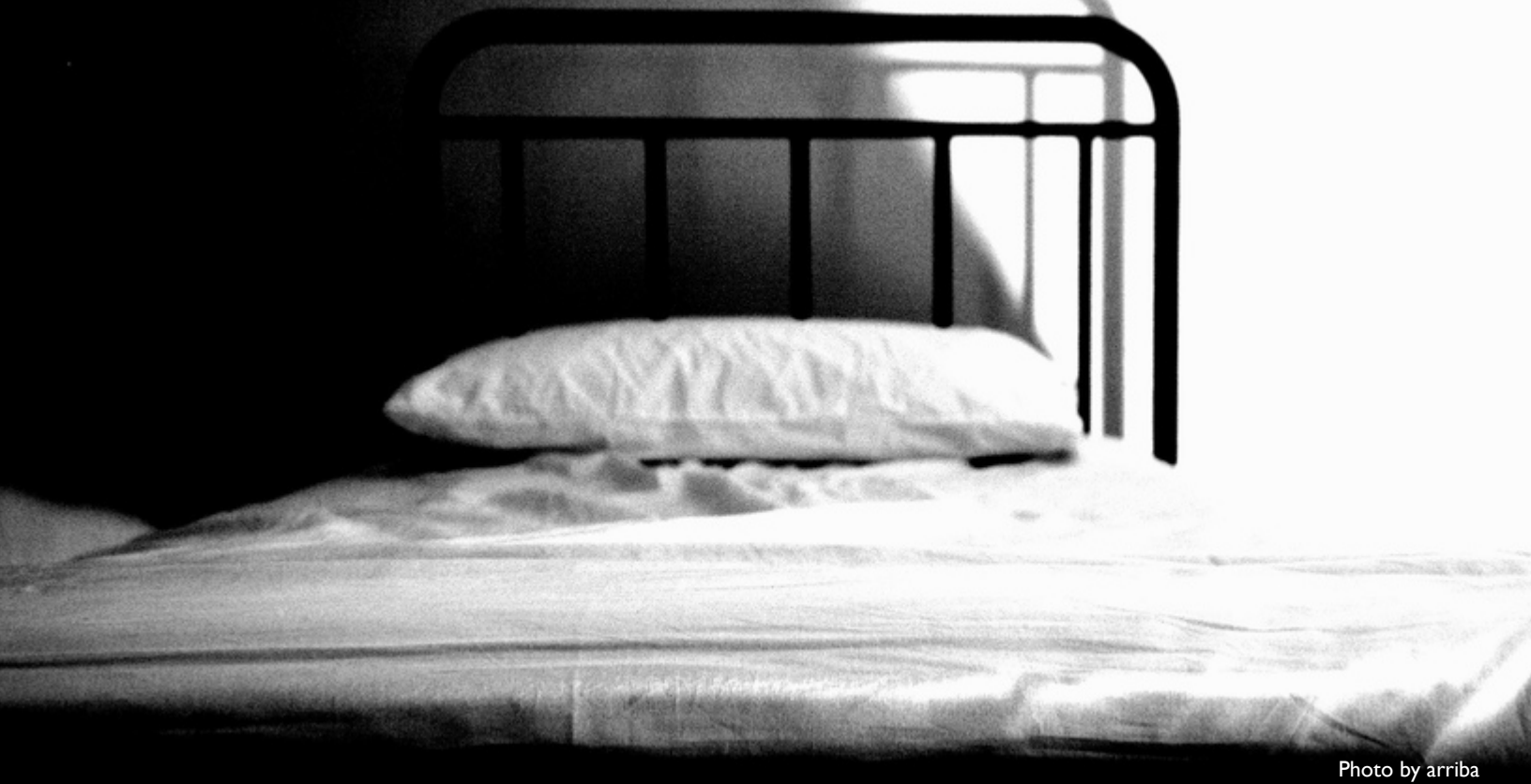


Photo by arriba

## ii.

The ward sister nods at me when I come in. It's late, and my shift's ended. I should go home and sleep. I'm on call again in seven hours, and it's been a difficult day. Still, she doesn't stop me, turning instead to her thick stack of patient files as I walk through the ward, my footsteps soft against the smooth, polished tile.

It's dark; the only light comes from the soft glow of the monitoring wards hovering above each bed, shifting from a pale gold to a soft blue as they cycle through vital signs. The patients lie silent, their minds gently pulled into a dark void by the bags of Draughts of Dreamless Sleep that drip slowly down the clear tubing into their veins in the hope that a lack of consciousness will induce their bodies and their magic to heal.

Sometimes it does.

Harry sleeps in the corner, away from the others. The unusual privacy's a concession to his status, one he'd hate if he were awake. Of that I'm certain.

I pick up the chart from the foot of his bed and flip through it mindlessly. There's nothing there I don't know. My own signature is scrawled across the bottom of several sheets detailing the trauma-healing spells performed in theatre this afternoon. I barely remember them.

Harry's pale beneath the bandages wrapped around his head; his normally golden skin looks sallow against the white sheets. His messy black hair is gone, shorn away by Marietta's precise charm. The image of my fingers twisted in those thick locks just this morning as I arched over Harry, gasping, makes my stomach lurch and I sit down suddenly in the narrow armchair beside the bed, holding Harry's chart close to my chest.

I'd ordered the induction of the Sleep after I'd spent hours pulling bone fragments from surrounding tissue.

It sounds so clinical, that. So far removed from the reality of the horror of plucking shards of Harry's skull from his brain, one by one, praying that my wand would hold steady. Hannah had come in halfway through and tried to take my place. I've no idea what I said to her, but I doubt it was pleasant. I remember Marietta pulling her away, though, and their whispered argument only a few feet from me as the monitoring spell beeped softly over Harry's too-still body.

I'll dream about it, I know, if I close my eyes. About the blood on my hands, and the firm softness of Harry's brain beneath my gloved fingertips, and the terror coursing through me that with one miscalculated slip I would destroy his life.

And mine.

The light above Harry's head rolls from gold to blue. He's stable now, if critical, and he's gone from being my responsibility to Healer Wibberley's. Giles is the best neuromagologist on staff. I still don't trust him. I'd told him as much when I'd stopped him in the corridor, my body aching and tight from so many hours bent over an operating table.

My hand settles over Harry's. His skin is warm. I stroke my thumb across his knuckle. I can feel the hot burn of tears in my eyes, and I blink fiercely. I won't. I can't.

I tell myself he knows I'm here, despite the fact that the Healer in me is quite aware that he can't know. There are necessary lies patients' families tell themselves when they come to this ward. *He knows I'm here. She can hear my voice. I can't leave; he needs me. She'll wake up.* I've never understood the necessity of them until now.

They come here to die mostly, their bodies or their magic all too often broken beyond repair. I do rounds in this ward once a day, looking at my trauma patients. I know Thomas Linnett near the door, his body wasting away thanks to his estranged son's curse. Amelia Watson, barely twenty-two, has been in hospital for over a year now, her frail body subsisting on potions and the nutritionally fortified liquids they feed her through the tubing that circles her thin shoulders. An experimental charm backfired on her, severing her spinal cord in three places and shriveling her left lung. The specialists in Spell Damage still haven't managed to reverse it. Dickie Hawes, two beds over from Harry, Splinched himself. No one's found his left leg, liver, or half his intestines. None of these people are expected to leave.

And now Harry's here.

I'm used to the medicinal smell of potions and antiseptics. Or I assumed I was. In Casualty they're overwhelmed by the scent of blood and of fear, but here they linger, heavy and strong, mixing with the earthy, mournful whiffs of failing bodies that catches in the back of my throat. I swallow hard.

This, I think numbly, is the end of everything good. I don't know why I'm surprised. It's been a long time since I've thought the world owed me happiness. Struggling through the aftermath of the war had taught me that much. I'd fought for my position at St Mungo's; I'd had to excel above the other Trainee Healers to prove I was worth the public tumult of bringing a former Death Eater on staff.

Harry had been a surprise. For a moment, I had believed in happiness.

I can hear the ward sister moving behind me, checking on the other patients. My fingers tighten around Harry's.

She hesitates behind me. "Healer Malfoy?" Her voice is soft. Quiet. I think her name is Rachael. Anthony Goldstein's little sister. I don't look at her, but when she touches my arm, I don't pull away.

"Would you like some tea?" she murmurs, and I nod.

She's back in a few minutes with a mug of Earl Grey, decently steeped. It usually isn't in the wards, but it's late now and there are fewer distractions. Rachael gives me a small, sad smile and her hand lingers on my shoulder.

My throat tightens, closes off and I sit silently in the shadows, staring at the tiny, pulsing ball of light that tells me my Harry's still alive.



This is what I remember: the rattle and clink of cutlery on china and the soft murmur of voices around me. The sideways looks directed my way. The dullness of Ministry speeches. Blaise beside me, coolly deflecting the genteelly snide barbs our dinner companions throw my way. Harry--still *Potter* then--staring at me over his glass of wine.

I excuse myself before the pudding arrives. Blaise doesn't say anything, but I know he's as aware as I am of Potter watching me.

The loo's empty, and the echo of my piss against porcelain is preferable to the stilted conversation at dinner. I'd only come because Blaise had convinced me it'd be good for my family. Even all these years after the war we're still social pariahs. The only Slytherin family who seems to have escaped the judgment of the wizarding world is the Zabini clan, and frankly, I think that's just because they're all terrified of Antigone. Not that I blame them. Blaise's mother is formidable in her own way. Then again, her grandmother was born into a secondary branch of the Black family. Blood will tell.

Not that I could ever endorse that view now.

I've just washed my hands when the door opens. The white towel I take from beside the sink is soft and charmed to stay warm. Footsteps fall against the black marble floor, and when I look up I can see Potter in the mirror, watching me.

Neither of us speak. I straighten my robe, smooth my palms against the heavy wool. It's high-necked with dozens of tiny jet buttons down the front, and only the small pristine white points of my collar break the swathe of black from throat to toe. I dress like Severus, I know. There's something comforting about stark attire.

I hear the rustle of his robe, the metal tug of his zip as he steps to the urinal for a slash.

When I turn to leave, Potter stops me with a quiet *Malfoy*. His hand's still on his cock. I try not to notice, but I can feel warmth rise in my cheeks.



I look back at him, my hand on the door.

He gives me a small smile as he shakes his prick, then tucks it back in his trousers, pulling at his zip again. I don't know whether to be amused or horrified. I settle for annoyed.

"What?" I snap, my irritation with the whole evening seeping out.

Potter just looks at me as he moves to the sink. I don't know who's tailored his robe, but the cut of it is perfect: fitted to his broad shoulders and his narrow waist and flared just enough at his hips to accommodate his penchant for Muggle trousers.

Even now I can still smell the faint scent of the sandalwood hand soap.

"We should have coffee sometime," he says finally, his eyes meeting mine in the mirror. The look he gives me is indisputable in its meaning. I've been with enough men to know. "Don't you think?"

That was not what I expected. I don't even know what to say. Before I can come up with a suitably vicious way of turning him down, he steps past me, opening the door, and the warm smile he gives me is wide enough to crinkle the corners of his eyes.

"I'll firecall you," he says, and then he's gone, leaving me unsettled and uncertain and undeniably aroused.

Harry was always good at that.



A hand on my shoulder wakes me, and I start, blinking before I realise I'm still in hospital. I've slept in the chair all night, it seems--or mostly in the chair. I lift my head from Harry's bed and from the chart that sticks to my cheek, its metal clip leaving an impression in my skin, I'm certain.

Weasley looks down at me. He's in his Auror robe--a clean one, at least, with none of Harry's blood on him, which is more than I can say for my own stained clothes. I push myself up slowly and tuck my hair behind one ear. I have a change of robes downstairs in the staff lounge, thankfully. A shower and a cup or two of hot black tea will get me through the morning, at least.

"You slept here," Weasley says.

I yawn, not bothering to cover my mouth. "I'm utterly dumbfounded by your powers of deduction." My gaze automatically goes to the monitoring wards. The ball of light glows a bright blue, and I relax. Harry's still stable. "There didn't seem to be a point in going home."

Weasley doesn't argue. "How is he?"

"The same." I hook Harry's chart on the bottom of the bed. It's hard to see him lying here in the early morning light that seeps through the nearby windows. His skin looks paler. The rise of his chest is almost imperceptible as he breathes. That particular side effect of the Draught has never bothered me before now. "We'll know more when it's time to bring him out of the Sleep."

When Weasley touches Harry's cheek it takes all I have not to bark at him to leave him be. I've never been fond of the Weasel, nor he of me, but we've at least tolerated each other in recent months, which is more than I can say for his wife. Granger still loathes me, and the feeling, I must admit, is entirely mutual. And if I'm being honest, entirely provoked, on my end.

"How much longer will he be under?"

I shrug and look away. "That's up to Wibberley now."

Weasley sits down in the chair I've just vacated. He rubs his hands over his face, and for the first time, I almost feel sympathy for the brute. "Will he make it?" he asks finally, and his voice catches.

I let my hand brush across Harry's, my fingertips sliding over his knuckles. Two are scabbed over, thick and black and rough. I can't answer. I don't know. Weasley just watches me.

"This isn't easy for you."

"Again, your powers of deduction astound me." I don't take my eyes off Harry. There's a faint stubble on his jaw; less than usual at this hour, but the Draught slows down most body functions. "Top-notch Auror, you are."

It's a sign of his worry that Weasley doesn't rise to the bait. I'm irritated by that; I'd like a blazing row with someone at the moment. I crave some way of purging all these emotions twisting through me.

"You should sleep," he says after a moment. "In a proper bed."

That won't happen and he knows it as well as I do. I can't bear the thought of going home to a bed with rumpled sheets that still smell like Harry. And sex.

I can't think of Harry touching me. Kissing me. Whispering against my throat how much he needs me. My eyes burn and I glance away.

"Just tell me," I say grimly, "that whoever did this didn't escape."

Weasley's silent, then his mouth tightens. "Dead, actually."

I give him a long, appraising look. He doesn't flinch. "Good."

When I walk out, I stop by Rachael's desk. She looks exhausted. "Put a note on Harry's chart," I say quietly and I glance back at Weasley. He's bent over, his face in his hands. "Weasley gets full visiting rights. All hours."

It's the least I can do.



This is what I remember: the smell of coffee, thick and rich and warm, and of sweet pastries smeared with cinnamon and icing. The clatter of cups behind the counter. The hiss of Muggle tyres against wet streets. The clang of the shop bell when Potter enters, shaking rain from his umbrella.

I watch him as he looks around, obviously uncertain that I've kept my promise to be here. To be honest, I'm not certain why I have. I blame my exhaustion of the night before, and the soul-crushing emptiness I always feel when a patient doesn't make it through casualty. Whatever anyone might think of me, I chose my specialty because I'd been forced to watch too many people die during the last year of the war, helpless to do anything.

Perhaps saving them now is my penance.

Potter's tall--taller than I remember from school, though I'll admit after twelve years my memories of those years have attained a comfortable haze. He's lean and almost angular in his Muggle clothes: the jeans that sit low on his hips, the black leather jacket that clings to his shoulders. He's tanned--or as much as an English boy ever can be in our damp climate--and his black hair is what Blaise would deem artfully messy. I somehow doubt the ridiculously appealing, yet casual tousle is deliberate. Potter's not that type.

He turns from placing his order and sees me finally at this table in the corner. A slow, small smile curves his lips, and my breath catches. I hide my reaction by lifting my cup to my mouth as he walks towards me, weaving his way through the tables.

When he sits, I straighten in my chair, oddly nervous. It annoys me. I don't know why I care what he thinks of me, sitting here in these uncomfortable Muggle clothes. I feel out of my element.

"Hullo," he says, and he holds out his hand. "Harry Potter."

His eyes are a brilliant shining green behind his wire-rimmed glasses. I look at him, perplexed. "Right." I set my cup down and eye him suspiciously, not entirely certain he's not trying to take the piss. "Are you an idiot?"

Potter's smile widens. "I thought we'd start over again," he says simply, and I glance down at his outstretched hand. A wave of anger and regret shivers through me, and I'm eleven again, my cheeks burning with shame and humiliation at a childish snub.

"I don't need your pity--"

"I know." Potter doesn't move his hand. It hovers between us, a promise of something that unsettles me. His gaze is steady. Open. "That's not what I'm offering."

The thick ceramic of my mug is warm against my palms. I turn it slowly, trying to hide my confusion. "What then?" I say at last.

Potter quirks an eyebrow--or tries to and fails actually. "I reckon I'd like to find out."

"That makes no sense," I protest with a snort. "Shouldn't *you* know what's on offer?"

"I think," Potter says, "that depends on what you're willing to take." He pushes his hand forward again. "So. Hullo. I'm Harry Potter."

My fingers curl around his, and my heart stutters at the touch. "Draco Malfoy," I say quietly. I hesitate only for a moment. "Nice to meet you, Harry."

Harry's smile is blinding.



Every night I sleep next to Harry's bed. Rachael doesn't say anything when I transfigure the chair into a sofa, despite it making the space tighter for the mediwitches to manoeuvre. They don't change it back during the day either, which surprises me.

It's over a week before I realise Wibberley has changed his rounds schedule so that he stops by Harry's bed just after my shift ends when I've settled down on the sofa. He brings food from the canteen--thick roast beef sandwiches and bottles of pumpkin juice--and we eat as we discuss Harry's case. Rachael sets a plate of buttered croissants from the tea room and a mug of Earl Grey in front of me in the morning before she leaves. Every afternoon either Hannah or Marietta or one of the other casualty mediwitches or wizards drags me to lunch and forces soup or a sandwich or a slice of quiche into me. I'm grateful, I suppose. As much as I know I need to eat, I've no interest in food.

Blaise and Pansy and Greg stop by. Sometimes together, sometimes separately. They never stay long, but they take me to the tea room on the fifth floor, insisting that if I won't leave hospital, then I at least need to look out of different windows. When Harry's friends come to see him, I disappear. They don't all hate me--only most of them--but without Harry as a buffer between us, we're awkward and uncomfortable. The one time I see Granger, I think she might speak to me. I leave before she can.

I focus on work when I'm away from Harry. At my request Hannah makes certain I'm scheduled for days rather than nights. I prefer to spend my hours with Harry alone, or occasionally with Weasley on the nights he stops by after a late patrol. After the first night, he takes to bringing a chess set with him, and we sit on either side of Harry's bed, the board floating above him as we spar with our knights and bishops and pawns.

Weasley barely talks, and I find it oddly comforting. I'm tired of the sympathy, of the questions about Harry's condition, of the concerned queries about my own state of mind.

The days slip by. I count them at first, and then it becomes too much. My life becomes a circle of work, sitting with Harry, and sleep. I shower at hospital; Pansy brings me clothes from my townhouse every few days when she goes over to feed my owl and let her fly in the back garden. I have no idea what's happening in the world. No interest in keeping up with politics or social gossip or anything that doesn't involve Harry or St Mungo's. I know there are *Prophet* articles on his condition. No one shows them to me, and I don't ask.

It's a Sunday--which one I've no damned idea--and I'm lying on the sofa next to Harry, reading out loud to him from the new issue of *Wizden Quidditcher* when there's a soft cough.

I sit up.



Mother is standing there, perfectly coiffed and dressed and obviously come straight from church. What surprises me, however, is Father standing behind her, his discomfort evident as he glances between me and Harry.

He hasn't cared for our relationship. It's difficult enough for him that his only son has had the audacity to be a poof utterly uninterested in any of the girls he's thrown my way. When he discovered that I was dating Harry Potter, of all people, he'd become apoplectic. He's only just stopped berating me for my stupidity.

We look at each other warily, he and I.

"Darling," Mother says, but Father cuts her off.

"Pansy says you haven't been home for weeks." He motions Mother towards the sofa as he takes the chair on the other side of Harry's bed.

I shrug and set the magazine aside.

Father doesn't say anything for a moment, then he sighs. "You're that certain of this." He twists his cane between his hands--needed now for assistance rather than pompous show--and eyes Harry before he turns back to me. "He could wake up a bed-ridden invalid. Or not at all. Are you prepared for that?"

"Lucius." Mother frowns at Father in disapproval, but I don't mind his bluntness. It's a relief after the platitudes of well-meaning friends.

I meet Father's gaze evenly. "Yes."

He sighs again. "I watched my grandmother nurse my grandfather through dragon pox, Draco. It's not easy when someone you--" He hesitates, his eyes flicking towards Harry, and his mouth twists to one side. "--care for is ill."

"I know." I glance at Harry, lying silent in the bed. I've done what I can to make him presentable. A shaving charm every day. Carefully brushing the short wisps of his regrowing hair, casting cleansing spells. I don't know what will happen when he wakes up--and he will; I utterly refuse to accept the alternative. All I know is that I'll be here. Now and after. I draw in a deep breath. "I don't have a choice. I--" And now I hesitate myself, the words choking in my throat. "I do...care for him."

Mother makes a soft sound, and her fingers tighten around mine.

Father studies me for a long moment, and then he nods. "How can we help?" he asks finally, his shoulders straightening.

I blink back tears.



This is what I remember: the faint warmth of the sun against my cheeks despite the slight chill of the late spring air. The light sparkling across the Thames. The spires of Westminster against the bright blue

sky and the white metal curve of the London Eye. The sweet vanilla of the ice cream I'd insisted he buy me from a Muggle truck on the side of Westminster Bridge. A chaffinch chirping on the wall of the Albert Embankment. The rustle of a gentle wind in the bright green leaves of the trees above.

We stop and sit on one of the wooden and iron benches along the wide Embankment, raised up on small concrete platforms to give a better view of the river over the wall. It's late afternoon on a Saturday, and a Muggle man only slightly older than ourselves jogs by in too few clothes and with music blaring from small white cords attached to his ear.

Harry just smiles as I eat my ice cream, reaching out to wipe the corner of my mouth with his thumb. It's our fourth date, I suppose, if you can call meeting for coffee or walks or Muggle films or any other of the ridiculous things Harry's suggested dates. I'm not used to it; the majority of my romantic life has been located around the loo of whatever latest wizarding club Blaise or Theo have dragged me to. No one's ever tried to court me, as Mother would put it. I'm a Malfoy. Why would they?

Still, the very fact that Harry hasn't even tried to kiss me, let alone fuck me, is unsettling.

I watch him, licking ice cream from my plastic spoon. The breeze ruffles his dark hair. "What do you want from me?" I ask finally.

Harry leans forward, his elbows on his knees. "Nothing."

With a snort, I dig the spoon deeper into the ice cream, irritated. "Four weeks now, and you haven't even tried to fuck me--"

"Do you want me to?"

I glare at him. "No." Well. That's a complete lie. God knows I lie in bed every damned night thinking about what it would be like to have Harry over me. The sodding house elf's already pursing her lips at me when she has to change the sheets again each morning.

Harry's laugh just annoys me more. "Really."

The ice cream is cold and sweet against my tongue, and I ask myself as I stare out over the river why exactly it is that I put up with the idiot. I scrape the spoon against the paper sides of the cup. I'm not entirely certain we're dating. We've been careful to stay in Muggle London, and I haven't even told Pansy I've seen him. A spike of fear goes through me. Perhaps I'm mistaken about all of this, about what he wants from me. I don't want to examine why that thought upsets me.

"I really don't understand you," I say finally. I set the empty ice cream cup down next to me. My knuckles press into the bench's worn wooden planks.

Harry doesn't say anything for a long moment, then he looks over at me. "You're not overly fond of taking things slow are you?"

Out of the corner of my eye I can see him watching me. My hair blows against my cheek, obscuring my view of his face. "I've never seen the point," I say. "It's just sex." I look at him then, channeling my most bored expression. "What two consenting adults do with their naked bodies isn't really that dramatic, Potter."

“Harry,” he corrects, and his eyes are mesmerizing. I can’t look away. “And maybe I don’t just want sex.”

“Just.” I pounce on the word triumphantly. “So you *do* want to fuck me.” I tell myself the relief I feel is merely because rejection by Potter would be unbearably humiliating.

“Christ, you’re an idiot.” Harry’s fingertips skim my cheek. I shiver. “I wanted to fuck you in the Ministry loo.”

My whole body tightens at the image of him shoving me against the marble wall, his thick fingers pulling at my robe. “Why didn’t you?” It comes out as a whisper.

Harry tucks my hair behind my ear. “Because I don’t *just* want sex, you stupid wanker.” His voice is gentle and warm, and the smile he gives me makes my breath catch.

He kisses me and my fingers twist in the lapel of his wool jacket. I cling to him like a drowning fool.



When Wibberley sends for me, I’m wrist deep into a patient’s abdominal cavity, trying to remove the foot Splinched into his stomach.

“Go,” Hannah says, already pulling on gloves, and she pushes me aside. I stand there, blankly, with bloody hands. Hannah looks up in exasperation. “Draco, go.”

I go.

In four and a half weeks, Wibberley has never sent for me during work hours, which can only mean one of two things: Harry’s significantly worse or they’ve pulled him from the Draught.

Marietta stops me at the theatre door, a fresh robe in her hand. “Wash up.” I clean the blood off me as best as I can; she removes the rest with a cleansing charm that sparks across my skin.

I run for the nearest lift.

Wibberley’s next to Harry’s bed when I come in, his sandy brown hair falling into his face as he bends over Harry. He looks up at me. “Malfoy.”

“Is he--” is all I can choke out, and then Wibberley steps back.

Harry turns his head. Our eyes meet.

My knees buckle beneath me and I grab the edge of Harry’s bed to steady myself. He’s awake. He’s alive.

“Harry,” I whisper. I don’t care that Wibberley’s watching us with a clinician’s eye. When Harry’s hand reaches out for me, I grab it. Tightly.

*Harry. My Harry. Always my Harry.*

Neither of us look away from each other.

“You stupid idiot,” I say quietly, and I blink back the wet burn of tears. “What were you thinking, or really, I suppose I should ask if you even were at the time--”

Harry opens his mouth. What comes out is unintelligible, a garbled nonsense. His forehead furrows and he tries to sit up. Wibberley pushes him back down again, gently, then looks at me.

“We need to talk,” he says, and I realise I’m holding Harry’s left hand, not his right.

My world shatters.



This is what I remember: the sound of my name on Harry’s lips. His breathy gasps and moans. The slick slide of our bodies together. The arch of my back as I shudder against him. His teeth on my throat. My pleas for him to fuck me, harder, faster, *please*. The glow of candlelight on Harry’s broad shoulders. The taste of his skin against my tongue. The smell of come and sweat. Cotton sheets tangled around us, beneath us.

I’m left speechless afterwards, my body limp and sated.

Harry wraps himself around me and presses his face into my shoulder. His hands trail over my side, my stomach, then curl around my wrist. When he lifts my arm, leaning forward to press his mouth against the faint shadow of the Dark Mark, I twist, turning to face him. I touch his face, press my fingertips against his scar, trace its outline.

“This isn’t going to work,” I murmur. “You know that.”

“I don’t,” he says. I wonder how many men have seen him like this, his eyes no longer hidden behind glasses, his hair rumpled, his face soft and open. He brushes his knuckles against my cheek.

I turn my head and kiss his fingers. “You’re the Chosen One,” I say, “and I’m a Death Eater--”

“Former,” Harry points out.

I shrug. “People prefer not to remember that part.” I lean my head against his shoulder. “If this is more than just sex--”

He brushes my hair back from my forehead. “It is.”

“If it is,” I say, my scepticism evident, “it won’t be easy. No one’s going to like it--not your friends, not my friends, and definitely not the public at large.” I stare up at the ceiling. “We won’t even go into the fits Father will have.”

“Your father’s a prick.” Harry kisses the corner of my mouth, and I can’t stop a smile.



“Well, yes.” I look at him. “But I’m not good at this sort of thing either. I work too much, I’m utterly self-centered, I fly into tempers for no reason at all other than I want to--”

“And you can be an utter shit,” Harry says. He leans up on one elbow, watching me. “I’ve known you since we were eleven. I rather think I’m aware of your faults, thanks.”

I just look at him. “You confuse me,” I admit after a moment. “Completely.”

Harry drags his thumb across my bottom lip. “I could say the same of you.”

“Then why are we--”

“Because we’ve spent our lives getting under each other’s skin,” Harry says quietly. “Because we want each other. Because we can’t stop thinking of each other. Because you make me feel alive, Draco, whether we’re fighting or fucking or just walking down the bloody street together, and you can’t tell me I don’t do the same for you.”

He does and he knows it. I look away, watching the candle cast flickering shadows against Harry’s bedroom wall.

“You’ll get tired of me,” I say. “Everyone does. And then you’ll walk away and I’ll be left a fool--”

Harry cuts me off with a slow kiss. He lifts his head, breathless. “I’ll make you a promise,” he says, and the look in his eyes makes my heart stutter. “As long as there’s anything here between us, I will not give up on you.”

I snort. “Even if it’s entirely hopeless.”

“What can I say?” Harry grins down at me. “I’m the bloody Saviour of the Wizarding World. Everyone knows hopeless causes turn me on.”

“Lunatic Gryffindor.”

I can’t hide my smile as he presses me into the mattress, his mouth finding mine.



“Aphasia,” Weasley says, leaning forward in his chair.

Wibberley nods. We’ve gathered in his office, two corridors over from the Agnes Fletcher Ward. He’s asked me to be here. I’d rather be in casualty. Still, I’m leaning against the windowsill, arms crossed, watching the Gryffindors as they try to take in what Wibberley’s telling them.

Molly Weasley wrings her hands as she glances at her husband, then back to Wibberley. “What exactly does that mean?”

Wibberley looks at me, and when I shake my head slightly, he shifts behind his desk. "The trauma Mr Potter sustained in his brain injury has affected the left posterior inferior frontal gyrus--"

At their blank looks I roll my eyes and push myself off the windowsill before Granger can open her mouth. "It means the Diffindo sliced through the part of his brain that affects his ability to understand and produce language. It also left the motor skills necessary to properly move his right arm and leg weakened."

Granger eyes me. "How long will it last?" She at least has the decency not to make her dislike of me obvious.

"That's what we don't know," Wibberley says. He rubs his thumb against the back of his hand. "Many injuries like this heal often either fully or significantly in six months." His eye meet mine, and I swallow, tightening my arms across my chest. "If they don't, well..."

"Then they don't," I say bluntly.

Granger bites her lip. At Ginevra Weasley's soft sound, Granger reaches for her hand, holding it tightly.

I don't even have it in me to hate Harry's ex today. I turn back to the window, staring out at the courtyard below. I can hear them talking behind me, their voices rising. It's only when Granger says, "He can't stay here," that I turn around. For once I agree with her.

"He'll need rehabilitation," Wibberley says. "The St Mungo's staff--"

"Are wonderful." Granger crosses one leg over the other, and her shoulders straighten. I can see her slide into barrister mode; it's obvious why she wins the majority of the cases she argues before the Wizengamot. "However, Harry needs to be with people who love him--"

"I concur." I can't stop myself. I know what I have to do. I've known since Harry first gripped my hand this morning.

They all turn to me. Granger looks flustered; Ginevra and her parents look confused. Weasley just smiles faintly and leans back in his chair.

I lick my lip and glance at Wibberley. "You know as well as I do that Harry will do better in an environment where he can be attended by someone who loves him."

Granger nods. "I'm so glad you agree--"

I ignore her. My heart is pounding in my chest; my fists are clenched tight at my sides. I don't look away from Wibberley. "And I--" The words almost catch in my throat. I force them out. "And I love him." I can hear a sharp intake of breath--I have no idea which Weasley it's from. I can't believe I'm saying this. I can't not say it. My stomach twists. This is for Harry. I lift my chin. "He promised me he wouldn't give up on me, however hopeless things seemed. I won't give up on him."

Wibberley picks up a quill and runs it through his fingers. "You don't have time to attend--"

"I'll make time," I say sharply. I put my hands on his desk, leaning forward. "You know I will."

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Granger snaps. “Ron and I can put Harry in our spare room. He’s our friend--”

“Hermione,” Weasley says.

His wife turns on him. “You can’t seriously think having *Draco Malfoy* look after Harry in this condition is a good idea.”

Weasley fiddles with his sleeve. “Yeah,” he says finally. “I do. Harry loves him, whether or not you like that fact, and Malfoy’s been here for weeks looking after him.” He glances over at me. “Have you even left?”

“Once,” I say. Pansy had insisted I go home for one night. I’d lasted four hours before I’d rolled out of bed and come back to sleep beside Harry.

“Right.” Weasley looks at Granger. “That’s what I’d do for you.”

Arthur Weasley clears his throat. “He has a point, dear.”

Granger turns to me, mouth tight. “You hurt him...” She trails off and blinks hard.

“It’s not your choice,” I say calmly, and I look at Wibberley. He rocks his chair back, the tip of his quill tracing circles across his desk blotter.

He nods finally, and drops his quill. “We’ll reassess at the end of the week, and if his condition improves, I’ll discharge him into Healer Malfoy’s care.”

Relief washes over me.

I have no damned idea what I’ve got myself into. I don’t care. Harry would do the same for me and I know it.

When Molly Weasley reaches for me, pulling me close, I let her. “If you need help, dear,” she whispers in my ear, “we’re a firecall away.”

I realize with surprise that I’m grateful for her offer.

My father will be horrified.



Photo by machernucha

### iii.

I take a leave of absence.

Hannah asks me if I really want to. I don't have a choice. My work is important to me, but Harry's more so.

Smethwyk's just been appointed medical director. He balks at giving me an indefinite leave, telling me it's career suicide. We scream at each other; a paperweight goes through his window, shattering the glass. Everyone in the hospital hears about it before lunch.

My leave is approved. "Six months," Smethwyk growls at me as he signs the paperwork. "And then you're back."

For now it's an acceptable compromise.

"Don't say a word," I say to Hannah when I walk back into the ward. She just gives me a small smile and points me towards a patient with cockroach antennae waving from his forehead.

"Entomorphis hex that doesn't seem to want to wear off." She hands me the chart. "Enjoy."

Work keeps me sane during the day, and at night I go back to Harry's bedside. Wibberley's moved him from the critical care unit to one of the wards on Spell Damage. He holds my hand, his fingers cold against mine, and I talk to him, telling him hospital gossip and what latest idiocy the fools in administration have decided to inflict upon the patients and staff. Harry had always laughed at my stories. Now he just looks at me, his bottom lip caught between his teeth as he struggles to understand what I'm saying.



All too often, I fall silent, worn out by work and the attempt to communicate. He squeezes my hand, his eyes clouded and sad, and I give him a wan smile, trying to tell him this isn't his fault. I know it doesn't matter. Harry will always blame himself. We sit quietly until Harry slips into sleep.

I stay awake for hours, listening to the soft sounds of the hospital around me, and wonder if I'll be able to do this.



This is what I remember: the acrid smoke of Pansy's cigarette, and the spicy-sweet scent of her perfume. The stunned look on her face. Her scarlet toenails against the brown leather of my sofa, and the dark swirl of her wine as she tilts her glass to one side.

"Potter?" she asks, and the scorn with which she infuses his name is impressive.

I take a sip of my wine. It's not stellar, but it's drinkable and that's all that matters at the moment. "Potter," I say finally.

Pansy stares into her glass. "I'm appalled."

"He's quite good in bed." I watch her closely. Pansy's my best friend and has been since we'd decided at Hogwarts that a quick fuck or three in the greenhouses wasn't what either of us really wanted from the other. Our parents had hoped we'd come to our senses and marry, but I'm far too interested in cock and Pansy's far too interested in anything that can make her come. Her latest conquest is Daphne Greengrass's little sister Astoria.

I care about what Pansy thinks.

"Darling," Pansy says, "even phenomenal sex can't excuse this one. You loathe Potter. Your entire *raison d'être* in school was to loathe Potter. You're far too intelligent to be thrown by one night with a Gryffindor with an adequate sexual technique."

"Obviously." I lean forward. The fire in the hearth warms my hands and casts long shadows across the blue and white Axminster that I nicked from one of the Manor guest rooms. I take a deep breath and look up at her through my hair. "Which is why it's not just sex between us. And hasn't been for five months."

Pansy catches her glass before it slips from her fingers. "Oh," she says finally, and she lifts her glass and drains it in one long swallow.

My only consolation is that Harry simply must be having a worse time tonight admitting to Granger and her Weasel that he's been shagging the fuck out of me since April.

"Have you told Blaise?" she asks tightly.

I shake my head. "I wanted you to know first."

“Good.” The look she turns on me is cold and pained. “I’d have to hex his balls to his forehead if he hadn’t told me. Honestly, he can be such a bastard.”

I set my glass down and move to the sofa, reaching for her hands. She lets me pull her to my side.

“Five months,” she says and I nod. She sighs. “That’s a record for you.”

“I know.”

Pansy leans against me. “I thought he was straight. Ginny Weasley, after all.”

I raise an eyebrow. “Trust me when I say he appreciates more than fanny.”

“Don’t be vulgar,” she says with a sniff, and I smile. She turns her head and studies my face. “You like him.”

“Yes,” I say, and it’s the first time I’ve really admitted it. I bite my lip. “God help me but I think I do.”

Pansy touches my cheek. “Don’t let him break your heart,” she whispers.

I’m not entirely certain that’s an option any longer.



Casualty throws me a party on my last day before leave--or rather, buys a few fairy cakes and pots of Earl Grey from the tea room and brings them down an hour before I’m off shift.

Marietta wraps her arms around me, squeezing me tight. “He’s lucky to have you,” she whispers in my ear. I’m not so certain.

Wibberley has pulled me aside already and told me what to expect. The days of frustration, of trying to coax some intelligible conversation from Harry. He’s blunt. “This won’t be easy,” he tells me. “It’s going to be as painful for you as it is for him. Are you certain it wouldn’t be better to put him into rehabilitation?”

I shake my head. Even if Harry would understand, I’d never forgive myself. I wonder when these ridiculously Gryffindor notions overtook my common sense.

Hannah tells me to firecall her whenever I need to. “It’s hard to Heal your own family,” she says quietly, her hand on my arm, and her perception unsettles me. Harry is my family now, and the sight of Mother or Father sitting at his bedside, reading to him has gone from bizarre to almost natural.

When I slip out of my robe to go home, I feel a twinge of grief. I’ve fought so hard to become a damned good Healer, and I can’t imagine six months away from it.

Harry’s small smile when I walk into his room makes my decision worthwhile.



Greg and Weasley help me bring Harry home.

Mother's been at the townhouse already with a phalanx of Manor elves. It's spotless and smells like lemon oil and beeswax. The rooms have been rearranged. Our bedroom's downstairs now, where the library once was. It's better for Harry to keep the primary rooms on one floor. He can walk, but slowly and only with a cane, dragging his right foot slightly behind him. He's learning to use his left hand as well, clumsily.

He follows Greg into the bedroom, looking around. Mother's done wonders. There's a sitting area in the bay windows, looking out over the tiny front garden, abloom with summer roses and spikes of lavender and rosemary, and into the tree-lined street, busy with Muggle cars and harried pedestrians hurrying home from work. Sheer white curtains flutter in the breeze from the open windows, and the sound of a jazz saxophone drifts across the street from the cafe on the corner.

Harry's head turns towards it. He's always loved music, and he closes his eyes now, leaning on his cane.

When Weasley puts Harry's bag down, I look at him and Greg. Go, I mouth, and they both nod.

"Firecall," Greg says with a firm squeeze of my arm, and then he's gone. Weasley glances at Harry, still lost in the music, and I understand the sadness in his eyes.

"Come back tomorrow," I say grudgingly, and he stops at the door.

"Thanks," he says.

Harry opens his eyes and looks at him. "Wrong. Want." His face twists in frustration as he realises our confusion. "Want for," he says loudly. "Want *for*."

Weasley swallows. "It's all right, mate," he says, and his fingers grip the doorframe. "I'll be back tomorrow. Pop in before breakfast if that's okay with the Ferret." He gives me a wry smile.

I nod.

Harry turns away, slamming his cane against the floor.

"You should go," I say to Weasley.

He looks between us both, and I know he wants to go to Harry. Wants to reassure him. Instead he takes a deep breath. "Right. If you need anything..."

"I'll owl."

The door closes behind him, leaving me alone with Harry.

I'm terrified.

Harry's shoulders slump. He leans on his cane, staring out the window. "Want for," he whispers, and I can't stop myself from going to him, wrapping my arms around his waist, pulling him against me.

He turns in my arms, and I see the dampness beneath his eyes. My thumb brushes away the tears. I've never seen Harry like this. I've never seen him cry. He's always been the strong one. The rock I can lean on. I don't know that I can be that for him.

I don't even know how to begin.

"Want for," he says again softly, and he presses his face against my neck. "My." I can feel him tremble against me.

We stand there silently, his hands clutching my robe, my fingers smoothing his short hair. The curtains billow white around us in a summer breeze.

I've never felt so alone.



This is what I remember: the pulsing beat of the club music, and a sideways, appraising glance from a boy with a body nearly as beautiful as Blaise's. The sour taste of whisky against my tongue. The faint slur of my words as I point the boy out. Blaise's insistence that a dance wouldn't hurt Potter. The press of the boy's hips as he undulates against me. The heat of his mouth on my neck, the sharpness of his teeth. The roughness of the brick wall on my bare shoulders; the rotting stench of the alley. The wet slide of slimy cardboard beneath my feet, and my moan when the boy's cock slips across mine. The quiet gasps and groans of our rutting. Cold air against my skin.

The guilt that swamps me as I slump there against the wall, come spattered across my open trousers as the boy tucks himself together.

I go home that night, my Occlumency high. I don't tell Blaise; I'm sure he suspects. I've no excuse, that much I know. I tell myself it's because I'm uncertain of this relationship, of the fact that Harry spends most of his nights now in my townhouse, that he's talked of giving up his flat when the lease runs out in May, that his clothes have begun to fill my wardrobe, that his toothbrush is on the sink next to mine.

I don't do relationships. I don't do monogamy. I don't do happiness.

*Everyone leaves in the end, I tell myself. It's best he does it now. Before it hurts too badly.*

When I slide into bed beside Harry, he turns towards me, yawning. "Have fun?" he asks, his voice thick with sleep, and he curls around me, settling his head on my shoulder, kissing my throat.

I hesitate. "I'd rather have stayed home," I murmur, and I realise I mean that. I circle my fingertips on his shoulder. His skin is soft and warm beneath his t-shirt.

Harry just smiles against my skin and a moment later he's snoring softly, his rumpled hair soft against my jaw.

I lie awake, hating myself.





The weeks pass slowly.

I'm exhausted. I don't sleep. I spend my days with Harry, working on strengthening his recalcitrant arm and leg, reading books and newspapers to him as I watch for any sign of comprehension. The moments he seems to recognise a word or a sentence I treasure. I don't care if I'm fooling myself; they buoy me up and give me hope.

We're not always alone, Harry and I. The Weasley clan stops by regularly, as do Blaise and Pansy and Greg, and surprisingly--or not so, I suppose--my parents.

Mother pours us tea, not hesitating to help Harry as he fumbles with his cup. Her fingers steady the cup as he lifts it shakily to his mouth, and she acts as if it's the most normal thing in the world. Harry gives her a grateful look, and she merely smiles and asks him if he's sleeping, listening gravely as he stumbles over words that mean nothing.

It's at that moment I realise how much I love my mother, and when I later walk my parents to the Floo as Harry lies down, worn out from another afternoon of socialisation, I hug her tightly, whispering my thanks.

She just kisses my cheek, then draws on her gloves as Father holds her cloak for her. "Really, darling," she says with a steady look at me, "you know how Malfoys feel about family."

I do.

Harry's lying on the sofa when I come back into the sitting room, curled in on himself. I kneel beside him, brushing his hair back from his forehead.

He opens his eyes and I give him a small smile. He traces the curve of my mouth with a trembling fingertip. I kiss it.

"I'm sorry," I whisper, and there are tears in my eyes.

Harry frowns. He touches my wet eyelashes. "Cold not." His jaw clenches, and I know he's exasperated with himself again. "Col--" He breaks off with a heavy sigh and looks away.

I lean against him, my face pressed against the worn leather of the sofa cushion. Harry's hand settles on my head, stroking lightly.

Somehow, I fall asleep.



This is what I remember: An overwhelming guilt. Harry watching me over the breakfast table, his brow furrowed in confusion as I eat quickly, desperate to get to work. A fissure between us that over the course of a month grows into a gaping chasm. He tries to talk. I ignore him. He finally gives up.

The silences grow deafening.

Harry stops sleeping over. His toothbrush is gone. His clothes slowly disappear from my wardrobe. We see each other once or twice a week for dinner and a quick fuck.

I can't bear it.

Pansy tells me I'm a fool when I confess to her. She's not wrong.

I find myself at Harry's flat. He's not there; I open a bottle of Ogden's and sit in the dark, waiting for him.

When he Floos in, the bottle's nearly empty and it's gone past midnight. Weasley's with him. They're laughing. My heart twists. I hate that Harry can be happy without me.

The light flips on, bright and blinding, and Harry freezes when he sees me. I push myself from the sofa, swaying less than I'd expected.

"We need to talk," I say.

Weasley gives Harry a long look. "I should get home to Hermione."

Harry doesn't look at him, but he nods. He doesn't take his eyes off me. His hands are shoved in his pockets.

We're silent until the Floo whooshes again, casting a faint green glow over the room.

"You're pissed," Harry says finally.

I hold up the bottle. "I owe you."

Harry leans against the doorframe. "So. Are you finally going to tell me what the fuck's been going on?" I take a deep breath. I know what I have to do, and it will either end my relationship or...well. I have no idea what the other option is. All I know is that things have changed between Harry and me, and I don't care for it.

Still, every ounce of Slytherin self-preservation is screaming at me that I'm a complete idiot for what I'm about to say.

I set the bottle on a side table, my back to Harry. It's easier this way. "I fucked someone."

Harry doesn't speak. I can't turn around. I drain my glass and set it beside the bottle. The firewhisky burns the back of my throat and I cough. "When?" Harry says at last. His voice is deadly quiet.

I stare at the framed photograph of a younger Harry with Granger and the Weasel. "At the club. With Blaise." "You fucked Zabini?"

"No." I look back at him then. He's standing still, tense, his fists clenched at his sides, his mouth a thin line. "Some boy." I can feel my cheeks warm. "I don't know his name."

Harry doesn't speak. I don't dare move. The look on his face is terrifying.

When the door slams behind him, I sink to the floor, shaking.

I don't know what I've done.



I hand Harry a fork. "Fork," I say, and he stares at it intently. "Fork." The muscle in his cheek clenches.

"Your." He throws the fork across the room. A house-elf pops in to pick it up. "Your!" We both look at each other, exhausted and frustrated. It's been a long afternoon of words, the same ones that define each of our days together. *Eat. Drink. Bath. Bed. Sleep.*

I take the fork from the elf. Neither of us slept well last night. Harry'd kicked and writhed, fighting off bad dreams. Wibberley had told me in his latest visit that they were most likely remnants of his trauma bleeding off and they weren't unusual. Wibberley had never had to wake up to the sound of the man he loved screaming in agony, never had to grasp his flailing hands, never had to wrap himself around him, shushing him, rocking him gently, whispering, "Me, Draco. You, Harry. Safe. You're safe. Safe."

I glance in the mirror. The glamour hiding the black eye Harry had accidentally given me is still holding. I've no intention of letting him see that. The salve I'd smeared into it this morning should eliminate it by the time we're back in bed. I've become adept at hiding the bruises and scratches his terrors give me every night.

"Fork," I say again, steeling myself.

Harry takes a deep breath. His mouth trembles. "Your," he whispers, and he looks away.

It takes all I have not to crumple. I refuse to. I grit my teeth. "Fork." Harry stares out the window, silent. Withdrawn into himself.

When I reach for him, he pushes my hand away and struggles to his feet, leaning on his cane. He doesn't look at me as he limps out of the room. The door slams behind him.

I bury my face in my hands and breathe.



This is what I remember: the silence of my townhouse, the emptiness of the rooms. The quiet echo of my feet as I walk the halls at night, wrapped in a dressing gown, unable to sleep. The loneliness of supper without Harry. Finding one of his t-shirts in the pile of clothes in my laundry.

I pull it out, wrapping it around my hands as I sit on the bed. It still smells like him, and I close my eyes, swallowing past the painful lump in my throat.

I miss him. He hasn't firecalled, hasn't owled, hasn't Floo'd. It's been nearly a week, and I've heard nothing. I've sent a note, left a message on his ansafloo. I don't eat. I don't sleep. I'm working as much as I can, trying on my best to avoid the townhouse, but tonight Hannah's forced me home.

There's a noise in the hall, and I push myself to my feet, hoping it's not Blaise again with another bottle of wine. I don't want to be coddled, to be coaxed out of my gloom. Greg and Pansy and Blaise, none of them understand. I should be grateful to be rid of him, they think, and we can put this Gryffindor-fueled madness behind us and let life return to normal.

It's not that simple. It never could be. Not with Harry. We've never been easy, he and I.

He's standing beside the Floo, looking uncertain.

I stop, his t-shirt still clutched in my hands. I can barely breathe.

"Hey," Harry says.

I can't speak. My throat tightens. He steps towards me, his eyes fixed on my face. "You're a fucking shit," he says. He reaches for me, and when his hand touches mine, I inhale raggedly. "But I couldn't stop thinking about you."

I let him draw me closer. "You came back." I'm not entirely certain I'm not dreaming.

Harry brushes my hair back from my cheek. "Yeah."

I turn my face into his touch. "Why?" The t-shirt in my hands falls to the floor. "I don't know." He's pressed against me now. I don't know who closed the distance between us--him or me. I don't care. "Ron thinks I'm an idiot. Hermione wants to hex you."

My hands clutch his hips. He feels warm and solid beneath my palms. "I'm sorry," I whisper. The words feel odd. I don't think I've ever apologised to anyone before--or at least meant it. I'd say it again for Harry, just to keep him from leaving.

"You look like hell," he says. I've lost weight this week, and it's noticeable. Not to mention the dark circles beneath my eyes.

I look up at him. "Don't leave." His fingers twist in my hair.

"Why shouldn't I?" he asks. He's watching me, his eyes dark behind his glasses.

I press myself against him. "Because I need you, you idiot," I say roughly, and I can't hide the cracking of my voice.

When Harry kisses me it's hard and angry, and I give myself up to it completely. He bites and pulls and knocks me into the wall, our bodies rutting against each other. His hands dig into my skin, his teeth are sharp against my lip. It hurts.

I need it to.

He pulls away, and his mouth is swollen and wet and pink. He's breathing hard. I can feel the swell of his cock against my hip. "No others," he says. "Ever."

“Ever,” I repeat, relief flooding through me, and I pull him into another kiss.

It’s a promise I intend to keep.



Pansy brings me a bottle of wine and a box of chocolates from my favourite Parisian confectioner. Sustenance, she pronounces them and informs me that I need to keep my strength up.

“How’s he doing?” she asks a third of the way through the wine and after half the box of chocolates are gone. Harry’s just left with Granger for a rehabilitation appointment at St Mungo’s. She’s softened towards me over the past few months. We can actually carry on civil conversations without tearing into each other. Weasley’s thrilled, and I suspect Harry’d be quite pleased too, if he could be certain of what we were saying. Still, he kisses me each time she leaves, smiling at me to let me know my patience has been noted.

I top off our wine glasses. “Fine.”

“Draco.” Pansy leans forward, one elbow resting on her crossed knees. Her skirt is entirely too short for decency. She’s cut her hair again, and the sleek black bob barely brushes her jaw. “You both look exhausted.”

I don’t say anything for a moment. I sip my wine, then sigh. “Physically, he’s doing well. He’s stronger. He doesn’t fumble as much when he’s dressing or holding an object. He still limps, but he’s greater mobility--”

“That’s not what I’m asking.” Pansy sets her glass aside. “His speech--”

“His aphasia’s unimproved.” I keep my voice even. Clinical.

Pansy studies me. “You have to go back to work in a month.”

“Perhaps.” I glance away and lift my glass to my lips again. Smethwyk’s already owled me about my return date. I’m fairly certain he’s no intention of extending my leave. I know from Hannah that Casualty’s overworked lately. I hesitate. “I might not go back.”

She leans back against the arm of the sofa. “Really.” I shrug. “It’s an option I’m keeping open.” “You love that ridiculous job,” she says.

I look at her, resigned. “I love Harry more.”

Pansy’s eyes are gentle as she reaches for my hand. “Oh, Draco,” she says with a sigh, “when did you become such a Gryffindor?”

I’ll be damned if I know.



This is what I remember: the chill of winter, our feet crunching in the first snow. Harry's pink cheeks above his thick red scarf. The ends of his dark hair peeking out from a black woollen cap. His smile, bright and warm on a January morning. Steam rising from a paper cup of tea; the scent of bergamot wafting through crisp air.

"What are you humming?" he asks, turning to walk backwards in front of me. The Heath's empty, save for a few children up early to try sledding down the steep hill. London's spread out below us, sleepy and grey.

I glance at him, puzzled, before I realise I actually was humming the Weird Sisters' latest beneath my breath. I can feel my cheeks warm. "Nothing," I snap and I frown at him over the edge of my cup of tea.

Harry just laughs, and he stops, blocking the path. "Bollocks."

It's been nearly three months since the night he came back. They haven't been easy months. We've fought. We've struggled. We've screamed at each other. Working through my infidelity isn't easy for either of us; there are moments I've been certain I wanted to walk out the door. But he keeps me here.

Nothing worthwhile is ever simple, I tell Pansy when she worries about me, and I believe it. And Harry, for some inexplicable reason, is worthwhile. My parents think I'm mad. My father refuses to speak to me until I come to my senses. I'm forced to deal with idiotic gingers on a regular basis.

I do it for Harry.

He's taught me how to forgive. It's not a concept I'm comfortable with. It's not one I'm good at. But Harry forgives. Slowly. Reluctantly. Uneasily.

Snow starts to fall again, fat, fluffy flakes that stick to our coats and our hair. "You're mad," I tell Harry, and I try to step past him.

Harry catches my wrist and pulls me to him, nearly spilling my tea. "You were humming." He grins at me. "I thought it was cute." I sniff. "Malfoys are never *cute*."

"The one I know is." Harry leans in and kisses me softly. When he pulls back, there's a curious look on his face. He brushes snow from my hair.

"What?" I frown at him, wrinkling my nose as he studies me. "Is there a mark--" "I love you," Harry says in a rush, and I still. Neither of us move. Neither of us breathe.

My heart thuds. I lick my bottom lip.

Harry's gloves are soft against my cheek. "I know it's mad," he says. "But I love you. And I have for a while." "Oh," I say finally. I'm numb. I don't know what to think.

Harry takes my hand. "You don't have to say it back," he says quietly. "I just thought you should know."

I nod.



We walk on in silence.

I'm utterly terrified.



I resign my position.

Smethwyk's furious. Wibberley thinks I've lost my mind. Father tells me I've made the right choice.

"If you're going to stay with Potter," he says calmly, watching as Mother walks with Harry along the Manor's leaf-strewn garden path, "there's no sense in doing it half-arsed." He looks at me. "I am correct in the assumption that he might as well be your spouse, am I not?"

It takes me a moment to answer, I'm so surprised. "Yes," I say finally. "I suppose." "There's no supposition," Father says. "You love him enough to make the decision to stay or you don't."

Autumn's turned the trees in the garden to red and gold. I watch Mother help Harry settle on a bench beneath one. "I do."

Father nods. "Then you know what's expected of you."

He's absolutely right.



Words still hinder us.

I practise every day with him. Some days are better than others. Some days I'm almost positive he understands. Today is not one of those.

The fire crackles in the bedroom, taking away the late November chill. Harry's ignored me most of the evening, escaping into here to curl up in his favourite chair.

I sink down on my knees in front of Harry, taking his hands in mine. They're cold, as always. He looks at me, his face twisted with misery. I kiss his knuckles.

We've been through so much already, Harry and I. Hate. Anger. Bitterness. Lust. Need.

Love.

I wish I'd said it before.

I don't care if he understands the words. He knows what it means.

"Love."

I say it out loud this time. Harry watches me. I turn his hand over and kiss his palm.

“Love,” I say again, letting the word whisper against his skin. I look up at him. “Love you.” I place my hand on his chest, over his heart. “Love Harry.” He’s staring at me. I won’t let myself look away. His fingertips brush my mouth, my jaw.

I’m tired. I’m exhausted. I’m worn out. Every day drags against my soul, pulling me into a grief that I can’t explain. I’m losing this battle. I’m losing Harry.

It breaks my heart.

Desperately, I reach for him, pulling him from the chair to the floor beside me. I kiss him. He moans into my mouth, and I press him into the rug, rolling on top of him. I want him. I’ve missed his touch so much.

We pull at each other’s clothes. I can tell he needs this just as much as I do. I Summon the phial from the bedside table and press it into his hand. “Please,” I say, and Harry doesn’t have to understand the word to know what I want.

He fucks me roughly, awkwardly but eagerly. Our mouths slide over heated skin; my hands grip his shoulders as I arch up against him. “Harry,” I say over and over, whispering his name into his throat, his shoulder, his jaw like a mantra.

When I come, I cling to him.

“I love you,” I say, and he shudders above me with a cry.

We lie on the floor, tangled in each other. For the first time in months, I sleep through the night.



This is what I remember: falling into bed, laughing, as the rain taps lightly at the window panes. Damp skin. Wet hair. Soft kisses. Harry’s *I love you* warm against my mouth.

He grins down at me. “I can’t imagine life without you, you know.”

“You’re a sap, Potter,” I say, but I can’t stop my own smile as I pull him down for another kiss.

Harry rolls me over, nudging my thighs apart. “One day you’ll admit it too.”

“Never.” I laugh and kiss him recklessly.

The next day my world will implode, but I’ll never forget that night.



It happens after breakfast.

Harry sits at the table, drinking his tea, the remnants of eggs and toast and marmalade spread across our plates.

I'm at the window, teacup in hand, looking out onto the back garden. It's nearly mid-December and the grey clouds above threaten snow.

"We should start thinking of Christmas presents," I say. I've fallen into conversing with myself over the past months, partially because I've a misplaced hope that somehow spoken words will seep through Harry's wounded brain and partially because I can't bear to live in complete silence. I sip my tea. "If you're feeling well, maybe we should go to Paris this weekend. There's a cloak pin Pansy saw in the Latin Quarter that she swears would be divine for Mother."

I can hear Harry set his teacup down. He shifts in his chair. He sighs, and says, "Ro."

My heart twists. It's almost worse when he tries to talk on his own. I steady myself. "Father will be a nightmare to buy for, but then he always is--"

"Ro-" Harry thumps his hand against the table. The cutlery rattles. He's silent for a moment, and out of the corner of my eye I can see him draw in a deep breath and scowl down at his plate, gathering himself. His jaw tightens and he looks up at me. "Love."

I still, my teacup shaking in my hands, and I turn to look at Harry. "What?"

Harry doesn't look away. His bottom lip trembles. "Love," he says again, more clearly. He holds a hand out to me, and I walk towards him, stunned. My fingers curl around his; he pulls me closer, presses his face to my hip.

I set my teacup down. My hands smooth back his hair. "Harry." My throat aches. I never thought this day would come. I was prepared for it not to come.

He looks up at me, and his eyes are bright and green. "Love." He takes a breath. "Draco. You."

And I cry.

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